Discourse markers and evidentials in Spoken Catalan

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Discourse markers and modality markers are directly related. Some authors consider modality markers a type of discourse or pragmatic markers (see Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen 2006, Norrick 2007, and the volume of Journal of Pragmatics on “Pragmatic Markers” also edited by Norrick, forthcoming). Moreover, from a diachronic point of view, subjectification and intersubjectification processes as described by Traugott and her associates (e.g., Traugott & Dasher 2002) often imply modal structures which evolve into connectives. As a consequence, the study of modal markers can profit from an analysis of the relationship and overlap with discourse markers.

The analysis of specific discourse markers such as *well* (see, for example, Cuenca 2008) uncover the hybrid nature of these markers, since they exhibit structural (or frame) and modal (or qualifying) functions. In this presentation, some relationships between discourse markers and evidentials will be analysed in an oral corpus. The examples belong to a multimodal corpus (*Corpus Audiovisual Plurilingüe*) which includes videotapes and transcriptions of interviews obtained through a semi-structured protocol which consisted of 5 tasks designed to elicit different types of text: narrative, descriptive, instructive, expository and argumentative.

A preliminary analysis of the examples in Catalan shows the importance of two items: the marker *clar* (‘it is clear’, ‘of course’) and predicative structures such as *és que* (‘it is that’). They are both used as discourse structuring devices and modality markers related to evidentiality. *Clar* is an already grammaticalised form which can be considered an evidential on its own, while *és que* constructions and other related structures illustrate a grammaticalisation process in progress which is activated by modal implicatures and leads to reanalysis as discourse markers.

On the one hand, *clar* can express different values ranging from clearly evidential to more structural. As Freites (2006) argues for *claro* in Spanish, this marker is usually described in relation to the functions of agreement and acceptation, but it also exhibits metadiscourse functions as reformulation marker and structural functions as continuity marker (for Spanish see also Martín Zorraquino & Portolés 1999). On the other hand, predicative constructions such as *és que* bracket units of talks signalling the introduction of a new topic while showing a relation of causality or explanation (Declerck 1992, Sancho in press). Specifically, these predicative constructions are used to convey modal values related to the speaker’s intention of justifying what s/he has previously stated, often in order to avoid a face-threatening act (Delahunty 2001, Porroche Ballesteros, 1998, Pusch 2007). Interestingly, both *clar* and *és que* constructions combine with typical discourse markers such as *perquè* (‘because’), *doncs* (‘then’), *bueno* (‘well’), which also highlights the relationship between evidentiality and discourse marking.

Finally, it is also worth noticing that *clar* and *és que* constructions instantiate the two types of evidentiality differentiated by Nuyts (2001): the former is ‘intersubjective’, in Nuyts’ terms, since it presents an evaluation as objective and generally accepted, while the latter is ‘subjective,’ as it focuses on the speaker’s stance; that is, *clar* is more hearer-oriented whereas *és que* constructions are more speaker-oriented.
References