

## CONNECTIVES/DISOURSE MARKERS. AN OVERVIEW

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### CONNECTIVES. AN OVERVIEW\*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

It is now 25 years since Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* highlighted the value of conjunctions as text-building devices, discovering a new perspective of this understudied category. Since then, an enormous flow of contributions has turned this field into a "growth industry" (Fraser 1999) which comprises diachrony and synchrony, semantics and pragmatics, internal and external linguistics. The (sub)discipline has grown so much that it is difficult to find comprehensive overviews of the literature in the field. Since Wierzbicka's introduction to the *Journal of Pragmatics* special issue on particles, few attempts have been made in this sense; among them, Östmann (1995), Schourup (1999) and Fraser (1999 and forthcoming). In this paper, I will try to provide an overview –albeit an incomplete one– of the

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goals and findings achieved by the study of connectives and an outline of the challenges it poses for Linguistics.

Initially, I will briefly summarize some of the major directions in the field (section II), I will then warn against a common misunderstanding –namely, the relationship between connectives and discourse markers (section III)– and, finally, I will sketch out some of the most promising directions (section IV) and challenges (section V) in the study of connectives.

## II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The history of connectives has different readings, which greatly depend on the researcher's perspective. From the US side, Schiffrin (1987)<sup>1</sup> is pointed out as the most important precedent; from a European perspective, however, other important antecedents have to be considered.

A. If we had to date the first steps in the study of connectives, we would have to return to the 70's literature on text linguistics. *Cohesion in English* (Halliday and Hasan 1976) and *Text and Context* (Van Dijk 1977) are two groundbreaking landmarks in the study of sentence-based conjunctions. These two books brought into play the active part of conjunctions in the construction of supra-sentential units, with the role of conjunctions being similar to those of intonation, anaphora or lexical repetition. Moreover, conjunctions were the syntactic (Halliday and Hasan) or semantic (Van Dijk) glue in the binding of sentences, as well as a bridge between infra- and supra-sentential syntax. This view of connectives as elements which provide coherence is also shared by Rhetorical Structure Theory (Mann and Thompson 1988).

A'. It is important to note, however, that such remarks are not new in the history of linguistics. The grammarians of the past were not disattentive to the peculiarities of the conjunctions they described; a pragmatic reading of some ancient grammars can bring about surprising information like for ex. that in (1), where Nebrija, the first Spanish grammarian, affirmed the priority of a connective function over semantic characterizations:

1. Otras [conjunctiones] son para continuar, como diciendo; *io leo mientras tú oies, io leeré cuando tú quisieres, tú lo harás como io lo quisiere*, estas conjunctiones mientras, cuando, como, continúan las cláusulas de arriba con las de abaxo, et en esta manera todas las conjunctiones se pueden llamar continuativas. (Nebrija, A. 1980:1492, 199).

<sup>1</sup> See Fraser (1990, 384-385 and 1999) for prior antecedents.

Other [conjunctions] are used to continue, like when we say *I read while you hear me, I will read when [whenever] you want to, You will do it as I want to*, these conjunctions, *while, when, as*, signal the continuation of the preceding propositions with the following ones, and in this way all conjunctions can be said continuatives.

Ex. 2, taken from Bello's (1847) grammar, illustrates what are called *deductive conjunctions (conjunciones deductivas)*. This is part of a whole typology of conjunctions whose scope goes beyond the sentence. This means that the connective relationships we are dealing with had been witnessed by former grammarians:

2. Sé más de libros de caballerías, que de las sùmulas de Villalpando; así que, si no está más que en esto, seguramente podéis comunicar conmigo lo que quisiéredes. (Bello 1988:1848, 747)

The observations of these grammarians, however, did not fit into the grammatical, syntactic paradigms available at that time, for which valuable observations can be found in footnotes, incidental side remarks and chapters devoted to exceptions. In general, it can be said that the history of (supra-sentential) connectives in descriptive grammars remains to be written<sup>2</sup>.

B. Contemporary with Text Linguistics is Oswald Ducrot and Jean Claude Anscombe's Argumentation Theory (Anscombe and Ducrot 1976, 1983, 1994). Argumentation is considered to be an inherent property of language<sup>3</sup> which provides a new dimension in the study of connectives: behind a sentence or a word there exists a number of conclusions we can access simply by uttering that sentence/word. This means that once we start to speak we are not totally free because the preceding discourse limits the forthcoming combinations. For instance, it is normal to bind the words *problem* and *easy* with the conjunction *but* (ex.3). However, changing the adversative conjunction for the coordinate results in a pragmatically infelicitous sentence (exs. taken from Ducrot 1995):

- 3. There is a problem but it is easy
- 4. #There is a problem and it is easy

<sup>2</sup> In Spanish, see , Briz 1998, 166-169, Martín-Zorraquino 1992, Pons 1994, 1995, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> As such, it must not be confused with implicatures or presuppositions.

The reason for this selection is that *problem* is not argumentatively neutral, but an oriented item—it points towards “difficulty” and not towards “easiness”.

In this framework, connectives do not just bind the propositional content of two sentences, but also the argument<sup>4</sup> conclusions which we can access via that argument. Let us illustrate this idea with another example:

5. John is poor but happy  
5'. #John is poor but unhappy

*John is poor* in itself suggests conclusions such as “he is unhappy”, “he cannot pay his credit”, etc. However, from *John is happy* we are likely to conclude something like “nothing worries him”, “he is not ill”, “he does not owe any money”, etc. *But* forces us to oppose these argumentatively opposing potential conclusions. The pragmatic ambiguity of 5', then, stems from the different instructions derived from *John is poor* and *but*, and from the conclusion we are lead to (unhappiness). No Gricean implicature would be defeated here, as shown in 6, where the defeated implicature is explicitly assessed:

6. John doesn't know all the wines, but he knows some of them (ex. taken from Ducrot 1995)<sup>5</sup>.

Within the argumentative framework, special attention has been paid to connectives. Fine-grained descriptions of many conjunctions, especially adversatives, have been offered (Ducrot 1980, 1984, 1995, Anscombe and Ducrot 1994, Anscombe in this issue). The argumentative perspective of language is nowadays widely accepted in Romance linguistics outside the English-speaking world, where the assumption that language carries an argumentative load is shared by many scholars (Roulet et al. 1985, Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1990, Briz 1998, etc.). In English-speaking countries, however, only a few contributions make an explicit use of this framework, even though the results may be very interesting (Schwenter 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Within Argumentation Theory, an argument is a rhetorical unit which belongs to the semantic component of a grammar. Ducrot's theory rejects two of the most common assumptions in the study of pragmatics: first, a semantic analysis in terms of truth-conditions and second a strict division between semantic and pragmatics, for which *arguments* and *conclusions* are semantic, not pragmatic.

<sup>5</sup> For an explanation of these examples in Grice's lines, see Levinson (2000).



C. The research group led by Eddy Roulet in Geneva (Roulet et al. 1985) has made interesting contributions to research on the role of connectives as devices which bind units of text/conversation. Their approach considers that a conversation can be hierarchically analysed into units of a lower or higher level. The units of the lower level are called acts; the units of the higher level are called interventions or exchanges. Acts and interventions are monological units while exchanges are dialogical. The recursive combination of these constituents discovers a structure in spoken language conversations. The role of connectives within this framework is to display the relationship between/among the different constituents of discourse. If we consider ex. 3 again, we will discover a binary structure in the sentence: there are two acts, joined together by the connective *but*. Argumentatively, however, they do not have the same importance, because the second act is more important than the first one for the development of discourse. Hence, the first is subordinated to the second. The structure of an adversative construction then is made up of two constituents, the second of which carries the argumentative load of the whole intervention (7) or exchange (7')

7.	<u>John is poor</u> but happy		
	As	Ad	
7'.	A. John is poor	Is (Subordinate intervention)	Exchange
	B: But happy	Id (Directive intervention)	

In a more recent version of this approach (Roulet 1991, Roulet forthcoming), the study of discourse is divided into modules, each of which focuses on a specific component of discourse. This new version of the theory has the power to integrate information from different sources (syntactic, intonational, argumentative, hierarchical, and so on). Connectives however still provide the "traces" of different relationships. The works of Roulet and his group have not been systematically translated into English. Hence, their influence is restricted to the Romanic area—a limitation that should not diminish the importance of their findings.

C'. The notion of reformulation, based on Antos (1982) and Gülich and Kotschi (1983), has been reinterpreted into a new discourse relation (Roulet 1987, Rossari 1994, Noreñ 1999), which provides new insights into the field. This relationship spreads over a wide range of values depending on the author utilizing the notion, but a major distinction can be drawn between *paraphrastic* and *non-paraphrastic* reformulations. Exs. (8) and (9) illustrate these two kinds of structures:

(8) The dress was mauve, that is, between violet and purple

(9) The dress was mauve. In fact, it was purple.

The paraphrastic reformulation in (8) is a mere restatement of the content of the sentence. In contrast, the non-paraphrastic reformulation of (9) is a corrective move which displays a change in the speaker's perspective, resulting in a reconsideration, distancing or even rejection of the perspective displayed in the preceding act/intervention. As shown by different works (Roulet 1987 and Rossari 1994 for French, Rossari 1994 and Bazzanella 1995 for Italian, Portolés 1998 for Spanish), a subset of connectives can be characterized by their predominantly reformulative function.

D. The research on modal particles carried out in languages like German (*Partikelforschung* –Weydt 1969, 1983, 1989, Gülich 1970, Krivonosov 1977, Bublitz 1978, Diewald forthcoming, Ferrer Mora in this issue–), although dealing with a different subject, should not be neglected for the study of connectives. What these studies bring into play is the lexicalization of a functional category, called modalization, into a grammatical word class. In languages which lack this class, modalization is distributed among different categories: connectives (Pons 1998), diminutives (Waltereit to appear), etc. Some of the “exceptional”, hard-to-define uses of connectives (e.g. stressing or hedging, expression of anger or surprise, ) can be seen as the expression of modalization. There seems to be a close relationship between some of these values and the encoding of politeness in some connectives/discourse markers (Chodorowska in this issue).

E. Deborah Schiffrin's *Discourse Markers* was the starting point for a flow of papers on the subject of the same name. The theory outlined in that book is, as pointed out by reviewers (Redeker 1990, 1991), too broad for the description of the class and, as such, is no longer subscribed to today. Nevertheless, several things must be retained from Schiffrin's important contribution: first of all, the name of the category—a non-trivial question, as we will show below. Second, we must retain the questions that a theory of discourse markers must address and answer (Schiffrin 1987, 72 and 314). Finally, we must also retain the idea that discourse markers are multifunctional elements by nature, that is, that they perform different roles in different spheres of discourse.

F. Gricean and neo-Gricean scholars have used connectives as heuristic devices for distinguishing cancellable from non-cancellable properties of items such as *and* or *but*, that is, to ascertain whether certain aspects of their meanings are semantic or pragmatic in nature. Levinson's three-layered theory of meaning (Levinson 1995 and 2000) describes the value of

Generalized Conversational Implicatures (GCI's) for those cases while Traugott (1999) establishes a most interesting relationship between GCI's and grammaticalization processes.

F'. Since its beginning, Relevance Theory has focussed on connectives as a way to prove the adequacy of the theory (Blakemore 1987, 1996, Blass 1990) and has come to the characterization of connectives as inferential, non-conceptual, procedural elements (Wilson and Sperber 1993) that restrict the relevance of the propositions they link (Blakemore 1987). This ostensive-inferential approach seems to be a promising perspective for the understanding of the category, and one which is not incompatible, by the way, with Argumentation Theory. However, the force of the paradigm must not obscure the fact that in many cases the description of connectives needs to be implemented by the use of real examples; on some occasions the explanation given is a mere reinterpretation of well-described grammatical units. In short, the undoubted theoretical force of Relevance Theory still must be applied to a wider range of elements to provide more fruitful descriptions.

G. Diachrony has been a neglected aspect in the study of connectives until recently. In the last decade, studies couched in the framework of grammaticalization have provided a solid framework to describe and explain the historical development of connectives. The paths of evolution within this framework have displayed adequacy, both descriptive and explanatory. As we will see below, diachrony can be the everybody's land for competing pragmatic theories.

H. As a result of twenty-five years of research, linguists have succeeded in solving some of the puzzles that the category of connectives has posed for linguistics. Among the findings, we should highlight the following<sup>6</sup>:

a) The (full) description of some (types of) connectives (e.g., adversatives) in different, typologically unrelated languages. This implies:

–the replacement of a sentential, grammatical paradigm, where connectives are treated as exceptions, with pragmatic explanations in which connectives are no longer counter-examples.

–the establishment of proofs to ascertain differences among/between neighboring classes (e.g. conjunctions vs. connectives, adverbs vs. connectives and so on).

–the recognition of general groupings within the class (argumentative, reformulative, etc.).

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<sup>6</sup> Due to the number of proposals, a summary like this has to be deliberately vague with regard to metalanguage, in order to avoid the identification of a concept with a certain theoretical perspective.



–the existence of grammaticalization processes whereby linguistic items are enabled to express connective functions.

b) The search for general pragmatic principles behind their description (like cooperation, relevance, politeness or argumentation).

c) The recognition of the inherent polyfunctionality of each member within the class. Connectives work simultaneously on different discourse levels (interactive, grammatical, coherence, and so on).

Incredible as it might have seemed only twenty years ago, the joint effort of many scholars has pushed forward the study of connectives to the status of a (sub)direction within Pragmatics. However, many veils remain to be uncovered. Here are some challenges for future research:

a) To determine the scope of the category, in order to precisely define its co-hyponyms and hyperonyms.

b) To fulfill a global description of all the connectives in a given language, entailing both synchronic and diachronic descriptions.

c) To establish the appropriate place for the study of connectives within grammar. This implies linking grammatical and non-grammatical uses.

d) To improve the relationship between formal features and discourse functions.

e) To integrate—as much as possible—different pragmatic principles to the extent that they provide complementary descriptions.

In the following sections, we will briefly discuss some of the problems sketched above: the definition of the class of connectives (section III), the relationship between categories and functions (section IV) and some promising directions in the current state-of-the-art (section V).

### III. A SOURCE OF MISUNDERSTANDING: DISCOURSE MARKERS OR CONNECTIVES?

This problem concerns (meta)language. The concepts *connective* and *discourse marker* are by no means clear and usually represent a source of misunderstanding. If we take one of Schiffrin's definitions of what a discourse marker is

Discourse markers are utterance-initial elements whose use is syntactically independent and sequentially dependent (Schiffrin 1987, 326-327)

we will identify as such elements like *well*, *oh* or *you know*. If we mention the term *connective* (*conector*, *connecteur*, *connettivo*) we will refer only to a subset of a wider class, that of discourse markers. That is, connectives are



hyponyms of a hyperonym, which comprises other elements as well (modalizers, reformulators, social and politeness markers, turn-regulators and so on). This idea is developed in Bazzanella's (1995) and Portolés' (1998) classifications of discourse markers in Italian and Spanish, respectively.

Up to this point, things seem to be clear. The problem lies in the fact that *connective* is not a widespread concept in US linguistics and that connectives are the best studied subset within discourse markers<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the specific properties of connectives are mixed up with those of discourse markers. It is sometimes hard to know if a given characterization of discourse markers is valid for all discourse markers or if it is only applicable just for the subclass of connectives. When this happens, generalizations may seem too broad and characterizations may lack depth. On the other hand, many readers unconsciously read *discourse marker* when they see *connective* on a paper, and find this characterization too restrictive.

Let us address this question with an example. It is widely assumed that discourse markers are utterance-initial elements, for instance in cases like 10 (exs. taken from Fraser 1990):

- 10.a. John can't go. And Mary can't go either
- 10.b. A: Did you like it? B: Well, not really.
- 10.c. I think it will fly. Anyway, let's give it a chance.

Now what does *first position* mean? If we mean "the first word of an utterance" we can almost be sure that discourse markers are initial-position elements. But this is too broad a characterization, because it cannot say anything about the internal preferences within this position (why is it that we prefer to say *yes/no but* instead of *#but yes/no*, that we say *oh yes* and not *#yes oh*, and so on?). Consider, in addition, that different discourse markers can combine at the beginning of an utterance. Is *initial-position* going to apply just for the first word or should we extend it to all discourse markers? In the latter case, we would be using the concept with a different meaning, that of "first syntagmatic position". This means that first position would be defined negatively, as the position outside the scope of a proposition or as the position which is not governed by a head.

If we try to define the same concept for connectives, the first criterium is no longer valid, because other discourse markers can precede a connective, as shown in 11:

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<sup>7</sup> Compare, for instance, Schiffrin's wider conception of DM's with Fraser's.

- 11.a. John can't go. **And** Mary can't go either  
 11.b. A: John can't go.  
 B: Well, **and** Mary can't go either  
 11.c. A: John can't go  
 B: Oh well, **and** Mary can't go either

But, in a sense, connectives are also initial-position elements, since they precede elements like subordinating conjunctions or adverbials. Hence, from a sentential perspective, the initial-position characterization of connectives seems to be correct:

- 12.a. John can't go. **Therefore**, Mary can't go either  
 12.b. John can't go. **And therefore**, Mary can't go either  
 12.c. John can't go. \***Therefore and**, Mary can't go either

Our conception of "first position", then, will depend on the range of elements we analyze.

#### IV. PERSPECTIVES: CATEGORIAL AND FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES

The study of connectives is deeply rooted in the relationship between categories and functions. For, on the one hand, connectives are units which belong to a word class and, on the other hand, their grouping is based on their ability to perform a common function, that of connecting elements. Hence, the study of connectives can be carried out either from the categorial perspective (description of a specific connective and the way it performs the connective function) or from the functional perspective (description of the connective function and of the particular instantiations which can create or display it). The picture is, in fact, more complicated than what an onomasiological/semasiological approach would suggest.

Let us consider the first path: most connectives come from well-established grammatical categories, especially from conjunctions and adverbs. When we say that *then* is a connective what we mean is that besides being an adverb, some of its occurrences work as a connective, that is, *then* is polysemous. So when we say that *entonces*, *alors*, *allora*, etc. are likewise connectives what exactly do we mean? We mean that these words can belong simultaneously to two or more categories—something not infrequent in sentence grammar, where assignment to two categories is quite common. But where does the basis lie for this new word class, called connectives? It is not

in their grammatical, but in their functional or pragmatic behaviour. Hence, the basis of the categorization process seems to rest on functional grounds.

One could think of formal features as a valid resource for the categorization process. However, formal features are risky, and are better applied within a family resemblance framework. We have referred to the problems of initial position, one of the most popular features assigned to connectives. Let us consider a second popular feature: the intonational independence of connectives. It seems to be true that many connectives, especially those which derive from adverbials or from the lexicalization of free syntagms (*o sea, así que, es decir*), show a distinct intonational pattern. But basic connectives such as conjunctions *y, pero, que, pues* are integrated into the intonational contour of the utterance. It should be noted that we too often deduce the intonation of connectives from written, or even invented, examples. If we take the results of analyses performed on real conversations (Hidalgo 1997, Pons 1998), what we find is that many of those instances are in fact cases where not a pause but a falling pitch is found after the connective, for which to the well-known schema #C#, where C stands for a connective and # for a pause, we should add a second schema, namely #C↓, where ↓ stands for “falling pitch”.

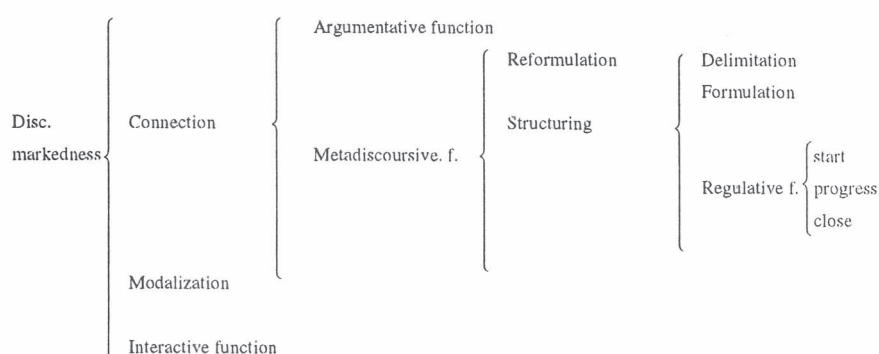
Another disregarded problem in the description of the connectives is that the initial purpose of “describing the connective uses of X” at times turns into something more akin to “describing the uses of X”. But, given the intrinsic multifunctionality of connectives, their description sometimes obscures their connective values. As a result, two kinds of functions are distinguished: grammatical functions and discourse marker functions. The latter may not only express connection, but other pragmatic functions, for instance modalization.

What is more, in the categorization process, a double reduction may occur: on the one hand, statements of the form “X is Y”, where X stands for *adverb, conjunction*, etc and Y for *reformulator, connective, turn-taking device*, etc (for instance, in *then is a connective*), strongly suggest a one-to-one relationship between forms and functions, which means that other functions must be accommodated as exceptions or extensions. On the other hand, statements of the form “x is Y”, where x is an occurrence of the category and Y is a function, suggest a one-to-one relationship between occurrences and functions, excluding the multifunctionality of the same occurrence on different levels of discourse (as pointed out by Schiffrin 1987). Hence, when a semasiological approach is performed, caution must be put on the delimitation of different pragmatic categories.



If we consider now the second, functional alternative, we could think of a function called *connection*, displayed by elements of very different origins; to the extent that they display this function, they can be called *connectives*. The main point now is to characterize the function, as a gradient category: the more occurrences of an element accomplishing the function of connection, the more central that connective is; the more prototypical the functions, the greater its centrality. In this approach, no one-to-one relationship needs to be assumed between categories/occurrences and functions. But this approach does not overcome all the problems in the characterization of connectives; it simply poses new ones.

The first problem with this new account lies in the fact that we do not have a clear picture of the co-hyponyms, hyponyms and hyperonyms of the connective function, nor clear relationships among them. As a working hypothesis, we could take the following point of departure (see Pons 2000 for a more detailed discussion):



The global function, discourse markedness, can be subdivided provisionally into three related functions: connection, modalization (Waltereit forthcoming) and an interactive function where the communicative function of forms like *you know*, *listen* or *right?* would be explained. This is a provisional picture, the result of a study performed on Spanish connectives (Pons 1998), and thus the basis for postulating the two other categories.

Within the function of connection, two broad subfunctions could be distinguished: an *argumentative function*, intended as the joint result of the argumentative (Anscombe and Ducrot 1994) and the inferential (Grice 1975, Sperber and Wilson 1986, Levinson 2000) properties of a connective; and a *metadiscursive function* (Briz 1998), which deals, in general, with the



building up of the discourse. Within this last function, we could talk of *reformulation* (Roulet 1987, Rossari 1994, Noren 1999) when we refer basically to correction moves, as illustrated in (13):

- (13) (A, C and D are talking about A's stay in Belgium and the meals in that country)  
 C: ¿entonces/ en los bares qué hacen?  
 C: So, what do they do in bars?  
 A: pues cosas raras// platos combinaos o cosas de esas  
 A: Well weird things// assorted dishes or things like that  
 [...]  
 B: [o sea] allí no hay costumbre del bocadillo ni historias ¿eh?  
 B: So they don't eat bocadillos or such stuff uh? [H.38.A1, 569-575]

and of *structuring* when we refer to the building, binding and hierarchical structuring of the discursive chunks. If the connective structuring function is performed between interventions/exchanges<sup>8</sup> or, in more classical terms, in a sequence or supra-sentential level (Gili Gaya 1983:1943, Alcina and Blecua 1975, Halliday and Hasan 1976, Van Dijk 1977) we will talk of *delimitation*, as in (14):

- (14) (B's intervention adds a second sequence to the sequence of history that has been developed for more than 200 lines).  
 A: no↓ oye↓ paa normalmente toos los días no se lo ponDRÁ/ pero así algún día→ que see vista bien o algo↑§  
 A: no↓ hear↓ usually every day she won't wear it [a clock she found in the street]/ but one day→ she gets smart or something↑§  
 C: §claro (( ))  
 C: §right

<sup>8</sup> *Exchange, turn changing, intervention, turn* and *act* refer to a theory of units in conversation sketched out in Briz (1998). Intervention and turn are the maximal monological units; exchange and turn changing are the minimal dialogical units. The difference between both kinds of units (interventions and exchanges on the one hand, turn and turn changing on the other hand) lies in the fact that the latter are explicitly acknowledged by other co-conversationalists while the former are not. An act is the immediate constituent of turns or interventions while sequence is a unit defined in terms of coherence. We resume the theory in the following schema:

	Dialogical	Monological	
Level 3	Sequence		
Level 2	Exchange	Intervention	Acknowledged by other participants
	Turn changing	turn	Not acknowledged by other participants
Level 1		Act	

B: ¡ah! y aún viene la otra noticia que también↓ menuda semana han tenido§

B. oh! and now comes another news well↓ what a week they had

A: §luego han hecho fijo a mi marido

A. now my husband has got a new contract [RB.37.B.1, 278-284]

If, instead, we focus on the micro-sentential/act level to establish how the message has been built and the problems related to the planning and construction of a given turn or intervention (Ochs 1979, Givón 1979, Sornicola 1981), we will be in the domain of *formulation*, as in (15):

(15) (The speaker is describing an elevator he saw in Mallorca)

S: claro// no↓ el de allí también ¿eh? subía un piso o dos/ el dee-el de Mallorca↑ pero claro/ tu veías// veías la zo- la playa desde- desde l'ascensor ése↓ por eso sí que tenía muchoo→///(2.5") a mí ese Pryca me gusta [AP.80.A.1: 409-412]

S. right// no the one there too, y'know? it was one or two floors/ that-that of Mallorca↑ but y'know// you could see// you could see the ar- the beach from- from that lift↓ that's why it was very→ ///(2.5") I like that Pryca

Hesitations and false starts (*el dee- el de*), as well as pauses (*veías// veías*) in (15) denote problems in the construction of the intervention. *Claro* is a filled pause which indicates the will of the speaker to hold the floor and to keep on talking.

The regulative function can be found in the intervention/act level and consists of displaying the beginning, the continuation, or the end of constituents, as example (16) illustrates:

(16) ?: [ve-vender] seguros// vendía yoo// una temporada/// no vendí ni uno y lo tuve que dejar

?: [sel-selling] insurances// I sold// for some time// didn't sell a damned insurance and I quit

A: (RISAS) pues por eso/ yo ni lo he cogío [AP.80.A1, 129-136]

A: [LAUGHS] well that's why/ I didn't take that job

This level is especially suited to account for sentential relationships, as well as for non-canonical constructions in spoken language at the utterance level (Narbona 1979). The picture sketched in this particular point should be able to explain the grammatical uses of conjunctions and to integrate them into a global framework, that of connection or, more generally, that of discourse markedness.

Those functions are not mutually exclusive. Hence, any occurrence of a given connective is able to perform different functions at the same time. For

instance, in (8), *y* delimitates two sequences and, simultaneously, it displays the regulative, progressive function of the intervention inside the exchange, as well as an emphatic value that issues from its modal function.

The functional approach developed here is not intended to replace the more traditional, categorial one; rather, it is intended as an additional element for a better comprehension of the phenomena involved. Likewise, it is not meant to imply the discarding of the categorial-functional circle, because the best way to study how connection is performed in a given language is, of course, by paying attention to the way connection is instantiated—namely, through connectives.

## V. CHALLENGES

The research carried out in the last twenty-five years has brought to light many features of the nature of connectives: we now know about their cohesive, argumentative, logical and (ostensive-) inferential properties. We have performed full descriptions of many members of the class and we have discovered subtle differences in behaviour, susceptible to new distinct relationships. Still, the category is problematic and many features are yet to be discovered. In this section, I propose a list of some of the challenges in the field:

### A. *The descriptive side*

The description of a connective is perhaps a mechanical but a necessary task for a full understanding of the category. Nowadays no language—including English, by far the best described language—has achieved a full description of its members. We know little of the argumentative properties of English connectives, and almost nothing of its set of reformulators. Nor do we have a systematic account of the interrelation between modalization and connection. Similar remarks can be made for languages like Italian, Spanish or Catalan, even though new comprehensive grammars have devoted a considerable effort to description (Bazzanella 1995, Martín Zorraquino and Portolés 1999, Cuenca forthcoming).

#### 1. Diachronic description

An urgent task is that of providing diachronic descriptions, which are now possible thanks to the large corpora available on-line for some languages and to the rise of diachronic pragmatic theories, like the grammaticalization

framework. The growing interest in the historical development of connectives stems from a range of different factors:

a) Some issues in the description of discourse markers cannot be properly addressed without any reference to diachrony. For instance, in the case of connectives which evolved from free prepositional phrases, the contribution of the preposition to the overall content of the connective or the relation between morphologically related units and their pragmatic behaviour (Rossari 1994, Traugott 1995, Brinton 1996, Ruiz and Pons 1996, Pons and Ruiz forthcoming) cannot be elucidated on a purely synchronic basis.

b) Grammaticalization and corpus linguistics have provided tools for this research effort to be fruitful. Given the availability of large corpora of different languages<sup>9</sup> it is now possible to select a wide range of occurrences of a connective across time, varieties and text type. The grammaticalization framework, in turn, has provided a new paradigm of semantic change which aims at explaining *why* some semantic changes occur (while the question in more traditional approaches was *how* semantic change took place).

c) The open debate between neo-Gricean pragmatics and Relevance Theory might find a decisive battleground in the field of diachrony. If many of the actual discourse markers and connectives have developed their values through time, and if this evolution implies the fixation of pragmatic values, then a pragmatic theory is compelled to ascertain the processes whereby a free construction undergoes grammaticalization processes. Now, it seems that, in the light of diachrony, the power of the two approaches may vary substantially (Traugott 1999).

d) The new developments in pragmatics and cognitive science provide excellent tools for filling in some disregarded chapters of Historical Syntax and Semantics—especially in Romance languages. Thus, an appeal should be made for diachronic linguists and pragmaticists to work together, in what has been called “new philology” (Traugott, 2000).

## 2. Syntagmatic combination

An unexpected gap in the—in other respects—extensive description of connectives regards their combinatorial possibilities. Only a few papers in the literature deal with this problem (Vicher and Sankoff 1986; Swerts 1998—but only for filled pauses), and we still ignore a great deal of the rules

<sup>9</sup> For Spanish, CREA and CORDE at <http://www.rae.es>; for French; FRANTETX at <http://zeus.inalfr.fr>, for the early stages of Italian, <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/projects/OVIL>.



governing the non-random ordering of connectives and other discourse markers. Note that the answer to this question will provide us with valuable information, such as the extent to which interactive and modalization markers interact with connection markers.

One of the reasons for this gap is the atomistic approach to connectives commonly taken, with particular studies on a single connective the norm and global studies the exception<sup>10</sup>. Studying one connective at a time provides us with an in-depth vision of its behaviour and is a necessary direction to be pursued. However, it does not permit a global view of the field.

Another reason is the absence of theoretical developments regarding the concept of *first position*. The tendency for connectives to appear—and to combine with each other—in the first position of the utterance, has been noted repeatedly. But the only common feature of this position seems to be its exceptional nature (see section III above) and there are reasons to suppose that further subdivisions can be established within that position. However, in order to achieve a clearer picture of the structural regularities of first position, a theory of units will be needed. Without such a theory, it becomes impossible to ascertain the relationship between intonation and connectives or the relationship among types of connectives, nor can generalizations be made about preferred patterns (e.g. do social/interactive markers appear before connectives, do connectives always precede conjunctions, what is the preferred position for attention-catchers like *hear* or *say*, and so on). It seems that the natural place for this theory of units is casual spoken language, because this is the register where a broader range of combinations can be found and the best place to investigate the correlation between intonation and connectives (Hidalgo 1997, Swerts 1998). An answer here will undoubtedly provide valuable clues for the resolution of the same question in written language (Narbona 1989b). For all this to be possible, however, two different kinds of theoretical tools are needed: first, a theory of constituents like the one pursued by Roulet et al. (1985), Roulet (1991), or sketched out by Briz (et al) (2000); and second, detailed descriptions of intonation patterns.

### 3. The integration of grammatical functions

The well-known fact that some grammatical conjunctions are among the most conspicuous connectives raises the problem of the relationship between

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<sup>10</sup> Only some examples will be provided here: Schroup 1985, Schiffrin 1987, Bazzanella 1995, Martín Zorraquino and Portolés 1999 for discourse markers, Halliday and Hasan 1976, Van Dijk 1977, Roulet et al. 1985, Rossari 1994, Pons Bordería 1998 for connectives, Weydt 1969, Güllich 1970, Bublitz 1978, for modalizers.

grammatical and connective functions. Beyond the diachronic approach, which tries to establish paths of evolutions from “the speaker’s subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition” (1995b) a synchronic theory of connectives must establish a relationship between pragmatic and grammatical uses of these forms. This has been the focus of much debate in Romance languages, with a deep rooted connection in grammatical theory<sup>11</sup>, but has not been a controversial issue in the literature on connectives.

Yet there must be a relationship between pragmatic and grammatical uses of *but*, *and*, *well* and, more generally, between grammatical notions like cause, consequence, condition, etc. and pragmatic notions like hedging, strengthening, etc., or conversational notions like taking or holding the floor (for instance, the addition of linguistic material through coordination can be interpreted as a signal to hold the floor and, on some occasions, to express emphasis).

#### B. A unified theory?

A not trivial question is the place a theory of connectives—or, perhaps more appropriately, of discourse markers—must have. Is it possible to outline a theoretical framework for research, following Schiffrin’s (1987) schema or, alternatively, is its explanation subservient to more general principles? The existing literature points, almost unanimously, in the second direction. Discourse markers have been an excellent testing ground for pragmatic theories, a catalyst of problems and solutions, but do not seem to form the basis of a new theory. In this sense, the role of connectives seems similar to the one played by phenomena like irony, anaphora or reference resolution: an important piece of evidence for a theory, not a direction on its own.

But even though we acknowledge the role of the metalanguage of connectives as a kind of a patchwork, their different constituents must be put together in a certain order, so that the cohesive properties shown by connectives in the macro-structure of a text/conversation can be related to their formulating, micro-structural features. Complementarily, their argumentative load should be related to their procedural meaning, their

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<sup>11</sup> For instance, see the debate held in Spanish regarding the classification of adverbial sentences and the progressive shift from grammatical to pragmatic positions (Rojo 1979, Rojo and Jiménez Juliá 1989, Narbona 1989 and 1990, Bosque and Demonte 1999). See also Pottier (2001).

formal description to the implicatures they may give rise to, and all this could in some way be related to their grammatical uses. This program is not uniform and the reader might invoke a theoretical version of Frankenstein's Monster. It is perhaps this no man's land which attracts so many researchers with such different backgrounds.

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