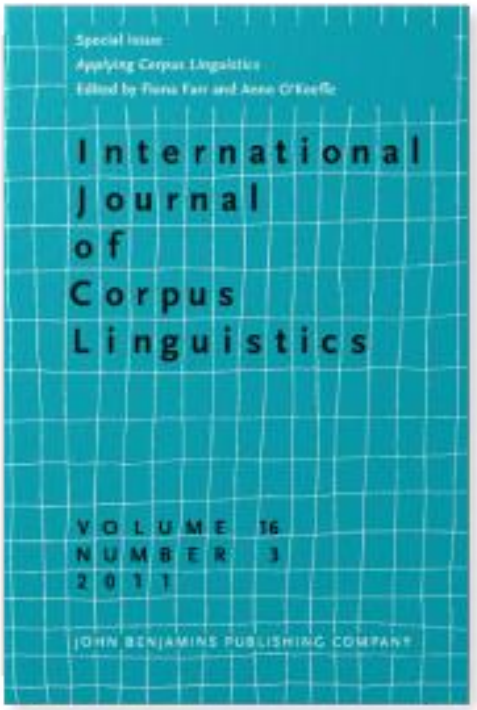

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Bricolage assembling: *CL*, *CA* and *DA* to explore agreement

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This article illustrates the use of spoken corpora for a contrastive study of casual conversation in English and Spanish. It models an eclectic methodology for cross-linguistic comparison at the level of discourse, specifically of exchange structures, by drawing upon analytic resources from corpus linguistics (CL), conversation analysis (CA) and discourse analysis (DA). This combination of perspectives presents challenges and limitations which will be discussed and exemplified through a case study that explores agreement and disagreement sequences. English data have been retrieved from the *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* (SBCSAE; cf. Du Bois et al. 2000, 2003) and Spanish data from *Corpus Oral de Referencia del Español Contemporáneo* (CORLEC). The case study reveals the need for spoken corpora to include complete conversations, discourse annotation, sound files and detailed contextual information. This means a step forward from *corpora of spoken language* to *discourse corpora* and a challenge for CL, CA and DA in the near future.

Keywords: conversation analysis, discourse analysis, corpus annotation, spoken corpora

1. Introduction

Although corpora have been widely used for lexicographic purposes since the 1980's, they are still finding their way into discourse analysis research and the social sciences in general. These areas of knowledge continue to make use of materials obtained through other methods, such as interviews, role plays or data

completion tasks (see, for instance, recent articles in Pütz & Neff-van Aertselaer 2008), mainly because of the difficulties encountered in attempting to obtain whole conversations from corpora collections, which are often accessible through interfaces that only provide a few lines of context for keywords. While some corpora have begun to facilitate free access to whole texts and audio files, there is still a need to make room for methodologies that allow for the alliance of quantitative and qualitative analysis of corpus data. In this vein, the present article explores some of the possible points of contact between corpus linguistics (CL) and two approaches highly nurtured from naturally occurring conversation, that is, conversation analysis (CA) and discourse analysis (DA). It will also illustrate how to apply quantitative analysis to conversational data, and to make cross-linguistic comparisons thereby, by means of a case study that explores the organization of agreement and disagreement sequences in casual conversation in English and Spanish. The English data consist of 450 turns of American English from the *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* (SBCSAE) and the Spanish data contain the same amount of turns from *Corpus Oral de Referencia del Español Contemporáneo* (CORLEC). The theoretical framework of the case study combines CA and 'structural-functional' DA, a label used by Eggins & Slade (1997: 43) to refer to two approaches sharing a common orientation to discourse, that is the Birmingham School and systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Corpus linguistics (CL) guides the collection and analysis of data from spoken corpora by means of quantitative computer-assisted methodology. Qualitative CA and DA results in the mark up of conversations with codes which facilitate CL quantitative analysis and the statistical treatment of data. The use of a text-retrieval program, a typical tool for CL, allows for the testing and validation of hypotheses. Hence, in the "bricolage process" of producing a suitable method of analysis (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 2, Wood & Kroger 2000: 25), CL, CA and DA have been connected, even when there are dividing lines between their cultures. In the following section, the possibilities of an interdisciplinary approach to spoken discourse will be explored.

2. Combining CL, CA and DA to explore spoken discourse

In applying CL to the study of spoken discourse from CA and DA perspectives, it is important to discuss some of their similarities and differences and find the ways in which they may complement one another instead of being considered as irreconcilable approaches. As can be expected, CA (a sociological approach in its origins) and structural-functional DA (a linguistic one) take different stances and apply different methods to the study of conversation. Eggins & Slade (1997: 7) summarise the differences as follows:

> Sociologists ask: "How do we do conversation?", and recognise that conversation tells us something about social life. Linguists, on the other hand, ask "How is language structured to *enable* us to do conversation?", and recognise that conversation tells us something about the nature of language as a *resource* for doing social life.

McCarthy et al. (2002: 66-67) also compare this divergence of interests between systemic functional linguistics and CA: "[...] the focus in systemic functional linguistics on spoken language is on the way that language is organised to enable conversation to work and have the power it does. By contrast, conversation analysis focuses on social life, and conversation is seen as a key to that". In spite of these differences, some work has been done in an attempt to reconcile both approaches. Tsui (1994) integrates CA and DA, and shows that the boundaries between them are not as clear cut as some authors have pointed out (e.g. Levinson 1983, Montgomery 1986, Lee 1987). These authors maintain that linguistic approaches tend to work with a priori theories or models and data are used to confirm them, while the sociological tradition of CA starts analysis with the careful observation of the data, without preconceptions about what may be found. Tsui (1994: 1), however, sets up a framework of analysis as a "two-way process": linguistic concepts are tested out by data which, in turn, "provides the insights and bases for revision of the framework". Hence, the aim is not to prove theories or models, "but rather to facilitate the formalization of observation of regularities exhibited" Tsui (1994: 1). Tsui draws on CA for describing units of conversational interaction (turn, pair, sequence) and complements them with

Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) units (act, move, exchange). This combination results in a rigorous definition and comprehensive taxonomy of discourse acts, which can be identified on the basis of structural location and prospective classification (i.e. utterance classification according to the expected response).[1] Hence, the concept of adjacency pair expands with the inclusion of discourse acts within its boundaries. An adjacency pair of agreement, for instance, may be seen to include two different acts, such as an informative act of assessing plus a discourse act of elicitation of confirmation. Tsui's (1994) taxonomy classifies initiating discourse acts in elicitations, requestives, directives and informatives. Each of these classes is further subdivided into categories by means of very specific and clear criteria, which also inform the definition of responding and challenging acts. Her taxonomy will be further illustrated in the presentation of the present case study with reference to the acts that express agreement and disagreement. Therefore, the contribution from the School of Birmingham together with SFL and its conception of language as a system of choices, is of great importance for the description of conversational processes that develop over long stretches of talk, allowing for consideration of the choices available at various points in conversation. The insights of CA into the description of how we actually engage in conversation facilitate DA's exploration on the ways that language enables us to do conversation. At the same time, DA's orientation towards a comprehensive linguistic description of conversation enables a detailed account of the speakers' choices and management of conversational processes. Research on social life may benefit from a more detailed account of the language as used by social agents, and research on speech may likewise benefit from learning more about the ways of construing social life, which are so pervasive in conversation. Therefore, the combination of CA and DA seems both feasible and productive. The present discussion will now focus on the possibilities to combine these approaches to discourse with CL.

The source of many of the limitations and challenges faced in an attempt to combine CA and DA with CL lies in the constitutive features of these disciplines. McEnery et al. (2006: 111) describe the cultural division between the interests of CL and DA by elaborating on Leech (2000: 678-680):

> while DA emphasizes the integrity of text, corpus linguistics tends to use representative samples; while DA is primarily qualitative, corpus linguistics is essentially quantitative; while DA focuses on the contents expressed by language, corpus linguistics is interested in language per se; while the collector, transcriber and analyst are often the same person in DA, this is rarely the case in corpus linguistics; while the data used in DA are rarely widely available, corpora are typically made widely available.

These cultural differences may explain the frustration felt by discourse analysts when turning to corpora for data and finding out that they do not fit their needs. It seems that a deeper mutual knowledge could lead to a better understanding and cross-fertilisation of approaches. A discussion of these differences and their implications follows here, with reference to the divergent interests of CL and DA quoted above, in an attempt to bridge the gaps between them.

Representativeness is a commonly accepted defining feature of a spoken corpus, as stated by Biber (1993: 243) or Crowdy (1993: 259), and how to achieve it counts as one of the first considerations in constructing a corpus. Demographic sampling has been a broadly adopted approach complemented with text typology criteria, intended to cover many text types "that are produced only rarely by comparison with the total output of all speech producers: for example, broadcast interviews, lectures, legal proceedings […]", as suggested by Crowdy (1993: 259). In order to comply with the text type requirements of a corpus, a word limit is usually to be respected. For instance, the *International Corpus of English* (*ICE-GB*) includes 2,000-word texts classified by genre, from which 90 belong to face-to-face conversation. Considering that in an hour of conversation speakers can produce an average of 8,000 words (Crowdy 1993: 261), the figure of 2,000 words would only represent fifteen minutes of talk. This amount may not be sufficient to explore those conversational processes that need longer to be fully developed, such as the processes involved in the negotiation of agreement, which are the object of interest of the case study in this article. Thus, it seems that the pressure for balance between different text types in spoken corpora may result in the excessive fragmentation of conversations, with negative consequences for

researchers doing CA and DA. Finding a suitable corpus was a difficulty faced when designing the case study presented below. The decision to use *SBCSAE* and *CORLEC* was informed by the fact that both corpora contained a similar amount of words from face-to-face conversations (249,000 and 269,500 respectively), with an average of 4,000 words each, featuring many instances of complete conversational sequences. From this discussion it follows that steps should be taken to ensure that word limits in conversational texts do not result in the chunking of conversational sequences, which may be the object of interest for discourse analysts.

Regarding the qualitative-quantitative dichotomy, the cultural divide could be diminished by observing the advantages of quantitative support for qualitative research. Tsui (1994: 3), quoted above, remarks on the importance of setting up a two-way process of analysis, testing linguistic concepts and models with data, and using data for insights and revision of the framework. Hence, it seems that the qualitative analysis of CA and DA would gain with the support of quantitative analysis which, at the same time, could provide insights for qualitative observations. In this vein, the article by Walsh, Morton and O'Keeffe in the present volume considers the benefits of the combination of CL and CA.

Further consideration of the differences among the disciplines suggests that the interest of CL in language *per se* together with the fact that the collection, transcription and analysis of the data are undertaken by different persons can result in a lack of contextual information in spoken corpora. Discourse and conversation analysts need precise details on speech events (as defined by Hymes 1972), which facilitate text interpretation. Both SBCSAE and CORLEC include information on speech events (setting, participants, frame of events, topics). Participants' details include their sex, age, occupation and relationship to the rest of the participants (i.e. relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc.). However, the description of relationships in these and other spoken corpora could be enhanced by reference to status relations, frequency of contact or level of familiarity, degree of affective involvement and orientation to affiliation. These dimensions of social identity have been developed by DA within an SFL perspective in the work of Poynton (1985), Eggins & Slade (1997) and Martin (2000) and have been

considered for the analysis of the conversations in the case study. As interpersonal relations vary according to these variables, their inclusion in spoken corpora will be of relevance to allow for the exploration of interpersonal meaning.

Although not being present in the collection and transcription of recordings means that discourse analysts have to rely on the information provided by corpus transcribers, one of the outstanding benefits derived from this division of tasks is the amount of time saved. Considering that the orthographic transcription of 1,000 words of face-to-face conversation may take an average of two hours, the transcription of a corpus of 250,000 words may take 500 hours. The degree of detail of the annotation system will increase working hours. Moreover, the time invested in the recordings must also be considered. Although 250,000 words can be contained in 25 hours of sound recordings (as 1 hour of talk may produce an average of 10,000 words), it takes considerably longer to collect them. The fact that speakers do not engage in long conversations at the researcher's will makes it difficult to predict the amount of time needed for their recording, especially if we keep in mind the recommendation of obtaining stretches of conversation with a minimum of 4,000 words.

Regarding differences on data availability, McEnery et al. (2006: 111) remark on the typical availability of corpora versus the rare availability of the data used in DA. Without doubt, the internet is facilitating the distribution of corpora as most of them can be found on the web or accessed from interfaces. Some are available through publishers and others through organizations such as universities or consortiums. For instance, the Linguistic Data Consortium (LDC), which distributes one of the corpora used for the case study, SBCSAE, offers the possibility to acquire corpora of different languages and types (speech, text, video, transcripts, etc.). In the case of CORLEC, the other corpus used for this case study, there is free access to the transcription files through the web page of the University Autónoma, Madrid, where it was compiled. It can also be accessed through the web site of *Real Academia Española* as this corpus has been integrated into CREA (*Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual*) and from the interface at http://davies-linguistics.byu.edu/personal/, although there is no reference to this corpus on this site and its data have simply been merged with

other corpora of Spanish. This shows that interfaces facilitate searches in corpora, even when they are of very limited use for qualitative analysis as practised by DA or CA, as they only allow for the retrieval of keywords and a few lines of context. These disciplines would, however, benefit hugely from the sharing of the data collected by practitioners in their field. Texts (either written or spoken) could be stored on-line by researchers into ever-growing corpora, making the most of the time and effort invested in their collection. In this spirit, the CHILDES database (concerning child language) has grown out of the contribution of over 100 researchers, which means moving forward towards "data sharing", as MacWhinney (2010: 10) observes. As desideratum for the future, I would suggest following this trend and designing a web-based corpus to be continuously grown by researchers' contributions. Apart from audio files and transcripts (in the case of conversational texts) it would be in the interest of the research community that contributors annotated essential information on context and discourse acts for future reference. This basic annotation could be complemented with more fine-grained categories resulting from more delicate analysis. Such annotated collections of transcripts together with audio files, would represent a step forward from *spoken corpora* to what could be called *discourse corpora*. The area of *discourse corpora* can be envisaged as a promising area to be developed in an attempt to include annotation resulting from discourse analysts' research, in the direction of merging CL, CA and DA methods.

3. The negotiation of agreement in English and Spanish conversation: A case study

In the case study presented in the following sections, DA and CA have been combined together with CL for the analysis of sequences containing agreement and disagreement in response to different discourse acts. This study started with the first step in the CA research procedure, that is "locate a potentially interesting phenomenon in the data" (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 71). I had observed the pervasiveness of turns exchanged for the negotiation of agreement in Spanish casual conversation, while recording and transcribing more than 500,000 words for the CORLEC and CCC (*Corpus de Conversación Coloquial*) corpora. Several

phenomena in the organization of turns and their delivery seemed of interest, mainly in relation to politeness and the system of preference. Moreover, a review of the relevant literature (see Section 3.1), together with the contrastive study of Spanish and English conversation suggested cross-cultural differences in those areas, especially in the use of prefaces, overlap and modalization resources. This led to the decision to investigate the linguistic structures realised in sequences produced to negotiate opinions.

3.1. Previous research and theoretical framework

A review of previous research in the expression of agreement in English conversation from a CA perspective (Pomerantz 1975, 1984; Pearson 1984, Goodwin & Goodwin 1987, Sacks 1987, Kakavá 1993, Mori 1999) revealed the connection between the preferred status of agreement and its turn organization without delay devices. Sacks (1987: 58) noted the interaction between agreement and contiguity, and disagreement and non-contiguity: "If an agreeing answer occurs, it [...] occurs contiguously, whereas if a disagreeing answer occurs, it may well be pushed rather deep into the turn that it occupies". As a consequence of the preference for agreement versus disagreement, Pomerantz (1975: 23) observes a general feature of agreements as a whole (compared with disagreements), namely, that they are performed "with a minimization of gap between prior turn's completion and agreement turn's initiation". Thus, agreement is expected to be initiated either at prior turn's completion, with no lapse, or just before prior turn's completion, in slight overlap. Disagreement, on the other hand, is expected after delay devices. However, these assumptions are challenged by conversational data in CORLEC. The several instances of disagreements produced after no delay devices or even in overlap in the Spanish data, made it worthwhile to explore preference structure in agreeing and disagreeing sequences and to test the validity of the above mentioned expectations about their production. Moreover, the fact that the above mentioned studies are not corpus-based may be the reason for their limitation to the structure of adjacency pairs. It also suggests the need to explore negotiating processes that develop over longer conversational sequences with data from spoken corpora. Other corpus-based studies on conversation, such as Aijmer

(1996) and Stenström (1987, 1994), are worth mentioning because of their rigorous empirical investigation of data (from the London-Lund Corpus of spoken English) although they deal with several speech acts and only partly with (dis)-agreement markers. Kotthoff (1993) deals with negotiating processes that develop over conversational sequences but her corpus is limited to discussions that took place during professors' consulting hours. Her study has been crucial for the observation that disputes reverse the normal preference order of friendly interaction and set up a frame of preference for disagreement, instead.

With the exception of Mori (1999), previous research has not explored the lexico-grammatical systems exploited in agreement negotiation. Halliday (1994), Halliday & Matthiesen (2004), as well as discourse analysis practised within an SFL approach (Eggins 1994, Martin 1992 or Eggins & Slade 1997), provide the descriptive framework needed for the study of the lexico-grammatical system intervening in the negotiation of agreement which will be adopted here (i.e. modalization and attitude structures). Another theoretical perspective within DA, which was not adopted in previous research but will be considered here, is politeness theory, as described by Brown & Levinson (1987) and further developed in a more discursive approach in works such as Watts et al. (2005). Politeness theory provides a useful theoretical framework for the study of the ways in which speakers adapt to their interlocutors' needs. Even when it has been severely criticised (for instance Eelen 2001), critiques have not destroyed the model but triggered new trends in research (such as Lakoff & Ide 2005). The theory starts with the assumption that all competent adult members of a society have 'face', consisting of two related aspects: the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (negative face) and the desire to be liked and approved of (positive face). Agreement is one of the discourse acts that satisfies the addressee's need for positive face whereas disagreement threatens it. Consequently, speakers may draw on different linguistic resources to mitigate disagreement, (such as dispreference markers, modalization and other politeness phenomena), which may be developed over long conversational sequences. For this reason, the analysis of whole sequences from spoken corpora together with the combination of CA, DA and CL perspectives may contribute to widening the scope of previous research.

3.2. Aims and hypotheses for the study

This study is aimed at describing and comparing the structures and processes produced to negotiate agreement in casual conversation at both lexico-grammatical and discourse levels in English and Spanish, integrating CL, CA and DA for the analysis of long stretches of conversation from authentic materials included in spoken corpora. The data have been analysed in order to examine the following hypotheses:

(1) Speakers produce functionally equivalent structures with similar frequencies in the negotiation of agreement at lexico-grammatical and discourse levels in English and Spanish conversation. However, a review of the above mentioned literature together with participant observation of both English and Spanish conversation suggest that there could be some differences in the realization of modalization, dispreference markers and politeness strategies.

(2) Tenor influences the speakers' choice of structures in the negotiation of agreement in English and Spanish conversation. Distance between speakers may increase the use of modalization resources, dispreference markers and strategies oriented towards the preservation of both speaker and addressee's positive face. However, English and Spanish might make use of different linguistic resources and in different percentages, as Spanish speakers seem to be more tolerant of disagreement.

3.3. Method and materials for the study

The two corpora used for the study, i.e. SBCSAE and CORLEC, include recordings of natural conversations collected without researcher prompting and transcribed in accordance with CA methodology, which allows for the qualitative analysis of the data. The conversations are also tagged with some conversational features at lexical, syntactic and discourse levels, as explained in Du Bois et al. (1993) and Ballester et al. (1992, 1993), respectively. The annotation in both corpora facilitates quantitative analysis with automatic searches for the tagged features, such as pauses or speech overlap. However, having the specific case study in mind, it was necessary to design a more delicate system of annotation,

including tags for the discourse acts participating in the negotiation of agreement, modalization and attitude resources, preference and dispreference markers, as well as markers of distance and power, details which had been identified as relevant from the literature reviewed. The tag sets will be further illustrated later in this section.

As data for this study, a total of 900 turns of conversation were selected (450 turns of American English from SBCSAE and 450 of Spanish from CORLEC). The main criterion for their selection was that the conversations in both languages were comparable regarding the elements of the speech event (setting and scene, participants, ends, acts, sequence, key, instrumentality, norms and genre) (Hymes 1972), as keeping these variables constant would facilitate the finding of similarities and differences between American English and Spanish. Regarding participants, conversations were selected when the number of participants and their personal relationships were similar in both languages. Relationships have been described marking *status relations* (equal, unequal**),** *affective involvement* (positive, negative, neutral), *contact* (high or low frequency) and *orientation to affiliation* (high, neutral, low), following Eggins & Slade (1997: 52). All these details were considered because they all intervene in the negotiation of distance and power among speakers and are likely to influence the expression of agreement and disagreement as they contribute to the weight of face threatening acts (Brown & Levinson 1987: 76). Table 1 gives contextual information on the speech events in the conversational turns analysed.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Conflictive talk was excluded from the sample, as this type of talk may reverse the preference system, showing preference for disagreement (Kotthoff 1993), which would alter discourse structure and processes.

The procedure for analysis consisted of three stages: (1) location of discourse acts of agreement and disagreement and of the potentially relevant features for analysis in the modalization, attitude and preference systems; (2) formal and functional description of agreement and disagreement sequences

(analysis of the relevant features just mentioned); (3) contrastive analysis of the data in English and Spanish.

In order to facilitate the automatic retrieval of the data, a database was created with *Code-a-Text* (Cartwright 1998) which allows for automatic searches, once different categorical scales of analysis have been created and filled with codes. Codes may consist of names for categories (for instance, epistemic, deontic, dynamic or bulomaic for the scale "modalization"), numerical features (such as 1-2-3 for high, medium or low degrees of certainty) or open-ended comments by the analyst (reference to general referents that co-occur with modal expressions, as an example). These codes facilitate the retrieval of data according to sequential hypotheses within adjacent segments, so the analyst is able to check whether a phenomenon "A" is followed or preceded by "B", for example whether disagreement is preceded by discourse markers. Thus, it will be possible to measure the strength of association between the codes applied to different segments and to obtain statistics in terms of frequencies, means and correlations. The categorical scales coded in the data for this study include the following: discourse acts, modalization and attitude resources, preference and dispreference markers, markers of distance and power, and positive and negative politeness strategies. For illustrative purposes I will describe the tags designed for *discourse acts*, *prefaces* and *attitude resources*.

As said above, the first stage in the procedure for analysis required the definition of the *discourse acts* which count as agreement or disagreement. When turning to CA for this purpose, I could not find a comprehensive model for the analysis and annotation of discourse acts. However, Tsui (1994), provides a taxonomy, within structural-functional DA, which allows for the systematic analysis of whole conversations at all linguistic levels, i.e. register, discourse-semantics and lexico-grammar levels (Eggins 1994: 111-113). Although Tsui's (1994) taxonomy only includes agreement in positive responses to (i) 'assessings' and to (ii) elicitations of the type "elicit: agree", the fact that the present study considers not only the expression of agreement but its negotiation, led to the definition of agreement as a wider category, including also acts of confirmation and acknowledgement, that is, seconds after (iii) "elicit: confirm", (iv) "report:

acknowledge" plus 3rd or 4th moves in follow-ups of (v) 'endorsement', (vi) 'acknowledgement' or (vii) 'concession', produced after responses to acts that expect agreement (see also Santamaría-García 2004, 2005). Hence, Table 2 contains the categorical scale of discourse acts with the code names for acts:

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

The following exchange from SBCSAE illustrates the production of an "assessing: agree" (an assessing followed by agreement). Tsui (1994: 143) defines an 'assessing' as a "[...] kind of assessment which gives judgement or evaluation of an event, state(s) of affairs, or a third party". In the example below Miles' evaluation on someone's speed is followed by Jamie's agreement:

(1) SBCSAE, *Lambada*

MILES: and I guess he really goes fa=st. [<X And X>],

JAMIE: [Yeah].

In acts of elicitation of agreement ("elicit: agree"), the speaker (S) gets the addressee (A) to agree with the assumption that the expressed proposition is self-evidently true. This example from the Spanish data shows Carmen producing an "elicit: agree" to which Rosi agrees:

(2) CORLEC, *Neighbours*

CARMEN: *Y luego pues se hace el humillo, ¿no?*

"And then you get sort of smoke, don't you?"

ROSI: *Se hace el humillo y se queda todo pegajoso.*

"You get sort of smoke and it all gets sticky."

In extract 3, Jamie confirms that the S's assumption in his "elicit: confirm" is correct:

(3) SBCSAE, *Lambada*

MILES: … You … you probably read the same Examiner article [I read].

JAMIE: [Yeah], probably, yeah.

In extract 4, the S produces a report, i.e. a factual account of events or states of affairs. "Its illocutionary intent is to get the addressee to accept what the speaker has reported as a true representation of events or states of affairs" (Tsui 1994: 181). The preferred act after a 'report' is an 'acknowledgement' of the report that can be "in the form of a remark on the reported event or a message-received signal".

(4) SBCSAE, *Lambada*

MILES: And they were talking about how,

... he's teaching [these] cla=sses,

PETE: [Hm].

Agreeing responses may also occur in follow-ups as 'endorsements', 'concessions' and 'acknowledgements'. In endorsements, the speaker "endorses the positive outcome of the interaction" (Tsui 1994: 200). Concessions are follow-ups which accept a negative outcome. Acknowledgements express "that the response has been heard, understood, and accepted, and that the interaction has been felicitous" and are "typically realized by a closed set of items like *okay, right, alright, yeah, oh I see*, or a repetition of the preceding response in low key" (Tsui 1994: 205). Acknowledgements can be produced after positive responses, negative responses and 'temporizations'.[2] In extract 5, Pete acknowledges Jamie's agreement.

(5) SBCSAE, *Lambada*

MILES:[<X That X> boy,

… he's supposed to be awe]some.

JAMIE: Yeah.

... Really fa[=st].

PETE: [Hm].

Negative responses or challenges to the S's assumptions, report, judgement or evaluation will be considered as instances of disagreement.

In order to explore the expression of attitude (Eggins & Slade 1997: 124-125, Martin & White 2005: 52-91) the selected conversations have been tagged with codes for the categorical scale of "attitude", as described in Table 3:

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

Preference structure has been explored according to the categories included in Levinson (1983: 332-334). Preferred and dispreferred turns are marked with this information: (i) overlap, (ii) delays (including pauses, prefaces, repair initiators, insertion sequences), (iii) accounts and (iv) declination components. Prefaces may contain any of the components included in Table 4. Discourse markers have been defined with reference to their meaning, borrowing categories from Brinton (1996), Blakemore (2004), Jucker & Smith (1998), Portolés-Lázaro (1998) and Schiffrin (1987), as explained in Santamaría-García (2005).

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

The tagging of preference structure with codes facilitates, for instance, finding out the percentage of overlaps, pauses and prefaces of each type which are

produced before agreeing as opposed to disagreeing responses. This helps to contrast the qualitative and quantitative findings of the analysis. As this process of tagging is very time-consuming it would be in the interest of analysts to have it incorporated into discourse corpora. Although very specific codes will be dependent on research questions, tagging at the levels of discourse acts and context could be included and made available with corpora to release analysts from this strenuous labour.

3.4. Results of the analysis and discussion

The two hypotheses are supported by the data, as will be illustrated below. Regarding the first one, the data show that speakers produce functionally equivalent structures with similar frequencies in the negotiation of agreement at lexico-grammatical and discourse levels in English and Spanish conversation. However, some differences are found.

At lexico-grammatical level, the data suggest higher exploitation of modalization resources in English. Modalization has been analysed following Halliday (1994: 88-92) who includes modalization (levels of certainty and frequency) together with modulation (from obligation to lower inclination) under the category of modality. However, the rare production of modulation in the data (more typical in exchanges of goods and services) has drawn attention to modalization in this study. Analysis reveals that modalization of different degrees of certainty is more frequent than modalization of frequency and their production rates higher in English than in Spanish. The following example illustrates modalization expressing certainty with the modal *must* in an assessing.

(6) SBCSAE, *Lambada*

MILES: [You **must** have] good stereo.

Cause I feel like I'm hearing --

Extracts (1) and (3) above show more examples of modalization expressing probability in assessings, with *I guess* in (1) and the adverb *probably* in (3), in SBCSAE.

The following extracts show modalization of frequency in English and Spanish, respectively with *sometimes* and *casi* ("seldom"):

(7) SBCSAE, *Actual Blacksmithing*

LYNNE: it's so= gross,

because,

(H) .. **sometimes** if you get one that's been thawed out a little bit,

.. they start really stinking and stuff?

(8) CORLEC, *Neighbours*

CARMEN: *Pero es que en las tiendas* ***casi*** *no te dicen…*

"Anyway, at shops they **seldom** tell you…"

Modalization of different degrees of certainty and frequency is found in 50% of all the initiating acts expecting agreement in the 450 turns selected from SBCSAE for this study, but only in 24% of them in the 450 turns from the CORLEC corpus. Modalization of certainty is present in 35% of the turns expecting agreement in the English data (mainly expressing probability) and modalization of frequency in 15%. In Spanish, modalization of certainty figures in 14% of the turns expecting agreement and that of frequency is also lower, 10%. Likewise, modalization resources are more frequently used in English for acts expressing agreement and disagreement: 33.5% of the turns in agreement in English versus 19.5% in Spanish. The expression of disagreement shows the

percentages of 55% of acts for English and 35% for Spanish. Absence of modalization (i.e. assertion and negation) is, thus, more frequent in Spanish, as represented in Table 5.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

Regarding the expression of attitude (Eggins & Slade 1997: 124-125; Martin & White 2005: 42-91), the results show a similar use of the categories of appreciation, affect and judgement for both languages but differences in the use of amplification resources. Mitigation is more frequent in English. It is present in 38.5% of the acts intervening in the negotiation of agreement versus 12% in Spanish. Conversely, enrichment is more frequent in Spanish (36% against 13.5% in the English data), as shown in Table 6.

INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

Extract 9 illustrates mitigation in English with vague language, *like*, and modalization of frequency, *sometimes*, in the same assessing act. Extract 10 illustrates amplification in Spanish by means of intensifiers:

(9) SBCSAE, *Book about Death*

PAMELA: (H) .. It's like **sometimes** you go through things

(10) CORLEC, *Neighbours*

ROSI: *A mí es que no me gusta nada. ¿A ti te gusta?*

"Me, I don't like it at all. Do you like it?"

MARÍA: *Nada.*

"Not at all!"

CARMEN: *¡Qué va! A éstas nada.*

"Not at all! They don't like it at all!"

At discourse level, the following differences can be observed in the data. Overlap is produced in very similar proportion in English and Spanish in turns expressing agreement (39% of the turns in English and 35% in Spanish) and percentages are also quite similar in the production of prefaces: 14% of the turns in English and 10% in Spanish contain a preface. However, there is a more significant difference in the production of pauses: 12% of the turns in English and only 5% of the turns in Spanish. Concerning the expression of disagreement, there are more differences. Overlap is less frequent in English (5%) than in Spanish (13%) and prefaces and pauses are more frequent in English (60%, 28% respectively) than in Spanish (25%, 14% respectively). This is illustrated in Table 7.

INSERT TABLE 7 HERE

Extract 11 illustrates the use of prefaces before disagreement in English. A pause (3 dots), self-editing, and the presentation marker *like* preface Harold's assessing in disagreement with Miles:

(11) SBCSAE, *Lambada.*

MILES: [3You must have3] good stereo. Cause I feel like I'm hearing --

HAROLD: ...We have % -- These are like,

JAMIE: the [**world's worst] speakers**.

MILES: [Where is the other one].

HAROLD: These are the [2shittiest2] .. speakers on earth.

Extract 12 illustrates the use of overlap with disagreement in Spanish:

(12) CORLEC, *Sunday morning*

CATALINA: *De mala tea que hay algunos militares qué bueno.*
"That was in a bad spirit cause some military are, well"
ANDRÉS: *No. Es que no...*
"No. It was that…"
CATALINA: <simultáneo> *De mala tea.*
<overlap starts> "In a bad spirit."
ANDRÉS: *Yo creo que... yo creo* </simultáneo> *que... (…)*
"I think... I think </overlap ends> that..."
ANDRÉS: *Yo creo que es que se pensaron que... que era una excusa para ir.*
"I think they thought that was an excuse to go."

The second hypothesis is also supported by the data. Distance and power asymmetries among speakers, which usually surface in casual conversation as the reflection of speakers' identities and roles in society, increase the use of lexico-grammatical and discourse resources oriented to the preservation of both S and A's positive face. This happens because distance and power differences increase the weight of face threatening acts (FTAs) and trigger the use of strategies which mitigate the threat to the A's face (Brown & Levinson 1987: 76) and are not necessary in acts that favour face wants (such as agreement). Thus, the positive face threatening status of disagreement accounts for the results presented here.

The expression of certainty decreases with the increase in distance (from 11% of the turns to 5% in English and from 15% to 8% in Spanish – cf. Table 8). Conversely, the production of probability and possibility increases with distance (from 33.5% of the turns to 37% in English and from 15% to 18% in Spanish), as they have the effect of diminishing the characteristic boldness of plain assertions. The following fragment illustrates modalization of certainty in order to mitigate

the assessings produced by the speakers. Even when this is a conversation among friends, speakers use modal expressions for different degrees of certainty, probability, and possibility (*I'm sure, probably, I mean, could have, I guess, I was wondering, I was imagining*) and vague language (*or something*).

(13) SBCSAE, *Lambada*

HAROLD: Well **I'm sure** #Thomas is all over it.

JAMIE: ... **Prob[ably** XX] [2XXX2] --

HAROLD: [**I mean** he] [2has a bro-2] --

MILES: [2XXXX **could have**2] see=n him.

HAROLD: **I guess** that means his broken leg is [3@doing @okay3].

PETE: [**3I was wonder3]ing** about that, **I was imagining** [4he had broke an arm4] or **something**.

JAMIE: [4<HI Oh yeah= HI>4].

In a similar speech event among friends in the Spanish data, occurrence of modalization is rarer in the exchanges for agreement negotiation. On the contrary, there is production of bold assessings like the following:

(14)

ISA: *Entonces si tú quieres llamar por operadora vas a la recepcionista del hotel*

"Then, if you want to make a call you go to the hotel receptionist"

JAVI: *Sí.*

"Yes."

ISA: *y le pides y te tardan dos días en darte la llamada.*

"and you ask and it takes 2 days to have the call"

MAITE: *Sí, como en Polonia,* <simultáneo> *igual.*

"Yes, like in Poland, <overlap starts> the same."

ISA: *Y te ponen* </simultáneo> *en una* <simultáneo> *lista de espera. (…)*

"And you get on </overlap ends> a waiting list. (…)"

JAVI: *Sí y además te hablan en Polaco. (…)*

"Yes, and they speak in Polish."

ISA: *(…), o sea... dos… veinticuatro horas, cuarenta y ocho horas es lo que tardan en una llamada.*

"So, two… twenty four hours is what it takes to have a call."

JAVI: *Sí, igual que en Ru<sia>*.

"Yes, the same in Ru(ssia)."

ISA: *Horroroso.*

"Horrible."

JAVI: *Igual que en Polonia.*

"The same in Poland."

ISA: *Claro*

"Sure"

The number of pauses increases with distance, and likewise, the production of complete pairs, which benefits from the pauses between turns. Distance favours the production of elicitations as opposed to assessings. Conversely, delivery of assessings increases with low distance among speakers (from 24% of the turns to 40% in English and from 36% to 48% in Spanish).

Regarding politeness, there are very few instances of negative politeness strategies in the data, most probably because of the friendly atmosphere in the conversations selected. Positive politeness and off record strategies are not very frequent either but a slight increase in their use is observed with an increase in distance, as shown in Table 8.

INSERT TABLE 8 HERE

The following extract shows the positive politeness strategy of raising a safe topic in order to seek agreement (Brown & Levinson 1987: 112). Pamela

raises the safe topic of vacation once Darryl has produced a disagreement with her turn:

(15) SBCSAE, *Book about Death*

DARRYL: ... No I I don't want to hear anything out of a book with,
.. chapter called heaven and hell.

PAMELA: You don't.

DARRYL: .. No.

PAMELA: Okay.

Well then let's talk about [our vacation].

No examples of changing topic were found in the Spanish data for illustration.

The fact that English shows a higher tendency for modalization in situations of distance and power asymmetries, seems due to the fact that Spanish makes more frequent use of other resources for showing politeness and respect, such as the addressing term *usted* or diminutives. Reference with *usted* has been widely studied in Spanish and other Romance languages as the *tu/vous* distinction. However, the study of diminutives for politeness has not received so much attention (Wierzbicka 1985). Its use makes it appropriate for a Spanish speaker to issue a mandative with an imperative, for instance, in situations where distance or power differences would recommend modalization in English. Although English makes use of vague language (including diminutives) for mitigation (Channel 1994) their production would rather be added to a modal in similar situations. As an example in Spanish, a customer in a restaurant can order a beer with *Ponme una cervecita* ("Serve me a small beer", literally, with imperative mood plus a diminutive suffix added to the noun in the complement) as a functional equivalent to "I'd like a beer, please": Extract 6 from *CORLEC* illustrates this use for a speech act of advice:

(16) CORLEC, *Flat*

LUIS: *Eso… algo estrech**ito** y unos muebles ahí.<simultáneo> tal…*
"There… something narrow (+diminutive) and some pieces of furniture there
<overlap starts> and so…"
CARMEN*: Sí.* </simultáneo>
"Yes. </ overlap ends>"

This is a first encounter between Luis, who is trying to sell his flat, and Carmen, a potential buyer. Luis is giving advice on the kind of furniture Carmen could have in the flat. The diminutive suffix added to *estrecho*, i.e. *–ito*, mitigates the potential threat of the speech act.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the selected data in the case study indicates that the production of initiating and responding discourse acts in agreement sequences is similar in English and Spanish regarding their frequency, structure and distribution at both lexico-grammatical and discourse levels. However, several differences are worthy of mention concerning the following aspects: (1) the use of modalization, (2) mitigation and enrichment, (3) preference markers and (4) politeness strategies. English makes greater use of modalization than Spanish, both in the expression of disagreement and at initiations. Concerning the expression of attitude, the results also indicate a higher degree of mitigation in English versus a higher degree of enrichment in Spanish. At discourse level we find differences in the use of preference markers in the expression of disagreement: more frequent pauses and prefaces in English contrasting with more overlap in Spanish and more positive politeness and off record strategies in English. Finally, as speakers choose structural and functional units to negotiate agreement according to tenor, social distance and power differences are seen to favour the production of modalization, dispreference markers, complete pairs, long turns, elicitations of clarification, confirmation and agreement versus assessments, positive politeness and off-record strategies in both English and Spanish, and the address term of respect *usted* or mitigating diminutives in Spanish.

The practical implications of this analysis have to do with cross-cultural interpretation of interaction in the negotiation of agreement. Speakers of different cultures with different interactional styles usually attribute a pejorative meaning to cultural differences (Lakoff 1973, 1975; House & Kasper 1981; Tannen 1981, 1994; Mori 1999). Consequently, native speakers of English may perceive Spanish speaking style as different (due to the characteristic features mentioned above) and attribute to them excessive directness or even rudeness. Conversely, Spanish speakers may interpret British or American tact as excessive coldness and distance. For example, the Spanish exchange in extract (10) might give the impression of excessive directness to English or American overhearers. On the other hand, extract (13) above, contains too many instances of modalization for Spanish ears. Its translation into Spanish would give a conversation totally inappropriate for a conversation among Spanish friends, who would not mitigate their assessments so much. Results from this study may also be of relevance for research on second language learning, as issues of cross-cultural interference are of prime concern in it (Pütz & Neff-van Aertselaer 2008, reviewed in Santamaría-García 2011).

By means of presentation of a case study, this paper models and illustrates an eclectic methodology for cross-linguistic comparison at lexico-grammatical and discourse levels. Spoken corpora provide valuable data with the potential to guide DA and CA. However, in order to meet the requirements of these disciplines as to the amount of information needed, it is essential that spoken corpora contain detailed contextual information and audio files, discourse act annotation and conversations which contain complete conversational sequences. Unfortunately, spoken corpora do not meet all of these requirements yet. In order to improve the situation I have suggested the inclusion of the following information in spoken corpora: (1) contextual information showing status relations, affective involvement, frequency of contact and orientation to affiliation, which, together with audio files may allow for the analysis of register; (2) discourse act annotation to facilitate localization of data for quantitative and qualitative analysis; (3) conversations which contain complete conversational

sequences, showing full development of the topics dealt with; an amount of 4,000 words or half an hour of talk seems recommendable.

Fulfilling these requirements would mean moving a step forward from corpora of spoken language to discourse corpora and also a challenge for CL, CA and DA in the near future. The combination of these disciplines can be envisaged as a powerful alliance with benefits for all of them. How far they can reach will greatly depend on harmonious co-existence, mutual understanding and cooperating efforts by researchers. Now that data sharing is easier than ever, it would be both feasible and desirable to have the conversational data collected by individual researchers stored in ever-growing corpora which incorporate the annotation derived from their analyses. These collections of conversations would emerge from the intersection of CL, CA and DA methods contributing to the birth of discourse corpora.

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Notes

1. Structural criteria overcome the problems in previous taxonomies (Austin 1962, Searle 1969, Bach & Harnish 1979 or Ballmer & Brennenstuhl 1981), which operate, as Mey (1993: 170) says, on "one-sentence one-case principle".
2. Tsui (1994: 58-59) makes a distinction between 'positive responding acts' and 'negative responding acts' that correspond to "preferred" and "dispreferred" actions. Moreover, she identifies as 'temporization' a type of responding act that "is neither a positive nor a negative responding act".

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