Spoken Discourse Marking

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This presentation aims at identifying the distinctive features of discourse-relational devices (DRDs) in spoken language, as opposed to written language (see, e.g., Biber, 2006; Castellà, 2004; Chafe, 1982; Horowitz & Samuels, 1987; López Serena & Borreguero Zuluoga, 2010). The features will be illustrated by various naturally-occurring examples from Catalan and Spanish corpora ranging from conversation and semi-structured interviews to political debate.

The features in DRDs description and classification that are relevant for spoken language will be identified and the problems that they arise will be discussed.

My departing point is the hypothesis that, although the mode of communication, either oral or written, is an important feature to explain the selection of discourse markers, the main factors are planning and interactivity. In fact, the term *mode of communication* must be understood in a wide sense: mode is not only or mainly the medium, but the contextual factors attached to it (Halliday, 1987).

The main features discussed and illustrated are the following:

As for text structure

(a) Structures containing DRDs in oral unplanned discourse are often truncated (the second segment is missing or is not complete) or independent (the main clause is implicit), whereas in planned discourse the structures tend to be continuous and complete.

(b) Structures containing DRDs in oral unplanned discourse often display long distance relationships, which would be odd in planned discourse, especially written.

As for the use of DRDs

(c) It is often the case that the meaning of DRDs in oral unplanned discourse is not clearly defined or it is intermediate or ambiguous between functions or domains.

(d) DRDs in unplanned discourse tend to be polyfunctional (see Hansen, 2008; Hummel, 2012), whereas in planned discourse they tend to exhibit a (more) specific function.

(e) DRDs in oral unplanned discourse frequently co-occur with other markers (Cuenca & Marín, 2009; Dostie, 2013; Fraser, 2013).

As for the functions of DRDs, considering that they can be propositional, structural or modal,

(f) Oral texts include more DRDs implementing structural and modal functions related to actions such as turn or topic management and/or agreement and disagreement. Propositional DRDs in unplanned (oral) discourse are frequent but not as varied as in planned (written) discourse.

(g) Structural markers are more frequent in genres in which planning is low. DRDs in oral text frequently alternate or combine propositional and structural functions.

(h) Modal markers are more frequent in dialogal genres, in which interactivity is more prominent (see Degand et al., 2013).

The implications and challenges that these features pose for DRDs annotation will be finally put to discussion.

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