

# THE CONSTRUCTION OF TEXTUAL COHESION IN SPANISH AND ITALIAN, AS MOTHER TONGUES AND AS SECOND LANGUAGES

PATRIZIA GIULIANO, SALVATORE MUSTO  
UNIVERSITÀ "FEDERICO II" – NAPOLI

**Abstract** – This paper analyses 80 narrative texts concerned with Italian and Spanish as L1s and L2s. We shall compare the way both native speakers and learners build textual cohesion when faced with a narrative task involving several referential restrictions: contrasts of entity and polarity; maintenance of the same predication; temporal shifts; etc. The stimulus used to collect the data is *The Finite Story* by Dimroth (2006). Our work adds to the debate about the learners' tendency to establish anaphoric linkage according to the specific grammaticized or lexicalized (readily encodable) concepts of their mother tongue even when their competence in L2 is advanced and their L1 is typologically and genetically very close to the L2. Nevertheless, our native and acquisitional data show that grammatical and lexical facts cannot exhaustively explain the speakers' choices with respect to textual cohesion and the construction of perspective in a given language; an integrative explanation is therefore necessary. We propose to combine the *Quaestio* model with an enunciative framework. Finally, we will offer some reflections about the functioning of languages in general, which will contribute to general linguistic theory as well as to the domain of second language acquisition.

**Keywords:** discourse cohesion, L2 acquisition, discourse and meta-operational approaches, L1 vs L2 perspective-taking.

## 1. Introduction

In the last two decades, several studies have shown that the grammar of discourse – on which the way of establishing anaphoric linkage in a certain language depends – reflects *the perspective-taking* typical of the native speakers of that language. Languages, in fact, impose a grammar of sentence but also “discourse” grammars, which are concerned with the way a certain type of text (narration, description, argumentation, etc.) is constructed and organized with respect to coherence (the relationship linking the meanings of the utterances forming a text) and cohesion (the formal means associated with them). The native speaker of a given language makes his conceptual choices on the basis of the most accessible formal means, which are evidently very close to the concepts grammaticized and lexicalized in the language in question (typological specificities). A strong peculiarity of discourse grammars is their being learned and used, for the most part, in a more unconscious way by the native speakers of a given language than any other aspect of the grammar,<sup>1</sup> and, as a matter of fact, traditional grammars do not describe the functioning of discourse, and even a highly educated speaker of a given language is unable to describe it if questioned about.

<sup>1</sup> While the grammar of sentence is seen as language specific and intensively focused upon since primary school, it is a matter of fact that the grammar of discourse is normally considered and studied as universal rules of organization of texts.

With respect to second language acquisition, some works have shown that advanced second language learners master the grammar of the target language *at utterance level but not at discourse level*, since their way of establishing anaphoric linkage, and consequently textual cohesion, still reflects *their mother tongue perspective-taking*. In other words, in selecting and organizing information within a text, learners tend to exploit the typological specific effects that the L1 offers because of the grammaticized or lexicalized concepts it has to encode and link information units (Carroll *et al.* 2000; Carroll, von Stutterheim 2003; Carroll *et al.* 2004; Carroll, Lambert 2005, 2006; Carroll *et al.* 2008; Gleitz, von Stutterheim 2003; von Stutterheim, Klein 2002; von Stutterheim *et al.* 2002, 2003; von Stutterheim, Nüse 2003). So grammar and lexicon are seen as the key processes to interpret discourse grammar.

In agreement with the discourse grammar topic, in the present paper we shall explore the way our Italian and Spanish speaking participants build textual cohesion in a narrative task, we shall focus both on the semantic domains (entities, time, polarity etc.) and the linguistic means (adverbs, pronouns, particles etc.) speakers (natives or L2 learners) select in order to highlight the referential flow of the narrative texts that we asked them to produce in L1 or L2.

Dimroth *et al.* (2010) identified several differences between Dutch and German *versus* French and (Northern) Italian, for the way native speakers of these two groups of languages build cohesion with respect to the stimulus they proposed (namely, *The Finite Story* by Dimroth 2006, that we also used for the present study and for which see Section 3.2), which pushed the authors to hypothesize “a Germanic way” and “a Romance way” of establishing anaphoric linkage (for this point, see Section 2.3). By using the *The Finite Story* stimulus, Andorno and Benazzo (2010), Benazzo *et al.* (2012), Benazzo and Andorno (2015), Giuliano (2012a) and Turco *et al.* (2012, 2015) further explored this topic through an acquisitional perspective (see Section 2.4), but none of these studies considered Spanish either as L1 or L2.

So, the reason why we have chosen Italian and Spanish as objects of our study lies in the absence of studies about Spanish with respect to its possible closeness or distance to/from the “Romance way”, to which Italian seems definitively to belong; and in the way learners perceive the distance or closeness between their L1 with respect to the L2 that they are acquiring.

Our data is divided in two subsections: Italian and Spanish as L1s (Section 5.1); Spanish L2 of Italian learners and Italian L2 of Spanish learners (Section 5.2). With respect to native speakers, we shall demonstrate that Spanish, despite its Romance origins, turns out to be closer to Germanic languages than to the ones of its own group, differently from what Dimroth *et al.* (2010) have stated for French and Italian, since its native speakers normally emphasize cohesion on the same semantic domains chosen by Germanic speakers (Section 2.2).

As for learners, the analysis will show that, even at advanced levels, they do not completely master the discourse grammar of the L2 – although the sentence grammar is perfectly managed –, since transfer from L1 still plays a role in the type of conceptual and formal means that the subjects select to build textual cohesion.

Finally, for both the native and the learner groups we will explore whether the specific grammaticized or lexicalized concepts of their mother tongues can or cannot satisfactorily explain the cohesive formal strategies selected by the groups, especially by the Spanish natives and the Spanish learners of Italian. In contrast with most of the studies adding to the debate about the building of a textual perspective in L1 and L2, we think that an integrative explanation is necessary to the lexical/grammatical one provided by some

scientists, and we shall do it by investigating the *enunciative operations* selected by the speakers while addressing their own texts to their co-enunciators (see Section 2.4).<sup>2</sup>

We shall also maintain that differences between the discourse grammars of different languages need to be interpreted in terms of *continuum* and not of discrete phenomena.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. The *Quaestio* model of textual analysis

The discussion about our findings will add to the debate on “the grammar of discourse” when building a text in a first or a second language.

As we said in the *Introduction*, discourse grammars involve specific choices with respect to the semantic domains selected by native speakers as well as specific grammatical or lexical means: the association of these two types of choices (content and form) leads to what some authors define as “the perspective-taking(s)” typical of a given language (Slobin 1987, 2003). The concepts of *discourse grammar* and *perspective taking* play a crucial role in the framework we adopted for the present study, in which we combine the psycholinguistic theory of the *Quaestio* (see Klein, von Stutterheim 1989, 1991) with an enunciative approach to oral textual production (for this approach, see Section 2.4).

In the last two decades, the *Quaestio* model of textual analysis has been adopted in many of the studies concerned with the grammar of discourse and the perspective taking (see references in the *Introduction*). According to this theory, a text is shaped and informationally organised thanks to an internal question that the speakers of a linguistic community progressively interiorize from their early childhood by exploiting the readily encodable conceptual and formal options<sup>3</sup> that are available. The prototypical *Quaestio* for a narrative text is *what has happened to the protagonist in time X?*, in which the event is the information to specify, or *focus*, whereas the protagonist and the time span are topicalized. But since the *Quaestio* is influenced by the formal and conceptual models that a certain language makes available, that explains why speakers with different mother tongues work out relatively different *Quaestiones*, namely *Quaestiones* highlighting a specific component (for instance, *what has happened to the protagonist and why?*, *what has happened to the protagonist after time X?* etc.). In Klein and von Stutterheim’s opinion, the *Quaestio* would guide the formal and conceptual choices of the speakers while producing the information structure of a text (introduction, maintenance, shifting and reintroduction of referents of any nature – entities, space, time, etc. – or *referential movement*),<sup>4</sup> On the whole, this internal question “dictates” the discourse principles

<sup>2</sup> For an alternative explanation to the lexical/grammatical one, see also Giuliano and Di Maio (2008) and Giuliano (2012a).

<sup>3</sup> By formal options we mean the available grammatical schemes for a given language; by conceptual options we refer to what is relevant for a community of speakers to pay attention to when speaking, namely the contents that they tend to focus on and the pragmatic habits that they select.

<sup>4</sup> The *Quaestio* shaping a whole text is said to be global by contrast to an incidental or local *Quaestio* a speaker can answer during his textual production, and that he can abandon immediately afterwards. So, with respect to our stimulus, a narrator could focus on a protagonist instead of the event, answering by that a local *Quaestio* such as *Who else jumps?*

coherence and cohesion are based on; and as a consequence, it would reflect the *perspective taking(s)* specific to a community of speakers.

## 2.2. Dimroth et al. (2010)

In accordance with the *Quaestio* model of textual analysis and the discourse grammar studies in first and second language acquisition, Dimroth et al. (2010) analyse narrative texts produced by native speakers of Dutch, German, French and Italian. The data were collected by a video clip, *The Finite Story*, created by Dimroth (2006), that we also used for the collection of our data in Spanish and Italian (see Section 3.2 for details about the experiment with this stimulus).

By virtue of their results, the authors state that when a contrast can be narrated, Dutch and German native speakers preferentially mark this contrast on the assertion level, either by a contrastive stress on the finite lexical verb (see Example 2), the auxiliary and the copula or by what they call “assertion related particles”, namely *doch/schon/wohl* (for German; see Example 1) and *toch/wel* (for Dutch).<sup>5</sup> In Example 1 below, two of the protagonists of *The Finite Story* short film refuse to escape their apartments despite the fact that their building is on fire because they are afraid of jumping out of the windows; a third protagonist, conversely, jumps out.

- 1) Der hat sich dann entschieden, *doch* zu springen, obwohl er eins höher wohnt  
 he has himself then decided, PART to jump, even-though he a higher [flat] lives  
 ‘he has decided to jump, even though he lives in a higher one [flat]’

In Example 2, a same protagonist decides to jump whereas before he had refused; the difference with respect to the previous example lies in the exploitation of the pitch accent on the finite verb in association to the assertive particle *wohl*:

- 2) und deswegen *IST* er dann wohl auch gesprungen  
 and because- of-that is he then well also jumped  
 ‘and because of that he has also jumped’

So, the highlighting of positive polarity in German and Dutch is made possible by the large repertoire of assertion markings available, which can have a lexical or a prosodic nature (assertive particle vs pitch accent on the finite verb component).<sup>6</sup>

For the same passages of the short film presented in (1) and (2), French and Italian native speakers prefer to mark the contrast by anaphoric devices acting on the topic component, at the levels of entity (Examples 3a and 3b) or time (Examples 4a and 4b), rather than on the polarity level:

- 3) (3a) Signor Blu *invece è l'unico/il primo che* accetta di saltare / *Solo* il  
 Signor Blu salta  
 ‘Mr Blue instead is the only one who accepts to jump’  
 (3b) M. Bleu *lui* il saute  
 ‘Mr Blue him he jumps’

<sup>5</sup> The German and Dutch particles in question are not easy to translate, and actually in some cases they are not translated at all. With respect to English, they can sometimes be compared to the function of the auxiliary *do* in a passage such as *Mr Blue does jump* contrasted to *Mr Green and Mr Red do not jump*.

<sup>6</sup> We remind the reader that according to Höhle (1992), the prosodically stressed component of a finite verb can be defined as *verum focus*. Furthermore, a contrastive stress on the finite element can have a function that is very much related to the function of the assertion-related particles.

- 4) (4a) I vigili del fuoco *finalmente* hanno risposto  
 ‘The firemen finally have answered’  
 (4b) *Cette fois-ci* le pompier décroche  
 ‘This time the fireman picks up [the phone]’

Examples (3a) and (3b) show that the cohesion strategies selected by Italian speakers and French speakers are not the same, though all of them act on the entity component of the utterance: Italian speakers exploit means such as the adverb *invece* (‘instead’), the restrictive particle *solo* (‘only’), the structures *è l’unico che* (‘is the only one who’) and *è il primo che* (‘is the first one who’); French speakers use the strong pronoun *lui* (‘him’), also acting on the level of the entities.<sup>7</sup> As to Examples 4a and 4b, speakers of both languages select temporal markings.

It is not impossible, of course, for German or Dutch speakers to have recourse to means comparable to It. *invece*, *al contrario*, *solo*, *è l’unico / il primo che* (for IS I), or to temporal expressions (for IS II), nevertheless, the first three means never appear in their narrations whereas the temporal devices go along with the highlighting of the positive polarity, which takes on the main contrast.

On the basis of their results for Italian, French, German and Dutch, Dimroth *et al.* (2010) state that there is a Germanic way versus a Romance way of building textual cohesion in narrative texts such as the ones elicited. The Germanic way is based on the highlighting of assertion (positive polarity) and that is why German and Dutch can be described as “assertion-oriented languages”;<sup>8</sup> the Romance way focuses on the entity and time levels and as a consequence can be defined as “non-assertion-oriented languages”. These results would be the obvious reflection of what languages make readily encodable in linguistic terms thanks to the grammatical or lexical means that they have: specific repertoire of particles (see Ger. *doch*), pronouns (see Fr. *lui*), etc.

### 2.3. Previous works on acquisition

By following the experimental procedure used by Dimroth *et al.* (2010) (see *The Finite Story* stimulus, commented in detail in Section 3.2), some authors extended their analysis to second language acquisition data (Benazzo, Andorno 2010; Benazzo *et al.* 2012; Andorno, Benazzo 2015; Giuliano 2012a; and Turco *et al.* 2015) in order to analyse the way learners build discourse perspective in a L2. In these works several pairs of L1/L2 are considered, but none of them takes Spanish into consideration (the involved languages are Italian, German, French and English). Some of them are focused on the acquisition of lexical and morpho-syntactical strategies of the L2s in question, some others concentrate more on the prosodical aspects.

<sup>7</sup> Contrastive stress on the finite lexical verb, auxiliary or copula is often used for the expression of *verum focus* in Germanic languages (Höhle 1992). A contrast on a finite light verb (auxiliary or copula) seems, conversely, very uncommon in Romance languages (for a discussion of *verum focus* in Italian and French, see Turco *et al.* 2012, 2015; for the same notion in Spanish, see Leonetti 2009).

<sup>8</sup> See Dimroth *et al.* (2010, p. 330): “In Dutch and German there is a special group of scope particles that lacks a direct translation equivalent in Italian and French. These are particles like Dutch *toch/wel* and German *doch/schon/wohl* (roughly meaning *indeed*) whose *stressed* variants mark that the utterance in which they appear is in contrast to an earlier, otherwise comparable utterance with opposite polarity [...] we will refer to these particles as assertion-related particles [...] because they evoke a proposition-level comparison of the utterance in which they occur to another assertion given in the co(n)text”.

With respect to the first type of strategies, both Benazzo and Andorno (2010, 2015) and Giuliano (2012a) show that the following general implication is valid for learners:

lexical means > morpho-syntactic means

Andorno and Benazzo (2015), in particular, explore the deceiving effects involved with the acquisition of an L2 genetically very close to one's L1, and the sometimes false correspondence between forms and functions in L2 narrations with respect to cohesive temporal means. Furthermore, morpho-syntactic means are shown to be acquired more slowly and to be more resistant to transfer from L1.

In pairs of languages such as German vs Italian and German vs French, for which a deeper restructuring of the L1 discourse perspective is necessary for a learner (see the highlighting of positive assertion in German with respect to its absence in Italian and French discussed in Section 2.2), Benazzo *et al.* (2012) demonstrate, in contrast with most of works about perspective in L2, that German learners of French and Italian basically restructure their source language discourse patterns by focusing their attention on entities rather than on assertion; nevertheless, this restructuring has as a result the choice of formal means different from the ones exploited by the native speakers of the Romance languages in question, which in a sense confirms the problems that L2 learners have with the adoption of a new perspective.

To sum up, with respect to the works just quoted and the ones mentioned previously (see *Introduction*), learners follow two tendencies:

- a) they tend to transfer the L1 discourse patterns that have formal equivalents in L2, even when the latter are not completely equivalent from a functional viewpoint or are not the patterns preferentially selected by the native speakers of the L2 in question: this is the type of transfer that Andersen (1983) defines as *transfer to somewhere*, since the existence of a formal similar pattern in L2 is necessary for transfer to take place;
- b) if forced by negative evidence in L2 input, learners restructure their L1 discourse perspective but can still neglect the appropriate formal means needed in L2.

Still with respect to transfer, the prosodic study of Turco *et al.* (2015) shows that despite the low frequency of a nuclear pitch accent on the finite lexical verb in Italian (see the notion of *verum focus* in note 8), very advanced German learners of this Romance language frequently tend to create polarity contrasts by prosodically highlighting Italian finite verbs. By doing so, transfer shows up on the pragmatic level (i.e. marking polarity contrasts on the assertion level) and on the phonetic level (for the implementation of the intonational marking).

As to Giuliano (2012a), the author shows that English, despite its Germanic origins, rests apart from Dutch and German with respect to the type of information its native speakers focus on when building cohesion in *The Finite Story* experiment since the highlighting of polarity contrasts (by the *verum focus* prosodic strategy and by the auxiliary *do*) is not frequent either in English L1 narrations or Italian L2 data of English speaking learners. This result pushes the author to state that the German/Romance pattern of analysis proposed by Dimroth *et al.* needs a *continuum* and that pragmatic explanations need to be explored in order to explain the scarce exploitation of assertive means by English native speakers in the experiment in question.

## 2.4. The enunciative approach

For the analysis of our data, the psycholinguistic theory of the *Quaestio* will be combined with an enunciative approach, according to which we shall interpret our results by taking the enunciator as the absolute origin of locative operations, since every enunciative operation is located with respect to him/her (see Culioli 1986). Consequently, in our opinion, the cohesive perspective selected by an enunciator while producing an oral text is the result of his communicative needs with respect to a specific co-enunciator, and not simply a selection of the most accessible concepts and linguistic means made available by one's mother tongue *via* the grammatical and lexical means that the latter has at its disposal.<sup>9</sup>

The centrality of the enunciator in the construal of an utterance is crucial in order to understand the functioning of a verbal language by the perspective proposed by the enunciative linguistics, and in particular in the meta-operational grammar by Adamczewski (1992) and its adaptation to Spanish grammar by Matte Bon (1993, 1997, 2006, 2008). According to the meta-operational perspective, the linguistic activity by the enunciator is seen as mainly unconscious: utterances are the result of an interior work which necessarily precedes the time of utterance. So, the linguistic operators<sup>10</sup> are “the visible traces” of the imperceptible meta-linguistic operations determining them. With respect to all of this, the enunciator is the “architect” who plans and builds the utterance and who shows his communicative intention by freely choosing among the different possible strategies that are available in a given language.

On the basis of the premises just discussed, we want to understand and not just describe the functioning of the operators used by our participants. In order to do that, we shall start from the conviction that the use of means such as Engl. *do*, Ger. *doch*, Du. *toch*, Sp. *sí/sí que*, etc.<sup>11</sup> are traces of an operation constructing the predicative relationship and that this metalinguistic operation is in many ways unconscious and directed to a specific communicative strategy. So the interpretation of the operators will mostly depend on what the enunciator decides to take on while uttering his statement in the textual dynamics he/she is creating.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> With respect to the myriad of linguistic means that speaker can pick up when solicited by a specific expectation, the *Quaestio* theory does not explain which means and why he/she should prefer to other means in a given context for the specific listener to whom he is addressing himself. The enunciative approach, conversely, deeply investigates about the underlying intention of the speaker and the reasons of his choices.

<sup>10</sup> We use the term *operator* according to the definition of Adamczewski (1992, p. 13) “Opérateur est lié à operation c’est-à-dire au travail de mise en discours de l’énonciateur. Pendant ce travail, l’énonciateur fait appel à des opérateurs grammaticaux pour construire son énoncé”. In Adamczewski’s perspective, the use of the term *operators* goes beyond the traditional distinction, in Hispanic works, between markers and operators since all grammatical means are regarded to be as operators, namely as traces of a metalinguistic operation activated by the enunciator.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of these operators and their functions, see Section 5.1.

<sup>12</sup> Giuliano and Di Maio (2008) also showed that different pragmatic ways of conceiving interaction across cultures influences the selection of linguistic and conceptual preferences.

### 3. Data collection method

#### 3.1. The participants

The participants of our investigation are Italian and Spanish native speakers, Italian learners of Spanish and Spanish speakers of Italian (20 subjects for each group).

All Italian native speakers come from Naples; all Spanish native speakers come from Madrid. Both groups live and were interviewed in their own towns.

As to learners of Italian, some of them were ERASMUS students in Naples, a few others work and live in this same city. Learners of Spanish are students of Spanish language and literature – most of whom had an ERASMUS stay in Spain – or university professors of these same subjects in Italy (just three of them). The competence in L2 of both groups of learners is advanced or very advanced (C1 and C2 levels), which has been ascertained by the certifications (Spanish DELE; Italian CILS) that they had received. Subjects of all four groups have or are completing a university education; a few of them have a PhD.

#### 3.2. The stimulus

We collected narrative data using the video clip *The Finite Story*, created by Dimroth (2006). The story is about three men, Mr Blue, Mr Green and Mr Red, living in three different flats but in the same building, which one night catches fire. The clip involves a non-prototypical information flow, since referential maintenance is continually alternated with contrasts<sup>13</sup> with respect to entities, events, time spans and sentence polarity; it is subdivided into several segments, the content of which is illustrated in Table 1.

The clip was proposed to each participant of the investigation in a progressive way, namely introducing a stop after each scene; for each stop the participant had to tell what he had seen.

We will focus on two passages of the story, that – following Dimroth *et al.* (2010) – we shall call *information structures I* and *II* (IS I and IS II) for reasons of analysis, and that correspond to the scenes commented on in Section 1.3. Each IS is repeated two or three times during the story (they are in bold in Table 1).

For Structure I (segments 9 and 26), speakers have to convey that a situation applying to the first two characters does not apply to the third one, since we have a change in the entity domain (that is to say the domain of the protagonists), an opposite polarity (with respect to the polarity of a previous action) but the maintenance of a predicate (namely a type of process mentioned before); for this structure speakers can either mark the contrast on the protagonist (the entity level) or highlight the change of polarity (see Examples 1, 3a and 3b in Section 2.2).

<sup>13</sup> We shall adopt the definition of the notion of contrast proposed by Umbach (2004), which is based on comparability presupposing both similarity and dissimilarity.

Nr	Film segment	IS vs. antecedent segment	Example utterances with corresponding IS marking
1/2	Introduction protagonists / flats		
3/4/5	Mr Blue going to bed, sleeping; Mr Green going to bed, sleeping; Mr Red going to bed, sleeping		
6	Fire on the roof		
7/8	Mr Green sleeping; Mr Red sleeping		
9	Mr Blue not sleeping	I: Different TT, different TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 03/04)	<i>Solo il signor Blu si sveglia / il Signor Blu è l'unico / il primo che si sveglia</i> ('Only Mr Blu wakes up / Mr Blue is the only one / the first one who wakes up') <i>El hombre de azul Sí se levanta / Sí QUE se levanta</i> ('The Blue man yes jumps / DOES wake up')
11	Mr Blue calling fire brigade		
12	Fireman in bathroom, not answering		
18	Fireman answering the phone	II: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 12)	<i>Questa volta / alla fine il pompiere risponde</i> ('this time / finally Mr Blue answers'); <i>Ahora el bombero Sí QUE contesta al teléfono / El bombero al final contesta</i> ('Now the fireman DOES answer / The fireman finally answers')
22	Arrival of fire engine		
24	Rescue net: Mr Green not jumping		
25	Mr Red not jumping		
26	Mr Blue jumping	I: different TT, different TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 24/25)	<i>Il signor Blu invece / al contrario salta</i> ('Mr Blue instead / conversely jumps') <i>El Señor Azul Sí QUE salta / En cambio el Señor Azul salta</i> (Mr Blue DOES jump / Conversely Mr Blue jumps)
27	Mr Green jumping	II: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 24)	<i>El de verde ahora acaba saltando</i> (The Green one now ends up jumping')
28	Mr Red not jumping		
29	Mr Red jumping	II: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 28)	
31	The happy end		

Table 1\*

The *Finite Story*: information structure in segments selected for analysis.<sup>14</sup>

\*The table illustrates just the segments our analysis is concerned with.

<sup>14</sup> The table illustrates the linguistic means available in Spanish, Italian and English since we shall refer to it in the following sections as well. For the acronyms and abbreviations their meaning is as follows: TT: Topic Time, i.e. the time span for which an event is valid; TE: Topic Entity, i.e. one of protagonists when topicalized; POL: polarity; PRED: predicate

As to the second structure (segments 18, 27 and 29 in Table 1), one of the protagonists accepts doing something he had refused before, so speakers can either mark the change of polarity or the temporal shift. As a matter of fact, the temporal shift linking devices are crucial for the second information structure since, ideally, they are the only alternative to the polarity change markings that speakers can use to mark the contrast (see examples 2, 4a and 4b in *ibid.*).

### 3.3. The languages involved in our study

The languages involved in our study are Italian and Spanish; the latter in particular has not been considered by any of the previously existing studies about *The Finite Story* experiment, either as L1 or L2.

Confronting Italian and Spanish, we can state that neither of these two languages has a highly specialized group of assertive means at its disposal such as the ones available for the German or Dutch speaker (see Section 2.2). As far as prosodic contrastive stress is concerned, it can be exploited to mark information structure in both Romance and Germanic languages, but intonational prominence plays a greater role in Germanic languages. A contrast on a finite light verb (auxiliary, copula) seems, actually, very uncommon in Romance languages – as Turco *et al.* (2012, 2015) have confirmed –, but it is not impossible, even though still rare, on a finite lexical verb (see Sp. *Al final el señor Verde SALta*, possible in Italian as well). The other possible highlighting assertion marking for Italian and Spanish speakers is the holophrastic particle *sì* (It. *Signor Blu sì che salta*; Sp. *el Señor Azul sí (que) salta*: 'Mr Blue yes (that) [he] jumps').

## 4. Hypothetical results and research questions

Following the hypothesis of Dimroth *et al.* (2010) about Italian and French and the “Romance way” of expressing cohesion in the *The Finite Story* experiment (see Section 2.2), we can suppose that, in their L1, our native speakers of Spanish will prefer time and entity cohesion means to the ones concerning the highlighting of positive polarity. So, for Information Structure I and the entity contrast, they could use means such as lexical modifiers (Sp. *en cambio, al contrario*: ‘conversely’, ‘instead’) or restrictive particles (Sp. *solo*: ‘only’, ‘just’); for Information Structure II, speakers could prefer the temporal shift to the change of polarity, by marking the former by adverbials such as Spa. *ahora, esta vez* etc. (‘this time’, ‘eventually’).

With respect to Italian L1, our data should confirm the pattern suggested by Dimroth *et al.* (2010).<sup>15</sup> As to the groups of learners, few differences are commonly expected between their data and the ones of the natives by virtue of the similarities existing between Italian and Spanish, an expectation that could nevertheless be betrayed.

Specifically, we shall try to answer the following research questions:

1. are all information units (i.e. entity, polarity, time) marked to contrast information in Spanish or Italian as L1s and L2s?
2. as a consequence of question 1, are native speakers of Spanish and Southern Italian oriented towards a “Romance way” of building textual cohesion?

<sup>15</sup> Our Italian participants come from Naples (Southern Italy), differently from the ones of Dimroth *et al.* (2010), who come from Turin (North of Italy).

3. does transfer from L1 play any role in the learners' narrations?
4. can grammatical or lexical reasons satisfactorily explain the cohesion strategies selected by the participants, or are the communicative needs or expectations of the co-enunciator to be taken into account?

Prosodic aspects will also be tangentially treated but they will not be the focus of our analysis.

## 5. The analysis

### 5.1. The narrations of the reference groups

In this section we shall comment on the results obtained from the narrations of the two reference groups, namely the Spanish and Italian native speakers.

Table 2 illustrates the formal markings that they exploited to mark the two information structures that we selected to study.

With respect to the two structures we decided to focus on (see Sections 3.2 and 2.3), the analysis of the data show that our two groups of participants have recourse to several contrastive strategies but that they share just some of them and not with the same frequency.

In the first strategy, the enunciator focuses on the subject of the predication (one of the protagonist entities); the second strategy points out the relationship between the subject of the predication and the predication itself, namely the notional nexus<sup>16</sup> or assertion; the third strategy highlights the content of the predication and is definitively less frequent with respect to the other ones; the fourth strategy focuses on the time spans; the fifth one is realized by virtue of contrasting adverbs such as It. *invece, al contrario...* and Sp. *en cambio, contrariamente* etc.. It is important to notice that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> strategies belong to an "assertion oriented" perspective<sup>17</sup> (see *Introduction*).

In what follows, we give examples for the first strategy both for Italian and Spanish; this strategy is concerned with both structures I and II, but it is actualised by different means since the situations instantiated involve either several characters (IS I) or the same one (IS II):

- (5) IS I, Italian L1:  
Il Signor Blu è l'unico che si sveglia  
'Mr Blue is the only one who wakes up'
- (6) IS I, Spanish L1:  
El vecino, el señor Azul, éste sale por su ventana y se da cuenta que la parte izquierda del tejado está empezando a arder  
'The neighbor Mr. Blue *this one* leans out of his window and realizes that the left side of the roof is starting to catch fire'

<sup>16</sup> As Culioli (1990, p. 69) states it, notions are "a complex bundle of structured physico-cultural properties and should not be equated with lexical items"; in other words, notions are the mental representation that the enunciator has of a given thing so they do not correspond to the representation of that thing in the extra-linguistic world nor to the linguistic signs referring to it. As a result, a notional nexus is the representation of the relationship between two notions.

<sup>17</sup> In the tables we shall refer to the assertion oriented strategies by *AO* and to the non-assertion oriented ones by *Non AO*.

IS I	Means	Spanish L1	Italian L1	IS II	Spanish L1	Italian L1
Strategy I Non AO	strong/d monstr. pronouns	El señor Azul éste (1)	-	Strategy I Non AO	-	-
	cleft sentences	-	è l'unico che (3), è il primo a (1)		-	-
	particles	-	Solo (2)		También (6)	Anche (21), Uguualmente (1)
	total	1 (5%)	6 (27%)		6 (19,5%)	22 (50%)
Strategy II AO	particles	Sí [que] (14)	-	Strategy II AO	Sì [que] (6)	-
	total	14 (80%)	0 (0%)		6 (19,5%)	-
Strategy III AO	stressed VP	SALta (1)	-	Strategy III AO		SALta (1)
	total	1 (5%)	0 (0%)		0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Strategy IV Non AO	Adverbs	-	Finalmente (2), alla fine (2)	Strategy IV Non AO	Al final (10), Ahora (5), Finalmente (6), Esta vez (5), Por fin (4), Al fin (1)	Questa volta (11) Finalmente (4), Alla fine (6)
	Verbal Periphrasis				Acabar + GER (1)	-
	total	0 (0%)	4 (19%)		27 (61%)	21 (47%)
Strategy V Non AO	adverbs	En cambio (1) Al contrario (1)	Invece (11), Mentre (1)	Strategy V Non AO	-	-
	total	2 (10%)	12 (54%)		0 (0%)	0 (0%)
total markings		18	22	total markings	44	44

Table 2  
Results for Information Structures I and II: native speakers.

For IS I, the Italian native speaker employs the expression *è l'unico che...* ('(he)'s the only one who...'; see Example 5), the restrictive particles *solo*, *solamente* ('only, just': 'just Mr Blue...') and the adjective *primo* ('the first one'), signalling by that that a specific character behaves differently from the other ones; in Spanish, the attention for a protagonist is conveyed by the demonstrative *éste* (see Example 6).

For IS II, the contrast on the entity is realized by additive means (It. *anche*, *ugualmente*; Sp. *también*) by both groups of speakers, since in this case the same character finally does something he did not do before; in Italian, nevertheless, the addition strategy is more frequent. Here are some passages:

- (7) IS II, Italian L1:  
 Anche il Signor Rosso decide di saltare  
 'Mr Red also decides to jump'
- (8) IS II, Spanish L1:  
 Al final el Señor Rojo salta también  
 'At last also Mr Red jumps'

For the second strategy, Spanish native speakers have recourse to *sí* or *sí que* to highlight the relationship given by the notional nexus; such strategy is never exploited by Italian participants even though they have the same formal means at their disposal (*sì* and *sì che*). Spanish speakers use the strategy in question for both structures I and II. Here are some examples:

- (9) IS II, Spanish L1:  
 Hay fuego dentro de la casa del azul y él *sí* se tira  
 'There is fire in the house of Mr Blue and he *yes* jumps'
- (10) IS II, Spanish L1:  
 Y el señor Azul *sí que* se ha dado cuenta  
 'And Mr Blu *yes that* has realized'

Spanish *sí* is a marker of general validation of the predicative relationship.<sup>18</sup> As to the operator *que*, it refers back to something stated previously so, as a result, when it is combined with the operator *sí*, that creates a grammaticized structure comparable to the thematic value of the English auxiliary *do*<sup>19</sup> (*Mr Blue does jump*) but also that of Ger. *doch* and Du. *toch, wel* (see Section 2.2).

As far as the third strategy is concerned, it consists of a prosodic accent on the finite lexical verb, both in Italian and Spanish, for both the first and second structures, but it is very rare:<sup>20</sup>

- (11) IS I, Italian L1:  
 ci sono già fiamme nelle stanze e lui non PUO' dire di no per non saltare e allora *SALta*  
 'there are already some flames in the rooms and he CANnot say no for not jumping and saving himself so he *JUMps*'
- (12) IS I, Spanish L1:  
 Y cuando lo intentan con el señor Azul como el fuego está en su casa éste *SALta*  
 'And when they try with Mr. Blue since the fire is in his house this one *JUMps*'

The selection of the second or third strategies depends on the expectations that the enunciator and the co-enunciator develop about the notional nexus (see Section 5.1).

Concerning the fourth strategy (time spans), it appears both in Italian and Spanish groups of narrations and is exploited both for IS I and IS II by Italian speakers but only for IS II by Spanish speakers:

<sup>18</sup> By *sí* the enunciator confirms the predicative nexus of his co-enunciator in a general way and without any expectation, namely he just states that he will take it into consideration and that from then on it is part of their common knowledge (see also Section 5.1).

<sup>19</sup> For an overview of the thematic value of the operator *do* see Gagliardelli (1999, p. 117).

<sup>20</sup> For contrasting stress on the finite lexical verb, auxiliary or copula (*verum focus*), see Notes 7 and 8.

- (13) IS II, Italian L1:  
Il signor Verde *alla fine* salta // Anche il Signor Rosso *finalmente* salta  
'Mr Green in the end jumps // Mr Red too finally jumps'
- (14) IS II, Spanish L:  
El señor Verde *al final* salta // *Por fin* el señor Rojo salta también  
'Mr Green finally jumps // In the end Mr Red jumps as well'

Differently from Italian, Spanish speakers also exploit the periphrasis *acabar + gerundive*:

- (15) IS II, Spanish:  
El de rojo aunque tiene las llamas en la habitación se niega a saltar // siguen insistiendo y el de rojo *acaba saltando*  
'The red one even though has flames in his flat does not want to jump // they insist on and the red one ends up jumping'

As to the fifth strategy, it consists of contrasting adverbs or adverbial expressions (only structure I for both groups of natives) able to oppose both entities and polarities at the same time, as it is shown in Examples 16 and 17:

- (16) IS I, Italian L1:  
Il Signor Rosso *invece* si sveglia e si affaccia alla finestra  
'Mr Red instead wakes up and leans out of the window'
- (17) IS I, Spanish L1:  
*En cambio* el Señor Azul al haber fuego en su propia habitación tiene miedo a quemarse y salta  
'Conversely, Mr Blue having fire in his own flat is afraid of getting burned and jumps'

The Spanish language has at its disposal two operators which are comparable to Engl. *do*, Ger. *doch* and Du. *toch/wel* in some of their functionings, namely *sí* and *sì que*.<sup>21</sup> A perfect correspondence between operators of different languages is often impossible; a correspondence of operations is nevertheless possible.

Sp. *sì* is a general operator that validates the notional nexus and, consequently, the predicative relationship (see also Note 16):

- (18) A: Has comprado lo que te pedí?  
'Have you bought what I asked you?'  
B: Sí  
'Yes'

By *sí* the enunciator only validates the predicative relationship that follows

<Tú – comprar lo que te pedí>  
'You – to buy what I asked you'

As Solís (2013) maintains, the operator *sí* simply indicates that a certain predicative relationship belongs to the previous knowledge of the enunciator, who by means of this operator – deprived of any expectation – is just confirming the information questioned about and declaring that he is acquainted with it. So, in order for *sí* to accomplish the same thematic function of Engl. *do* (for which see Gagliardelli 1999), it must be combined with

<sup>21</sup> As far as we know no work about the enunciative distinction of *sí* and *sì que* is available at the moment.

the operator *que*, which refers back to something already talked about or implied. As a matter of fact, the most used strategy by Spanish speakers is *sì que* (see Section 5.1):

- (19) IS I and II, Spanish L1:  
El Señor Rojo no se tira por la ventana // tampoco el Señor Verde // el Señor Azul *sí que* se tira  
'Mr Red does not jump through the window // Neither does Mr Green // Mr Blue *yes that* jumps = does jump'

In (19), the negative relationship:

<Señor Rojo/Verde – NO – tirarse por la ventana  
'Mr Red/Green – NOT – to jump through the window'

is corresponded by the relationship:

<Señor Azul – SÍ QUE – tirarse por la ventana>  
'Mr Blue – YES THAT – to jump through the window'

The two previous *no* (<Señor Verde – NO – tirarse por la ventana> and Señor Rojo – NO – tirarse por la ventana>) could produce an expectation for the co-enunciator inducing him to think that the third character will do the same, and as a result the enunciator marks the change of polarity by *sí que*; in doing so there is nothing special of course, nevertheless the selection of *sí que* is what our interest focused on. It is also possible to simply have recourse to a positive relationship but that would not take into account the previous perturbation of the notional nexus.<sup>22</sup>

## 5.2. The narrations of the learners

Tables 3 and 4 below illustrate the results for our two groups of learners with respect to the information structures studied.

The tables show that learners exploit all the five strategies commented on in Section 4.1 (the periphrasis *acabar + gerundive* is nevertheless missing).

As to Italian L2 of Spanish speakers, the most relevant result is concerned with the recourse to the second strategy, namely the use of the particle *sì* – both for the first and second information structures – to highlight the polarity change, which never happens in the retellings in Italian L1. Here are some examples:

- (20) IS I, Italian L2:  
Blu *sì* salta  
'Mr Blue does jump [but the other ones did not]'
- (21) IS I, Italian L2:  
Il Signor Azzurro *sì* si alza  
'Mr Blue does wake up [but the other ones did not]'

<sup>22</sup> When the notional nexus is not accepted by the co-enunciator, the enunciator is forced to intervene by commenting on the relationship: this relationship is often defined as “perturbation of the notional nexus”.

IS I	Means	Spanish L1	Spanish L2	Italian L1	Italian L2
Strategy I Non AO	strong/demonst. pronouns	El signor Azul éste (1)	-	-	-
	cleft sentences	-	El unico que (1), El primero que (4)	È l'unico che (3), È il primo a (1)	L'unico che (1), Per primo (1)
	particles	-	Sólo (2)	Solo (2)	Soltanto(1)
	total	1 (5%)	7 (29%)	6 (27%)	3 (15%)
Strategy II AO	particles	sí [que] (14)	sí [que] (5)	-	sì (5)
	total	14 (80%)	5 (21%)	0 (0%)	5 (24%)
Strategy III AO	stressed VP	SALta (1)	-		-
	total	1 (5%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Strategy IV Non AO	Adverbs	-	Ahora (1), Al final (1), Esta vez (1), Ya (2), Luego (1), Por fin (1)	Finalmente (2), Alla fine (2)	Finalmente (1), Alla Fine (1), Già (3), Ormai (2)
	total	0 (0%)	7(29%)	4 (18%)	7 (33%)
Strategy V Non AO	adverbs	Al contrario (1), En cambio (1)	Al contrario (1), En cambio (3), En contra (1)	Invece (11), , Mentre (1)	Invece (6)
	total	2 (10%)	5 (21%)	12 (55%)	6 (28%)
total markings	X (100%)	19	24	22	21

Table 3  
Results for the Information Structure I: learners vs. natives.

IS II	Means	Spanish L1	Spanish L2	Italian L1	Italian L2
Strategy I Non AO	particles	También (6)	También (12), Igualmente (1), Sólo (1)	Anche (21) Ugualmente (1)	Anche (11) Pure (7)
	total	6 (13,5%)	14 (22%)	22 (50%)	18 (35%)
Strategy II	particles	sì [que] (6)	sì [que] (7)	-	Sì (1)
	total	6 (13,5%)	7 (11%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
Strategy III AO	stressed VP	-	SALta (1)	SALta (1)	RISPONde (1)
	total	0 (0%)	1 (1,5%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Strategy IV Non AO	adverbs	Al final (10), Ahora (5), Finalmente (6), Esta vez (5), Por fin (4), Al fin (1)	Al final (17), Ahora (7), Finalmente (2), Esta vez (7), Por fin (3), Después (1), Luego (2)	Alla fine (6), Questa volta (11), Finalmente (4)	Alla fine (16), Questa volta (2), Finalmente (5), Ormai (2), Adesso (7)
	Verbal Periphrasis	acabar + GER (1)	-	-	-
	total	32 (73%)	39 (65,5%)	21 (48%)	32 (61%)
Strategy V Non AO		-	-	-	-
	total	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
total markings	X (100%)	44	61	44	52

Table 4  
Results for Information Structure II: learners vs. natives.

Such examples sound quite strange to an Italian native speaker. In the Italian of native adults, the employment of the adverb *sì* is linked to strongly marked pragmatic contexts, especially to dialogues as in the following, where an enunciator opposes his opinion to that of a co-enunciator:

- (22) A: Giulio non mangia la carne  
 ‘Giulio does not eat meat’  
 B: Ma *sì che* la mangia!  
 ‘he DOES eat it’

As the passage shows, It. *sì* goes along with *che* in order to correct a specific expectation by the co-enunciator, similarly to what we remarked for Sp. *sí que* in Section 4.1.<sup>23</sup> The use of *sì* by itself to simply indicate that a certain predicative relationship belongs to the previous knowledge of the enunciator is, conversely, quite unusual in Italian.

So, for learners of Italian, traces of transfer from Spanish show up in the polarity change domain.

Nevertheless, Table 3 above also demonstrates that our learners of Italian have identified and exploited the means *l’unico che* (‘the only one who’) and *per primo* (‘the first’) for IS I (in 4.1 we described these devices as belonging to the domain of the first strategy), that our Spanish reference group never employs.

As to the learners of Spanish, they seem to master the polarity assertion markings (second strategy), but it is interesting to notice that just three participants employ them<sup>24</sup> (in Spanish L1, these same markings are distributed among all of the informants), which could be due to the absence of this strategy in Italian L1. Here are two passages:

- (23) IS I Spanish L2:  
 Entonces se ponen por debajo de la ventana del señor Azul... y el señor Azul *sí que* se tira por la ventana y se salva  
 ‘Afterwards [the firemen] go under the window of Mr Blue... and Mr Blue does jump out of the window and is saved’
- (24) IS II Spanish L2:  
 Y vuelve a llamar... a los bomberos que ahora *sí que* han contestado  
 ‘and he goes back to call... the firemen who now do answer’

Transfer from Italian L2 also emerges from the means that this group of learners selects to highlight the entity level (first strategy), for which no one uses Spanish demonstratives such as *éste* but rather the Spanish formal equivalents of the L1 expressions *l’unico che*, *il primo che* (see both tables above), as in the following passage:

- (25) IS I, Spanish L2:  
 Y el tío azul es *el único* con un poquito más de coraje y se tira  
 ‘the Blue guy is *the only one* with a bit of courage and he jumps’

<sup>23</sup> With respect to a sample of 80 Italian native narrations based on The Finite Story by children and adults, Giuliano (2012b) has demonstrated that just one speaker exploits the expression *sì che*, and that happens at the age of seven and with an intonation and a facial expression of great astonishment (since the young speaker did not expect the third protagonist of the story to do something different from the other two); as a result, Giuliano interprets the use of *sì che* as a childish narrative feature.

<sup>24</sup> With respect to all of the other phenomena analysed, the occurrences are to be understood as distributed among several participants and not just a minority of them.

As far as the third strategy (prosodic accent on lexical finite verbs) is concerned, Tables 3 and 4 show that both groups of learners exploit it but as rarely as in Spanish and Italian L1s (just 1 occurrence for each group of subjects).

The fourth and the fifth strategies (temporal expressions and adverbs of contrasts), instead, are more frequent in the L2s in question, as otherwise happens in the narrations of the reference groups as well.

Overall, both groups of learners have identified some features of the L2 textual perspective, which is certainly favoured by the genetic closeness of Italian and Spanish. Nevertheless, some textual fragilities still show up.

## 6. Discussion

An answer to the first and second of our research questions with respect to the reference groups (are all information units – entity, polarity, time – marked to contrast information in Spanish or Italian as L1s; are native speakers of Spanish and of Southern Italian oriented towards a “Romance” way of building textual cohesion?) is given in what follows.

Despite the typological and genetic closeness between Italian and Spanish, our native speakers of these two languages show some relevant differences with respect to the cohesive strategies that they adopt during *The Finite Story* experiment. The most significant distinction is concerned with what we defined as the *second strategy*, for which the enunciator highlights the positive assertion. This strategy is completely lacking in the Italian narrations but very much present in the Spanish ones. So, for Southern Italian, our results confirm what Dimroth *et al.* (2010) have already maintained for their Northern Italian data, namely the non-assertion-oriented character of this language (see Section 2.2); for Spanish, never investigated before, our narrations push us to state, unexpectedly, that it is assertion oriented despite the lack of a highly specific repertoire of lexical means or grammaticized devices to focus on positive polarity.

As to our third research question (does transfer from L1 play any role in the learners' narrations?), the narrations of the two groups of learners show traces of transfer from L1, although their competence in L2 is advanced or very advanced. As we showed in 4.2, the domains mostly influenced by transfer are concerned with polarity for the Spanish learners of Italian and with entities for the Italian learners of Spanish. Both groups of learners seem to have acquired some modalities of building textual cohesion in L2 but not others or anyway they do not exploit them as much as the native speakers.

The second part of our first research question (are all information units – entity, polarity, time – marked to contrast information in Spanish or Italian as L2s?) is essentially concerned with the polarity level. In particular, we can ask why some Italian learners manage to acquire the Spanish polarity highlighting markings; but we must also reflect on the fact that Spanish speakers do not employ those same markings in Italian L2. The Spanish structure *sì (que)* is a quite perceptible and frequent structure in Spanish L1 input (see Corpus del Español; CREA), a reason which could explain its employment by some very advanced Italian learners. Nevertheless, this happens just for three participants out of twenty (in Spanish L1, conversely, it is distributed among all of the informants), which means that:

1. Italian learners do not feel the change of polarity is as significant as Spanish natives do;

2. 70% of Italian learners exploit L1 strategies, as is reflected by the frequent use of temporal expressions, additive means, generic contrastive adverbs and the expressions *él unico que, él primero que*.

As to the employment of the polarity markings in Italian L2, though Italians do not normally exploit them, the use of *sì che* (= Sp. *sì que*) is not impossible – as we saw in 4.1 –, which probably does not furnish strict evidence to Spanish learners to avoid it; otherwise, the existence in Italian of formally equivalent means does not help to prevent mistakes in Italian L2 (see the concept of *transfer to somewhere* by Andersen 1983).

Now, in Slobin's *Thinking for Speaking Theory* (see, among other works, Slobin 1987 and 2003) a speaker adopts a perspective when producing a text which reflects how his mind has been moulded since early childhood *via* his/her mother tongue. This same perspective is resistant to restructuring and our L2 data confirms that, as otherwise many other studies have done. The advanced adult learner masters the sentence grammar in L2 but he/she still has trouble with the "grammar of the text", namely the grammar of discourse.

Giuliano (2012a) has shown that the availability of assertive highlighting polarity means is not a guarantee for their high usage frequency, since English native speakers do not use the *do* auxiliary as often as they could in the *The Finite Story* experiment, which pushed the author to define English as a non-assertion-oriented language. Conversely, our present study shows that Spanish native speakers frequently highlight the polarity level although they do not have a range of highly specific means to do that but just the generic assertive adverb *sì* (see, by contrast, Engl. *do* auxiliary; Ger. *doch/schon/wohl*; Du. *toch, wel*). Now, in an acquisitional perspective, Italian learners of Spanish and Spanish learners of Italian do not have to learn a new combination of concepts and formal means with respect to their L2 since they *have* those same concepts and means in their mother tongue (see It. *sì e sì che*); as a consequence, the grammatical/lexical explanation is not able to justify the reason why some formal patterns are frequently exploited or not independently from their highly specific (see Engl *do* auxiliary) or general (Sp. *sì*) function. An alternative explanation is needed and we can find it in the enunciative framework that we adopted for our analysis.

Concerning our last research question (can grammatical or lexical reasons satisfactorily explain the cohesion strategies selected by participants, or are the communicative needs of the co-enunciator to be taken into account?), from the point of view of the enunciative perspective, learners of an L2 have an more difficult task than the one suggested by the several works on perspectivation: on the one hand, they certainly have to identify the most grammaticized or lexicalized concepts in a given language and the formal means associated with them; on the other hand, they must also correlate these concepts/forms with the *cultural and pragmatic habits* presently employed by the speakers of a given language such as the *frequency of use*, the *exact pragmatic nuances* and the *textual pertinence*.

The pragmatic habits *seem to strongly guide* native speakers' choices in the construction of a specific textual cohesion both *in absentia* or *presentia* of specific grammatical or lexical phenomena. Learners of Spanish, for instance, have to learn that by means of the operator *sí* the Spanish L1 speaker states and validates that the relationship between the subject of the utterance and the predicate is part of his/her knowledge and that he/she wants to share that with his listener by confirming it to him/her; conversely, the operator *sì que* (like the English operator *do*) is used not only to validate the relationship but also to confirm or simply to assert that the relationship has got a positive polarity when the negotiation of the information can be controversial. These two concepts and formal

means are not unknown to Italian learners of Spanish, and yet, in their mother tongue, they exploit them only in pragmatically strongly marked contexts.

Our theoretical framework is *enunciative* but also *psycholinguistic* (see Section 2.1), and as such it is not opposed to the framework proposed by the several authors working on perspective (most of them employing the *Quaestio* Theory) but rather integrative with respect to the latter. From a psycholinguistic point of view, the *Quaestio* is a conceptual scheme forged by the formal means made available by a specific language, means which push the native speakers of that language to make special choices both on the grammatical and content levels when building textual cohesion. Spanish speakers select a perspective oriented towards polarity contrasts by means of the general marker *sí*, combined with *que* when highlighting a possible controversy; this cohesive orientation cannot, nevertheless, be justified by a strong grammaticized or lexicalized process of the assertion perspective as seems to be the case for Dutch and German. Conversely, the presence in modern English of the *do* auxiliary should theoretically make the recourse to the contrast of polarity very frequent, which does not happen in the The Finite Story experiment. In our opinion, the solution to this apparent dilemma can be found in a larger conception of the *Quaestio* model, according to which the internal *Quaestio* is shaped not only by grammatical and lexical processes (the *do* auxiliary is certainly a more specific grammaticized phenomenon than the generic *sí*) but also by the more or less unconscious decisions that *enunciators* take by virtue of their *communicative needs* and the *pragmatic habits* (among these the frequency of use and the textual pertinence) of the community of speakers they belong to.

## 7. From the acquisitional results to the general linguistic theory

In this study we analysed narrations by speakers of Italian and Spanish, natives and learners, from the viewpoint of textual cohesion. The first interesting result is concerned with the perspective selected by Spanish speakers: this perspective preferentially highlights the assertion nexus or the predicate content (polarity contrast), so their narrations sound “assertion oriented”, though more data are certainly necessary to sustain this proposal. The highlighting of the polarity contrast in Spanish is certainly a highly unexpected result according to the typological patterns proposed by Dimroth *et al.* (2010), where Dutch and German are described to be “assertion-oriented languages” in opposition to Italian and French (see Section 2.3). These authors’ theory is rightly supported by what they observe for The Finite Story narrations in the Germanic languages that they have investigated (German and Dutch), and for which the strategies concerned with the highlighting of positive assertion (by lexical means or the prosodic accent on the finite verb), for IS I, take over 47% of all the strategies exploited for German retellings and 92% for Dutch retellings vs 14% for French narrations and 0% for the Italian ones; for IS II percentages around 60% are observed both for German and Dutch but 0% for Italian and French. Giuliano (2012a) nevertheless observes a very different result for The Finite Story narrations of English native speakers, in which the percentages of strategies highlighting the positive assertion are 20% for IS I e 7% for IS II.

Now, the comparison between the five languages just commented on and our retellings in Spanish L1 pushes us to state that the typological, Romance and Germanic patterns proposed by Dimroth *et al.* – though acceptable for some Romance and Germanic languages – cannot work as is – as otherwise happens for other phenomena as well (see also Giuliano, Di Maio 2008) –, but they must be understood as a *continuum* (as Giuliano 2012a had already suggested).

We also think that the patterns of different textual cohesion observable across languages should be explained by *a multifactorial theory*. As a matter of fact, grammatical and lexical phenomena cannot explain our results for Spanish patterns of textual cohesion with respect to the Italian and French ones, nor is it possible to justify the scarce use of Engl. *do* auxiliary with respect to the over-exploitation of Ger. *doch* and Du. *toch, wel*. None of the three Romance languages investigated has a highly specific repertoire of highlighting assertive markings, and yet Spanish speakers focus on the polarity level when building textual cohesion; all the three Germanic languages studied have highly specific grammaticized means to emphasize the polarity level but the speakers of German and Dutch exploit them much more frequently than the speakers of English. These apparent inconsistencies can be resolved if we adopt an enunciative interpretation of the data, by virtue of which the cultural and pragmatic habits carried on by the speakers of a given language are seen as much central and explicative as the grammatical/lexical devices.

**Authorship:** The study was jointly conceived and carried out by both authors but, for the requirements of Italian Institutions, we declare Patrizia Giuliano responsible for the introduction and paragraphs 1.1., 1.2, 3, 4.2, 5 and Salvatore Musto for paragraphs 1.3, 1.4, 2, 4.1, 6.

**Bionotes:** Patrizia Giuliano is associate professor for Didactics of Modern Languages and Acquisitional Linguistics. Her interests range from the acquisition of Italian as first and second language to linguistic disadvantages of socio-cultural origin and to the acquisition of foreign languages both in natural and institutional environment.

Salvatore Musto is researcher in Spanish Linguistics. His interests range from the acquisition of Spanish as L2 to synchronic and diachronic pragmatics.

**Authors' addresses:** [patrizia.giuliano@unina.it](mailto:patrizia.giuliano@unina.it); [salvatore.musto@unina.it](mailto:salvatore.musto@unina.it)

## References

- Andersen B. 1983, *Transfer to somewhere*, in Gass S. and Selinker H. (eds.), *Language Transfer in Language Learning*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 177-201.
- Andorno C. and Benazzo S. 2010, *Discourse cohesion and topic discontinuity in native and learner production: changing topic entities on maintained predicates*, in “EUROSLA Yearbook” 10, pp. 92-118.
- Andorno C. and Benazzo S. 2015, *L'acquisition L2 de langues proches : expression de la continuation et de l'itération en français et italien L2*, in Borreguero Zuloaga M. and Gómez-Jordana Ferary S. (eds.), *Marqueurs de Discours dans les Langues Romanes: Une Approche Contrastive*, Limoges, Lambert-Lucas, pp. 424-448.
- Adamczewski H. and Gabilan J.P. 1992, *Les clés de la grammaire anglaise*, Armand Colin, Paris.
- Benazzo S., Andorno C., Interlandi G. and Patin C. 2012, *Perspective discursive et influence translinguistique. Exprimer le contraste d'entité en français et italien L2*, in “Langage, Interaction et Acquisition” 3 [2], pp. 173-201.
- Carroll M., Murcia J., Watorek M. and Bendiscioli S. 2000, *The relevanced of information organisation to second language acquisition studies: the perspective discourse of advanced adult learners of German*, in “Studies in second language acquisition” 22, pp. 87-129.
- Carroll M., von Stutterheim C. and Nüse R. 2004, *The thought and language debate: a psycholinguistic approach*, in Pechman T. and Habel C. (eds), *Multidisciplinary Approaches to Language Production*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, pp. 184-218.
- Carroll M. and Lambert M. 2005, *Crosslinguistic analysis of temporal perspectives in text production*, in Hendricks H. (ed.), *The Structure of Learner Variety*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, pp. 203-230.
- Carroll M., Lambert M., von Stutterheim C. and Rossdeutscher A. 2008, *Subordination in narratives and macrostructural planning: taking a comparative point of view*, in Fabricius Hansen C. and Ramm M. (eds.), *'Subordination' versus 'Coordination' in Sentence and Text*, Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 161-184.
- Carroll M. and von Stutterheim C. 2003, *Typology and information organisation: perspective taking and language specific effects in the construal of events*, in Giacalone Ramat A. (ed.), *Typology and Second Language Acquisition*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, pp. 365-402.
- Carroll M. and Lambert M. 2005, *Crosslinguistic analysis of temporal perspectives in text production*, in Hendricks H. (ed.), *The Structure of Learner Variety*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 203-230.
- Carroll M. and Lambert M. 2006, *Reorganizing principles of information structure in advanced L2s: a study of French and German learners of English*, in Byrnes H., Weger-Guntharp H. and Sprang K. (eds), *Educating for Advanced Foreign Language Capacities*, Georgetown University Press, Washington D. C., USA, pp. 54-73.
- Culioli A. 1986, *Stabilité et déformabilité en linguistique*, in “Etudes de Lettres, Langages et Connaissances”, Losanne, Université de Losanne, pp. 127-134.
- Dimroth C. 2006, *The Finite Story*. Max Planck Institut for Psycholinguistics: [http://corpus1.mpi.nl/ds/imdi\\_browser?openpath=MPI560350%23](http://corpus1.mpi.nl/ds/imdi_browser?openpath=MPI560350%23) (7.12.2017)
- Dimroth C., Andorno C., Benazzo S. and Verhagen J. 2010, *Given claims about new topics. The distribution of contrastive and mantained information in Romance and Germanic languages*, in “Journal of pragmatics” 422, pp. 3328-3344.
- Höhle T. 1992, *Über verum-fokus im Deutschen*, in “Linguistische Berichte” 4, pp. 112-141.
- Gagliardelli G. 1999, *Elementi di grammatica enunciativa della lingua inglese*, Bologna, CLUEB.
- Giuliano P. (2012a), *Contrasted and maintained information in a narrative task: analysis of texts in English and Italian as L1s and L2s*, in “EUROSLA Yearbook” 12, pp. 30-62.
- Giuliano P. (2012b), *The construction of textual cohesion in narrative texts: evidence from different tasks by Italian children from 4 to 10 years old*, in “Linguistica e Filologia” 32, pp. 7-49.
- Giuliano P. and Di Maio L. 2008, *Abilità descrittiva e coesione testuale in L1 e L2: lingue romanze e lingue germaniche a confronto*, in “Linguistica e Filologia” 25, pp. 125-205.
- Gleit D. and Von Stutterheim C. (eds.) 2003, *Linguistics [Perspectives in language production]* 41[5].
- Höhle T. 1992, *Über verum-fokus im Deutschen*, in “Linguistische Berichte” 4, pp. 112-141.
- Klein W. and von Stutterheim C. 1989, *Referential movement in descriptive and narrative discourse*, in Dietrich R. and Graumann C.F. (eds.), *Language Processing in Social Context*, Elsevier Science Publishers B.V., Amsterdam, pp. 39-76.
- Klein W. and von Stutterheim C. 1991, *Text structure and referential movement*, in “Sprache und pragmatik” 22, pp. 1-32.

- Leonetti M. 2009, *Fronting and verum focus in Spanish*, in Dufter A. and Jacob D. (eds.), *Focus and Background in Romance Languages*, Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 155-204.
- Matte Bon F. 1997, *Criterios para el análisis de la lengua desde la perspectiva de la comunicación, Lengua espanyola III*, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona.
- Perdue C., Benazzo S. and Giuliano P. 2002, *When finiteness gets marked: the relation between morpho-syntactic development and use of scopal items in adult language acquisition*, in "Linguistics" 40 [4], pp. 849-890.
- Perdue C. 2007, *L'espressione della finitezza nel bambino e negli apprendenti adulti di L2: una prospettiva interlinguistica*, in Chini M., Desideri P., Favilla M. E. and Pallotti G., *Atti del VI Congresso Internazionale dell'Associazione Italiana di Linguistica Applicata, Napoli 9-10 febbraio 2006*, Perugia, Guerra, pp. 43-63.
- Slobin D.I. 1987, *Learning to think for speaking*, in "Pragmatics" 1 [1], pp. 7-25.
- Slobin D.I. 2003, *Language and thought online: cognitive consequences of linguistic relativity*, in Gentner D. and Goldin-Meadow S. (eds), *Advances in the Investigation of Language and Thought*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 157-192.
- Solís García I. 2013, *La toma de posición del enunciador por medio de los operadores claro, desde luego y por supuesto*, in "ARCHIVUM" LXIII, pp. 348-349.
- Turco G., Dimroth C. and Braun B. 2012, *Intonational means to mark verum focus in German and French*, in "Language and Speech" 56, pp. 460-490.
- Turco G., Dimroth C. and Braun B. 2015, *Prosodic and lexical marking of contrast in L2 Italian*, in "Second Language Research" 31, pp. 465-491.
- Von Stutterheim C. 1999, *How language specific are processes in the conceptualiser?*, in Klabunde R. and von Stutterheim C. (eds), *Conceptual and Semantic Knowledge in Language Production*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Wiesbaden, pp. 153-179.
- Von Stutterheim C. 2003, *Linguistic structure and information organisation. The case of very advanced learners*, in "EUROSLA Yearbook" 3, pp. 183-206.
- Von Stutterheim C. and Klein W. 2002, *Quaestio and l-perspectivation*, in Graumann C.F. and Kallmeyer W. (eds), *Perspectivity and perspectivation in discourse*, Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 59-88.
- Von Stutterheim C., Nüse R. and Murcia Serra J. 2002, *Crosslinguistic differences in the conceptualisation of events*, in Hasselgård H., Johansson S., Behrens B. and Fabricius-Hansen C. (eds), *Information Structure in a Cross-Linguistic Perspective*, Rodopi, Amsterdam/New York, pp. 179-198.
- Von Stutterheim C., Carroll M. and Klein W. 2003, *Two ways of construing complex temporal structures*, in Lenz F. (ed.), *Deictic Conceptualization of Space, Time and Person [Cognitive Linguistics Research]*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 97-133.
- Von Stutterheim C. and Nüse R. 2003, *Processes of conceptualisation in language production*, in "Linguistics" Special Issue: Perspectives in language production, p. 851-881.
- Von Stutterheim C. and Carroll M. 2006, *The impact of grammatical temporal categories on ultimate attainment in L2 learning*, in Byrnes H., Weger-Guntharp H. and Sprang K.A.(eds), *Educating for Advanced Foreign Language Capacities*, Georgetown University Press, Washington D.C., USA, pp. 42-53.
- Umbach C. 2004, *On the notion of contrast in information structure and discourse structure*, in "Journal of semantics" 21, pp. 155-175.