

How to contrast and maintain information in narrative texts: comparing English and Spanish

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the way English and Spanish speaking informants build textual cohesion in a narrative task involving a non-prototypical information flow, namely referential maintenance or contrast² with respect to entities, events, time spans and sentence polarity. We will focus both on the semantic domains and the linguistic means speakers select in order to highlight such referential flow and will compare our results with those of Dimroth *et al.*³ in order to develop the debate about the “assertion oriented” (German and Dutch) and the “non-assertion oriented” (Italian and French) languages (for this debate cf. § 1).

The data were collected using the video clip *The Finite Story* by Dimroth⁴ (cf. § 1 for a discussion of this stimulus). With respect to the subjects interviewed, our results will show that:

- a. English, despite its Germanic origins, is not an “assertion oriented language”, unlike what Dimroth *et al.*⁵ have stated for Dutch and German, since its native speakers do not normally emphasize cohesion on the sentence polarity, namely the assertion level;
- b. Spanish, in its turn, is an “assertion oriented language”, because its native speakers tend to focus their attention on the assertion level by means of *sí* and *sí que*;
- c. as a consequence of points (a) and (b), English native speakers take on a coherence perspective much closer to what Dimroth *et al.* describe as the Romance

¹ The study was jointly conceived and carried out by both authors. For the requirements of Italian Institutions, nevertheless, we declare Patrizia Giuliano responsible for paragraphs 1 and 5 and Salvatore Musto for paragraphs 2 and 4; both authors are responsible for the introduction and paragraph 3.

² We will adopt the definition of the notion of contrast proposed by Umbach (2004), which is based on comparability presupposing both similarity and dissimilarity.

³ C. Dimroth, C. Andorno, S. Benazzo, J. Verhagen, *Given claims about new topics. The distribution of contrastive and maintained information in Romance and Germanic languages*, in «Journal of pragmatics», 42 (2010), n. 12, pp. 3328-3344.

⁴ C. Dimroth, *The Finite Story*. Max-Planck-Institut for Psycholinguistics, 2006, cfr. [http://corpus1.mpi.nl/ds/imdi_browser?openpath=MPI560350%23].

⁵ C. Dimroth, C. Andorno, S. Benazzo, J. Verhagen, *op. cit.*

pattern of textual coherence with respect to the Germanic one, since they prefer to mark contrasts at the level of the protagonist and/or the time and/or the semantic content of the predicate, just like Italian and French informants do. Conversely, our analysis shows that Spanish native speakers select a perspective based on the highlighting of positive assertion and, for this reason, their narrations turn out to be much more similar to the German and Dutch ones – that is to say to the Germanic pattern – than to the Italian and French retellings.

The present study discusses the psycholinguistic implications of our results and the validity of the typological patterns proposed by the authors quoted above.

1 *Stimulus and previous studies*

The video clip *The Finite Story* is about three men, Mr Blue, Mr Green and Mr Red, living in three different flats but in the same building, which one night catches fire. The clip is divided into several segments, the content of which is illustrated in table 1. We will focus on two information structures (IS: I and II), each of those is repeated two or three times during the story (they are in bold in table 1).

As to the first information structure (segments 9 and 26), a situation that applies to the first two characters does not apply to the third one, since we have a change in the domain of the protagonists, an opposite polarity and the maintenance of the predicate. For this configuration speakers can either mark the contrast on the protagonist or highlight the change of polarity. If they contrast the protagonists, they can apply means such as lexical modifiers (Engl. *on the other hand, instead, differently from Mr X*; etc.) or restrictive particles (Engl. *only, just: only Mr Blue...*). As to the change of polarity, in English it can be marked by an auxiliary highlighting the finite component of the verb (*Mr Blue DOES jump*) or by a pitch accent on the lexical verb (*Mr Blue JUMPS*); in Spanish the change of polarity can be marked by *sí (que)* (*El de verde SÍ salta*) and, at least theoretically, by a prosodic stress on the lexical verb (*Al final el señor Verde SALTA*).

As to the second configuration, speakers can either mark the change of polarity or the temporal shift. As a matter of fact, the temporal shift linking devices are crucial for the second information structure since, ideally, they are the only alternative to the polarity change markings that can be used to mark the contrast; in particular, the speakers can do that by adverbials such as Engl. *this time, eventually*; etc; Spa. *ahora, esta vez*, etc.

**Table 1. The Finite Story: information configuration in segments selected for analysis*.**

<i>Nr</i>	<i>Film segment</i>	<i>IS with respect to antecedent segment</i>	<i>Example utterances with corresponding IS marking</i>
1/2	Introduction protagonists / flats		
3/4/5	Mr Blue going to bed, sleeping; Mr Green going to bed, sleeping; Mr Red going to bed, sleeping		
6	Fire on the roof		
7/8	Mr Green sleeping; Mr Red sleeping		
9	Mr Blue not sleeping	I: Different TT, different TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 03/04)	<i>Only Mr. Blue does not sleep; El hombre de azul sí se levanta.</i>
11	Mr Blue calling fire brigade		
12	Fireman in bathroom, not answering		
18	Fireman answering the phone	II: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 12)	<i>this time the fireman DOES ANSWER/ ANSWERS the phone, ahora el bombero Sí QUE contesta al teléfono.</i>
22	Arrival of fire engine		
24	Rescue net: Mr Green not jumping		
25	Mr Red not jumping		
26	Mr Blue jumping	I: different TT, different TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 24/25)	<i>Mr Blue on the other hand DOES JUMP/JUMPS; El de color azul SÍ/SÍ QUE SALTA</i>
27	Mr Green jumping	II: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 24)	<i>Mr. Green eventually DOES JUMP/JUMPS; El de verde AHORA SÍ QUE SALTA/ ACABA SALTANDO</i>
28	Mr Red not jumping		
29	Mr Red jumping	II: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 28)	<i>finally Mr. Red DOES JUMP/JUMPS; El de rojo AHORA SÍ QUE SALTA/ ACABA SALTANDO</i>
31	The happy end		

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

The two configurations just commented have been studied by Dimroth *et al.*⁶ with respect to native speakers of four languages: Dutch, German, French and Italian. By virtue of their results, the authors state that:

- a. When a polarity contrast is involved in an information structure, Dutch and German native speakers mark the contrast on the assertion level, either by a contrastive stress on the finite lexical verb (for German, cf. ex. 2) or auxiliary or by what they call “assertion related particles”, namely *doch/schon* (for German; cf. ex. 2) and *toch/wel* (for Dutch), as in the following examples:

1) Information Structure I

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

“he has decided to jump, even though he lives in a higher one [flat]”

2) Information Structure II

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

“and because of that he also has jumped”

- b. For the same information structures, French and Italian native speakers prefer to mark the contrast by anaphoric devices acting on the topic component, at the levels of entity or time, rather than on the assertion level, as in the examples below:

3) Information Structure I

3a. Signor Blu *invece è l'unico/il primo che* accetta di saltare / *Solo* il Signor Blu salta
 “Mr Blue instead is the only/first one who accepts to jump / Only Mr Blue jumps”

3b. M. Bleu *lui* il saute
 “Mr Blue him he jumps”

4) Information Structure II

4a. I vigili del fuoco *finalmente* hanno risposto
 “The firemen finally have answered”

4b. *Cette fois-ci* le pompier décroche
 “This time the fireman picks up [the phone]”

Examples 3a and 3b show that the cohesion strategies selected by Italian speakers, on the one side, and French speakers, on the other side, are not the same, though all of them act on the entity component of the utterance: Italian speakers exploit means such as the adverb *invece* (‘instead’), the restrictive particle *solo* (‘only’) and the uniqueness or primate structures *è l'unico/il primo che* (‘is the only/first one who’);

⁶ C. Dimroth, C. Andorno, S. Benazzo, J. Verhagen, *op. cit.*



French speakers use the strong pronoun *lui* ('him'), also acting on the level of the protagonists. As to examples 4a and 4b, speakers of both languages select temporal markings. It's not impossible, of course, for German or Dutch speakers, to have recourse to means comparable to It. *invece*, "è l'unico/il primo che" (for IS1), or to temporal expressions (for IS2), but the first two means are not the preferred ones whereas the temporal devices go along with the highlighting of the positive polarity.

On the basis of their results for Italian, French, German and Dutch, Dimroth *et al.*⁷ state that there is a Germanic way versus a Romance way of building textual cohesion in narrative texts such as the ones elicited. The Germanic way is based on the highlighting of assertion, that is why German and Dutch can be described as "assertion oriented languages"⁸; the Romance way focuses on the entity and time levels so consequently it can be defined as "non assertion oriented languages". By stating that, the authors enter the debate about the different way speakers of languages build perspective when organising information to produce an oral text. All the authors taking part in this debate have crucially contributed to define the "grammar of discourse" for some languages, namely the cohesion strategies that the native speakers of the latter select when facing an oral cognitively complex task, such as narrating, describing, etc.⁹. According to these scientists, the cohesion specificities observed for each language are strictly connected to the type of phenomena a certain language has or has not grammaticalized: so grammaticalization (or the lack of it) is seen as the key process for interpreting data.

2. Framework

The discussion about our findings will add to the debate on "the grammar of discourse" and "the perspective-taking" by a speaker when building a text in a specific language. As a matter of fact, these two concepts interface each other.

⁷ C. Dimroth, C. Andorno, S. Benazzo, J. Verhagen, *op. cit.*

⁸ Ivi, p. 3330: "In Dutch and German there is a special group of scope particles that lacks a direct translation equivalent in Italian and French. These are particles like Dutch *toch/wel* and German *doch/schon* (roughly meaning *indeed*) whose *stressed* variants mark that the utterance in which they appear is in contrast to an earlier, otherwise comparable utterance with opposite polarity [...] we will refer to these particles as assertion-related particles [...] because they evoke a proposition-level comparison of the utterance in which they occur to another assertion given in the co(n)text".

⁹ Cf. the several works by M. Carroll, M. Lambert, C. von Stutterheim, A. Rossdeutscher, *Subordination in narratives and macrostructural planning: taking a comparative point of view*, in C. Fabricius Hansen, W. Ramm (eds.), *'Subordination' versus 'Coordination' in Sentence and Text*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 161-184; D. I. Slobin, *Learning to think for speaking*, in «Pragmatics» 1 (1987), n. 1, pp. 7-25; C. Von Stutterheim, R. Nüse, J. Murcia Serra, *Crosslinguistic differences in the conceptualisation of events*, in H. Hasselgård, S. Johansson, B. Behrens, C. Fabricius-Hansen (eds.), *Information Structure in a Cross-Linguistic Perspective*, Rodopi, Amsterdam-New York 2002, pp. 179-198; C. Von Stutterheim, W. Klein, *Quaestio and l-perspectivation*, in C.F. Graumann, W. Kallmeyer (eds.), *Perspectivity and perspectivation in discourse*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 2002, pp. 59-88; C. Von Stutterheim, R. Nüse, *Processes of conceptualisation in language production*, in «Linguistics», [Special Issue: *Perspectives in language production*] (2003), pp. 851-881.



In the last decade, several studies have shown that the grammar of discourse – on which the way of establishing anaphoric linkage and textual cohesion in a certain language depends – reflects *the perspective-taking* typical of the native speakers of that language. The language specific effects that a language involves would reflect, in their turn, the grammaticized concepts it offers to encode and link information units¹⁰. These effects are highly specific and, as a matter of fact, second language learners have serious difficulties in identifying and mastering them (cf. *ibid.*).

The works just cited will be our reference during our study, along with the *Quaestio* model of textual analysis by Klein and von Stutterheim¹¹. According to the *Quaestio* approach, a text is shaped and informationally organised thanks to an internal question that the speakers of a linguistic community progressively learn to formulate since their early childhood. The prototypical *Quaestio* for a narrative text is *what has happened to the protagonist in time X?*, in which the event is the information to specify, or *focus*, whereas the protagonist and the time span are topicalized. But the *Quaestio* is influenced by the formal and conceptual models that a certain language makes available, which explains why speakers with different mother tongues work out relatively different *Quaestiones*, namely *Quaestiones* highlighting a specific component (for instance, *what has happened to the protagonist and why?*, *what has happened to the protagonist after time X?* etc.).

In Klein e von Stutterheim's opinion, the *Quaestio* would guide the formal and conceptual choices of the speakers while producing the information structure of a text (introduction, maintenance, shifting and reintroduction of referents)¹², or *ref-*

¹⁰ Cf., among other works, D.I. Slobin, *Language and thought online: cognitive consequences of linguistic relativity*, in D. Gentner, S. Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Advances in the Investigation of Language and Thought*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2003, pp. 157-192; M. Carroll, C. von Stutterheim, *Typology and information organisation: perspective taking and language specific effects in the construal of events*, in A. Giacalone Ramat (ed.), *Typology and Second Language Acquisition*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 2003, pp. 365-402; M. Carroll, C. von Stutterheim, R. Nüse, *The thought and language debate: a psycholinguistic approach*, in T. Pechman, C. Habel (eds.), *Multidisciplinary Approaches to Language Production*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2004, pp. 184-218; C. Von Stutterheim, M. Carroll, W. Klein, *Two ways of construing complex temporal structures*, in F. Lenz (ed.), *Deictic Conceptualization of Space, Time and Person* [Cognitive Linguistics Research], Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 2003, pp. 97-133; M. Carroll, M. Lambert, *Crosslinguistic analysis of temporal perspectives in text production*, in H. Hendricks (ed.), *The Structure of Learner Variety*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 2005, pp. 203-230; P. Giuliano, L. Di Maio, *Abilità descrittiva e coesione testuale in L1 e L2: lingue romanze e lingue germaniche a confronto*, in «Linguistica e filologia», 25 (2008), pp. 125-205 and P. Giuliano, *Contrasted and maintained information in a narrative task: analysis of texts in English and Italian as L1s and L2s*, in L. Roberts, C. Lindqvist, C. Bardel, N. Abrahamsson, *EUROSLA Yearbook 2012*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 2012, vol. 12, pp. 30-62.

¹¹ W. Klein, C. von Stutterheim, *Referential movement in descriptive and narrative discourse*, in R. Dietrich, C. F. Graumann (eds.), *Language Processing in Social Context*, Elsevier Science Publishers B. V., Amsterdam 1989, pp. 39-76 and W. Klein, C. von Stutterheim, *Text structure and referential movement*, in «Sprache und pragmatik», 22 (1991), pp. 1-32.

¹² The *Quaestio* shaping a whole text is said to be global by contrast to an incidental or local *Quaestio* a speaker can answer during his textual production, and that he can abandon immediately afterwards. So, with respect to our stimulus, a narrator could focus on a protagonist instead of the event, answering by that a local *Quaestio* such as *Who else jumps?*



erential movement. On the whole, this internal question “dictates” the discourse principles coherence and cohesion are based on; as a consequence, it would reflect the perspective specific to a community of speakers¹³.

Now, regarding our data, our purpose is to speculate on the type of more or less unconscious principles native speakers of English and Spanish adopt when selecting conceptual contents and formal means for linguistic production, especially when producing a narrative text. The results will show how far these two languages are in terms of textual cohesion with respect to the narrative text we proposed and with respect to the other Romance and Germanic languages already investigated (cf. § 1 above). Furthermore, they will allow us to explore the “assertion oriented” and “non assertion oriented” character of English and Spanish.

3. *The informants and the data*

Our data are retellings of the video clip *The Finite Story* produced by English native speakers and Spanish native speakers (20 subjects for each group). As to the English speaking group, fourteen out of twenty have always lived in USA and never spent a long period abroad (they were interviewed in Italy during a two-week holiday). For the other six subjects, five come from England and one from Ireland: the five English speakers have been living in Italy (where they were interviewed) for several years but they use English daily for their job; the Irish informant was in Italy thanks to the ERASMUS project. Concerning the Spanish native speakers, all of them are from Madrid, where they also live and were interviewed. All subjects of both groups have a university degree, but whereas most of the Spanish speakers studied modern languages, the English native informants have more varied types of degrees.

As regard the languages of our two groups, we can state that none of them has a highly specialized group of assertive particles at its disposal such as the ones available for the German or Dutch speaker (cf. § 1). In this respect, English is comparable to Romance languages including Spanish. As far as prosodic contrastive stress is concerned, it can be exploited to mark information structure both in Romance and Germanic languages, but intonational prominence plays a greater role in Germanic languages (concerning German and Dutch, Dimroth *et al.* (2010) point out that contrastive stress on the finite verb or auxiliary can have a function that is very much related to the function of the assertion-related particles). A contrast on a finite light verb (auxiliary, copula) seems, actually, very uncommon in Romance languages¹⁴.

¹³ P. Giuliano, L. Di Maio, *op. cit.*, show that different pragmatic ways of conceiving interaction across cultures also influences the selection of linguistic and conceptual preferences.

¹⁴ Dimroth *et al.*, *op. cit.*, state that “we have occasionally observed pitch accents on lexical verbs in our French and [Northern] Italian data. While it is known that Romance languages mark both narrow and contrastive focus with a pitch accent [...] to the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study dealing with the prosodic marking of the *verum focus* in Romance languages” (p. 3336, note 18). La citazione non fa riferimento al testo citato nella nota precedente, cancellare IVI o sistemare.

The possible means for some Romance speakers are the holophrastic particle *sì* (It. *Signor Blu sì che salta*; Sp. *el señor Azul sí salta*: “Mr Blue yes that [he] jumps”) and the adverb *bien* (Fr. *M. Bleu il a bien sauté*: ‘Mr Blue he has well jumped’). As to English, it is possible to highlight the finite component of a verb phrase by *do/does/did* or, similarly to other Germanic languages, to prosodically stress the finite lexical (or auxiliary or copula) verb.

4. *The analysis of the data*

When it comes to the configurations we decided to focus on (cf. § 1), the analysis of the data shows that our two groups of informants have recourse to several different strategies.

By the first strategy, the enunciator focuses on the subject of the predication (one of the protagonist entities); the second strategy points out the relationship between the subject of the predication and the predication itself, namely the notional nexus or assertion; the third strategy highlights the content of the predication; the fourth strategy focuses on the time spans; the fifth one, finally, is carried out contrasting adverbs such It. *invece, al contrario...* and Sp. *en cambio, al contrario...*

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

(5) IS 1, English L1: Mr Green... doesn't want to jump //... even he [= Mr Red] doesn't want to jump out onto the blanket // *MR BLUE* though ... jumps straight away

(6) IS I, Spanish L1: El vecino el señor Azul *éste* sale por su ventana y se da cuenta que la parte izquierda del tejado está empezando a arder +//

“The neighbor Mr. Blue *this one* leans out of his window and realizes that the left side of the roof is starting to catch fire”

The English native speaker can employ the prosodic accent on the protagonist entity for the information structure I (ex. 5), signalling that a specific character behaves differently from the rest. In Spanish this same meaning is conveyed by the demonstrative *éste*.

For IS II, the Spanish group is the only one exploiting the first strategy, which is realized by the additive particle *también*: in this case the same character finally does something he did not do before:

(7) IS II, Spanish L1: Finalmente el Señor Rojo *también* salta

“Finally Mr Red also jumps”

When it comes to the second strategy, it consists of a prosodic accent on the finite lexical verb, both in English and Spanish, and is once again exploited for the



first configuration (a situation not applying before to a protagonist applies later):

(8) IS I, English L1: Mr Green slept while the fire became stronger and stronger // MR RED slept while the fire became stronger and stronger // Mr Blue *WOKe* up and he *SAW* the fire

(9) IS I, Spanish L1: Y cuando lo intentan con el señor Azul como el fuego está en su casa éste *SALta* <supongo_que_no_le_queda_más_remedio> +//.

“And when they try with Mr. Blue since the fire is in his house this one *JUMps*”

For the third strategy English native speakers have recourse to the auxiliary *do* to highlight the relationship given by the notional nexus; the Spanish native speakers do the same by the means of *sí* or *sí que*. For both groups of informants, these strategies are employed just for the second configuration. Here are some examples:

(10) IS II, English L1: But *finally* Mr Red *did* jump out of the window

(11) IS II, Spanish L1: Hay fuego dentro de la casa del azul y él *sí* se tira

‘There is fire in the house of Mr Blue and he *yes* jumps’

(12) IS II, Spanish L1: Y el señor Azul *sí que* se ha dado cuenta

“And Mr Blu *yes that* has realized”

Engl. *do* validates a predicative relationship previously negated¹⁵; conversely, Sp. *sí* is a marker of general validation of the predicative relationship. As to the operator *que*, it refers back to something stated previously so, as a result, when it is combined with the operator *sí*, that gives place to a grammaticized structure equating the function of Engl. *do*.

As to the fourth strategy it consists of adverbial expressions in both groups of narrations and is found both for IS I and IS II:

(13) IS II, English L1: But *finally* Mr Red *did* jump out of the window

(14) IS II, Spanish L1: *Al final* el señor Rojo *sí* que se tira por la ventana

“Finally Mr Red does jump out of the window”

Lastly, the fifth strategy consists of contrasting adverbs or adverbial expressions contrasting the opposite actions of different protagonists. It is not frequent and is exploited just by Spanish speakers:

(15) IS I, Spanish L1: *En cambio* el Señor Azul al haber fuego en su propia habitación tiene miedo a quemarse y salta

“Conversely, Mr Blue having fire in his own house is afraid of getting burned and jumps”

¹⁵ G. Gagliardelli, *Elementi di grammatica enunciativa della lingua inglese*, CLUEB, Bologna 1999, pp. 75 and 117.



5. Discussion of the results and the typological debate

The results emerging from the analysis of the narrations produced by our native speakers of English and Spanish show that the latter share four similar strategies: a strategy focusing on the protagonist entities, two strategies highlighting the content of the predicate or the assertion nexus, a strategy focusing on the time spans. Nevertheless, the frequency of occurrence of each of them is not the same for the two languages and/or the same information structure.

Spanish speakers exploit the highlighting of the assertion nexus and that of the content predicate much more frequently, and especially for IS I (cf. tables 4 and 5 below), unlike English native speakers, who massively alternate these two strategies with the highlighting of the entity and time.

The following tables show the type of contrasts emerging from our data in comparison with those from Dimroth *et al.*'s data.

Table 2 - Results for IS I: Germanic Languages.

<i>Information structures</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Dutch</i>
Change of time	Adverbs	Finally 1, now 1	-	-
	Total	2 (28%)		
Change of entity	Stressed NP/ pronouns	MR BLUE 3	DER (3)	HIJ (2)
	Strong/demonstr. pronouns	-	dieser (1)	-
	Cleft sentences	He's the brave one who 1	-	-
	Particles	-	nur (3)	-
	Adverbs	-	als einziger (1)	-
	Total	4 (56%)	8 (53%)	2 (8%)
	Change of polarity	Particles	-	doch (3)
Stressed VP		WOKe up 1	SPRINGT (2), STEIGT (1), IST (1)	MOEST (2), SPRINGT (1)
Total		1 (12%)	7 (47%)	23 (92%)
Total markings		7	15	25

**Table 3 - Results for IS II: Germanic Languages.**

<i>Information structures</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Dutch</i>
Change of Entity	Additive particles	Also, too, as well 6 (15%)		
Change of time	Temp. adverbials	This time: 10; finally: 16; at last: 1; once the fire is in Mr Green's room: 1; at the 3 rd time: 1	diesmal (4), schließlich (3), zum Schluß (1), letztendlich (1), JETZT (3), NUN (2), DANN (1)	Deze/dit keer (5), uiteindelijkijk (13), NU/NOU (11)
	Verbal periph.	2	-	-
	Other		-	-
	Total	31 (77,5%)	15 (45%)	29 (45%)
Change of polarity	Particles		doch (15)	wel (16), toch (12), toch wel (5), alsnog (1)
	Stressed VP; Engl. do + V	3	ERREICHT (3)	SPRINGT
	Other			
	Total	3 (7,5%)	18 (55%)	35 (55%)
Total markings		40	33	64

Table 4. Results for IS I: Romance Languages.

<i>Information structures</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>Spanish L1</i>	<i>French L1</i>	<i>Italian L1</i>
Change of time	Adverbs	-	-	Finalmente (2), alla fine (2)
	Total	-	-	4 (18%)
Change of entity	Stressed NP/pronouns	-	-	-
	Strong/demonstr. pronouns	El signor Azul éste 1	lui (14), celui-ci (1)	-
	Cleft sentences	-	-	è l'unico che (3), è il primo a (1)
	Particles	-	-	Solo (2)
	Adverbs	En cambio (1) Al contrario (1)	par contre (3), en revanche (1)	invece (11), mentre (1)
	Total	3 (17%)	19 (86%)	18 (82%)
Change of polarity	Particles	Sí [que] (14)	bien (1)	-
	Stressed VP	SALta (1)	VU (2)	-
	Total	15 (83%)	3 (14%)	-
Total markings		18	22	22



Table 5 - Results for IS II: Romance Languages.

<i>Information structures</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>Spanish L1</i>	<i>French L1</i>	<i>Italian L1</i>
Change of entity	Particles	también (6)	-	Anche (21), ugualmente (1)
	Total	6 (11%)	-	22 (39%)
Change of time	Temp. adverbials	al final (10), ahora (5), finalmente (6), esta vez (5) por fin (4), Al fin (1), por fin (4)	cette fois(ci) (8), finalement (12), enfin (4), là (1)	questa volta (11) finalmente (4), alla fine (6)...
	Verbal periph.	Acabar + GER (1)	finir par (7)	-
	Other	-	ça y est (1)	-
	Total	42 (88%)	32 (100%)	33 (59%)
Same predication	Anaphoric VP	-	1	1
	Total	-	1	1
Change of polarity	Particles	Si [que] (6)	-	-
	Stressed VP	-	-	SALta
	Total	6 (11%)	-	1 (2%)
Total markings		54	32	56

As the tables demonstrate, the perspective selected by our Spanish speakers when organising a narrative text full of referential contrasts such as *The Finite Story* is a perspective which preferentially highlights the assertion nexus or the predicate content, so their narrations are “assertion oriented”, and much more than our narrations in English.

The highlighting of the polarity contrast in Spanish, focusing on the assertion nexus or the predicate content, is certainly the more unexpected result according to the typological patterns proposed by Dimroth *et al.* (2010), where Dutch and German are described to be “assertion oriented languages” in opposition to Italian and French. The comparison between the six languages in question pushes us to state that the typological patterns proposed by the authors cannot work the way they are but must be meant as parts of a *continuum*.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, we can ask how the *Quaestio* approach can explain the differences between assertive languages and non-assertive languages. From the point of view of the many scholars working on the textual perspective (or discourse grammar) in languages (cf. §§ 1 and 2), the *Quaestio* is a conceptual tool forged by the formal means made available by a specific language, means who push the speakers of that language to make special choices both on the grammatical and content levels when building textual cohesion. Now, as to Spanish speakers, they



select a perspective oriented towards polarity contrasts by means of the general marker *sí* – combined with *que* when underlining a possible controversy – and not by a range of specific repertoire of particles, which their language does not put at their disposal, as it conversely happens for Dutch and German speakers (c. § 1). As a consequence, the highlighting of the assertion nexus and the predicate content, in modern Spanish, cannot be justified by a strong grammaticalization process of the assertion perspective as it seems to be the case for Dutch and German. Conversely, the presence in modern English of the *do* auxiliary, should, theoretically, make the recourse to the contrast of polarity very frequent, which does not happen in our test. In our opinion, the solution to this apparent dilemma may be found in a larger conception of the *Quaestio* model, according to which the internal *Quaestio* is shaped not only by grammaticalization processes (the *do* auxiliary is certainly a more grammaticalized phenomenon than the generic *sí*) but also by the unconscious decisions that enunciators take by virtue of their communicative needs with respect to a specific co-enunciator: in other terms, the grammatical and semantic levels must necessarily be considered in agreement with *the enunciative level*, a level which is too often neglected in some frameworks of analysis.

Symbols and abbreviations

- // marks the border between the comments concerned with the different segments of the video clip
- # marks a short pause
- : marks the lengthening of a phoneme
- ... refers to the elimination of a passage
- [...] contains the analyst's observations or additions
- PART (assertive) particle
- IS information structure
- Wrt with respect to