

Evidentiality and Socioepistemic Status of Participants. A Case Study of Spanish *por lo visto* ‘seemingly’ and *al parecer* ‘apparently’*

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Abstract

This paper presents an interactional approach to the evidential discourse markers *por lo visto* ‘seemingly’ and *al parecer* ‘apparently’. It is shown that these markers show a clear preference for interactional actions which involve exchange of information (tell, ask and reply). Moreover, it is argued that the distribution and the function of the two markers are related to the socioepistemic status of the speaker and the organization of the sequence. Primary knowers usually use evidential markers in second parts of the adjacency pair, with a distancing effect, whereas non-primary knowers use evidential markers in first parts. This way speakers seek a confirmation in the next turn, which has a mitigation effect. Our interactional analysis offers a more contextualized and detailed characterization of evidential discourse markers and allows us to understand the type of activities speakers are engaged in when using these knowledge related linguistic expressions.

Keywords: conversation analysis; discourse markers epistemic asymmetry; evidentiality; interaction; socioepistemic status

Resum. *Evidencialitat i estatus socioepistèmic dels participants. Anàlisi del cas de por lo visto i al parecer en espanyol*

Aquest article presenta un enfocament interaccional dels marcadors discursius evidencials *por lo visto* i *al parecer*. Es demostra que aquests marcadors presenten una clara preferència per accions interactives que impliquen intercanvi d'informació (dir, preguntar i respondre). A més, s'argumenta que la distribució i la funció dels dos marcadors estan relacionades amb l'estat socioepistèmic del parlant i l'organització de la seqüència. Els coneixedors primaris solen utilitzar marcadors evidencials en la segona part de la parella d'adjacents, amb un efecte de distanciament, mentre que els coneixedors no primaris utilitzen marcadors evidencials en la primera part. D'aquesta manera, els parlants busquen una confirmació en el torn següent, amb un efecte de mitigació.

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La nostra ànalisi interaccional ofereix una caracterització més contextualitzada i detallada dels marcadors discursius evidencials i ens permet comprendre el tipus d'activitats en què participen els parlants quan utilitzen aquest coneixement vinculat a expressions lingüístiques.

Paraules clau: ànalisi conversacional; marcadors discursius; asimetria epistèmica; evidencialitat; interacció; estatus socioepistèmic

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1. Introduction

In this paper we examine how Spanish speakers use the evidential discourse markers *por lo visto* ‘seemingly’ and *al parecer* ‘seemingly/apparently’ in different types of talk-in-interaction, that is, with different degrees of formality. It is claimed that, in addition to their inference and hearsay readings, both adverbial expressions can be recruited for specific interactional discourse strategies in conversation. Our analysis will not review the evidential values expressed by *por lo visto* and *al parecer*, which have been extensively accounted for in the literature discussed in Section 1.2. In this paper the focus will be on the socioepistemic status of the speaker and his/her coparticipant(s) in terms of “access to knowledge” and “right to know” in different spoken genres (spontaneous conversation, radio interviews, talk shows, consultancies and news). (cf. Sidnell’s 2012 proposal of the “right to know”)

The paper is organized in the following fashion. In the remainder of the introduction, the background of our study will be sketched, both in the general and interactional-linguistic literature and in the Hispanic linguistic literature. In Section 2., we will discuss in detail our data and methodology. The results of our analysis are given in Section 3. Finally, Section 4. presents a series of conclusions.

1.1. Evidentiality and interaction

The notion of evidentiality sees the light in the field of language description and typology. Most typologists consider evidentiality as a grammatical category fulfilling some formal, paradigmatic criteria. Other authors conceive evidentiality as a functional category and reject the grammatical nature of evidentiality. Whether grammatical or functional, evidentiality is often presented as a category including expressions and meanings that qualify a proposition. Such an approach, which stems from the tradition of logic, is mainly concerned with the scope of the evidential markers over the sentence which is usually formed by the predicate and

its arguments. Yet, in many evidentiality studies of the first generation hardly any attention is paid to the embedding of evidential markers in the broader discourse dynamics (cf. many papers in Chafe & Nichols 1986; Palmer 1986, 2001; Dendale & Tasmowski 2001; Aikhenvald 2004; Nuyts 2001, 2009; Cornillie 2007, 2009; Squartini and colleagues 2007; Boye & Harder 2009; and Wiemer 2010, among many others, but see Pietrandrea 2007 for discourse configurations).

The interactional-linguistic tradition, by contrast, has addressed the category of evidentiality as one of the many tools that speakers have at their disposal to organize the dynamics of discourse. In this tradition, special attention has been paid to the presence of coparticipants (speaker-hearer) and the role of evidentials that these participants select in spontaneous interaction.¹ Against the background of the negotiation between coparticipants, it is worth noting that responsibility has been a key element in several discourse studies of evidentiality. Hill & Irvine (1993) refer to the responsibility of speakers when they encode evidence in their utterances in spoken interaction. In a similar vein, Kamio (1994, 1997) focusses on the “territory of information”. Fox (2001: 176) presents an account which, in addition to responsibility, also includes authority and entitlement in the speaker-hearer interplay. She stresses that evidential marking is “responsive to and constructive of the relationship between speaker and coparticipant(s)” and calls for special attention to the “precise sequential location in which the utterance is produced”.

One of the most influential papers is Heritage and Raymond (2005), in which they develop the concepts of epistemic authority and epistemic subordination and apply them to the speaker-hearer interaction. Heritage and Raymond (2005: 22) observe that speakers who first assess a statement express “a tacit claim to epistemic primacy”. In this discourse context, evidentials can help the speaker upgrade or downgrade the right to assess. In doing so, sentences with evidentials are opposed to unqualified declarative statements, which then contain an “unmarked claim of primacy” (Heritage & Raymond 2005: 22). In the same line, Hanks (2012: 169) confirms this view when he states that evidentials serve to “mitigate or reinforce the speaker’s authority and right to know some bit of information, which may fit into an argument strategy vis-à-vis the interlocutor”. Finally, Sidnell (2012) examines the “epistemic asymmetry” in conversation and deepens the dynamics relative to the right to assess. Rather than accounting for the speaker’s downgrading of his/her claim to know, Sidnell (2012: 315) focusses on “a knowledge differential between speaker and recipient”. Moreover, he broadens the analysis of evidentials in two ways: (i) he stresses that evidentials are but one of the many linguistic (and non-linguistic) resources which the speaker has recourse to for his/her epistemic positioning in interaction; and (ii) the negotiation between speaker and coparticipants is one dimension of the discourse actions performed by speaker and coparticipants.

Furthermore, other linguists working in the tradition of interactional linguistics focus on the speaker stance study taking into account the function of evidential markers: Kärkkäinen (2003) describes how evidentials can be used in on-line plan-

1. García Ramón (2018) offers a critical and updated discussion of Conversation Analysis inspired by approaches to epistemicity (and evidentiality).

ning of the discourse, i.e. discourse production at the very moment of enunciation and Clift (2006) discusses how interaction develops when speakers use reported speech.

1.2. Interaction in Spanish

In the Hispanic linguistic literature, the categorial status of discourse markers with an evidential meaning is not entirely clear. Some papers focus on lexical expressions that are exclusively used as evidential markers, as it is the case of *por lo visto* and *al parecer*. Other papers deal with grammaticalizing expression types that face layering with free uses, such as the phraseological ones, e.g. *se ve (que)* ‘one sees that, apparently’, *según dicen* ‘as they say’ or *según parece* ‘as it seems’ (see González, Izquierdo & Loureda 2016 for an overview). In this paper, we will focus on two expressions that have become stable markers, namely *por lo visto* y *al parecer*, which have received a lot of attention in the literature. In the following lines we will present the previous research on the two markers. First, Martín Zorraquino & Portolés (1999: 63.6) stress the different degrees of grammaticalization: whereas *por lo visto* is completely fixed, *al parecer* presents a certain degree of variation (*a {mi, tu, su} parecer, al parecer de Ana*).

Second, from a semantic-pragmatic point of view, the literature states that both markers code the indirect access to the information as their basic meaning, which then contextually can be interpreted as the result of an inferential process or a reference to hearsay readings² (Cornillie & Gras 2015; Taranilla 2015). *Por lo visto* lends itself to express inferential readings, although hearsay readings are also common, whereas *al parecer* is seen as a hearsay marker, but it can also express inferences (González Ramos 2005, 2016).

Third, in addition to exclusively evidential readings, previous studies have also examined other functions or meanings with a pragmatic effect. As far as *por lo visto* is concerned, Martín Zorraquino & Portolés (1999: 63.6) observe a pragmatic dimension of irony and avoidance of taking responsibility, and González Ramos (2005) refers to an additional effect of questioning the content of the utterance. Finally, Martín Zorraquino (2013) describes the polyphonic dimension of the adverbial markers under examination.³

Fourth, from a pragmatic and discourse point of view, Cornillie (2010a,b) deals with the usage of Spanish evidential and epistemic adverbs in terms of turn-taking strategies in Spanish conversation, but does not examine knowledge asymmetries between participants. Kotwica (2013) accounts for *al parecer* on

2. The distinction between encoded meanings and contextual meaning can also be seen as a distinction between semantics and pragmatics, as Hanks (2012: 175-176) points out: “[f]rom a pragmatic perspective, the challenge is not to delimit the category of evidentiality, but to distinguish which aspects of evidential practice are properly part of the grammar and semantics of the language, and which are part of the contexts in which speech occurs”. For a discussion on the semantics-pragmatics interface of evidentiality see also Cornillie & Marín-Arrese (2015).
3. For a general description of evidential discourse markers in Spanish, see González, Izquierdo & Loureda (eds.) (2016).

the basis of the concepts of mitigation and distancing from the speaker's perspective. Estellés & Albelda (2014) take into account the coparticipant, but focus on politeness strategies and their correlation with the prosody of Spanish evidentials such as *por lo visto*. In an overview paper on mitigation (in Spanish "atenuación"), Albelda (2016) presents three functions of the evidential discourse markers *al parecer*, *por lo visto*, *parece ser*, *según parece* and *según dicen*: (i) mitigation, when the face of (one of) the interlocutors could be threatened;⁴ (ii) neutral, when the marker refers to the source of information; and (iii) ironical dissociation, when the speaker distances him/herself from his/her own message. The results of this research indicate that, although mitigation is one of the most frequent functions of evidentiality, there are also non-mitigating uses of evidential markers, whether they are neutral or distancing, and that the distribution of the functions is influenced by the discourse genre.

Fifth, following Cornillie & Delbecque's (2008) distinction between speaker commitment and speaker involvement, Albelda (2018: 206-207) argues that *por lo visto* and *se ve que* can be differentiated in terms of this opposition: *por lo visto* is inclined to a weak speaker involvement and a strong epistemic commitment to the certainty of the evidence, whereas *se ve que* can be described as containing strong speaker involvement (subjectivity) and a weak epistemic commitment.

Sixth, Taranilla (2015), building on the analysis of formal written data, shows that the inferential, quotative or strong rejection readings of *al parecer* which she calls "pragmatic effects", are closely related to discourse patterns. Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson's (2008: 446) definition of discourse pattern is "a recurrent interactional practice which has not become sedimented as a grammatical format, but is instead a pragmatic routine". In Taranilla's (2015) analysis, discourse patterns are not defined from an interactional point of view, but as the rhetorical function of the utterances that precede and/or follow the discourse marker (premise, conclusion, etc.) and the position of the marker with regard to these utterances. The relation between meaning and patterns is also relevant for our own approach. Although patterns in spoken interaction are not defined in terms of the rhetorical organization of utterances, they are determined by the organization of the sequence, the types of actions being performed and the speakers' relationships, especially in terms of knowledge of and experience with the topics being referred to in the conversation.

Our literature review has not clarified whether *por lo visto* and *al parecer* are semantically, pragmatically and discursively different from each other and whether they are used in different discourse contexts. The idea of focusing on the differences between both expressions stems from two different research traditions. On the one hand, in the Hispanic tradition, researchers start from the presupposition

4. Albelda (2016) takes into account both Positive Face and Negative Face, since she deals with the analysis of assertive and directive speech acts. Yet, as it will be clear below, in this paper we focus on speech acts that transfer information (speaking, asking) in which the autonomy of the participant is not threatened. Hence, when using the concept of Face we refer to the positive dimension: "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman 1967: 5).

that discourse markers cannot be seen as a free alternation, but have to be examined in specific contexts in which switching to another marker is not possible (see, for instance, Portolés 1998, Montolio 2001). On the other hand, traditional evidentiality studies have been based on the rich typological literature, which examines and describes languages with grammatical evidential paradigms. Thus, as far as the expression of evidential values is concerned, each marker is opposed to other markers belonging to the same paradigm. Yet, this does not hold for languages that lack such a paradigm.

Finally, aiming at answering the question whether the evidential discourse markers (*por lo visto*, *al parecer*, *se ve (que) y evidentemente*) form an evidential paradigm, Cornillie & Gras (2015) examine the distributional features (semantic, grammatical or interactional) of *por lo visto* and *al parecer* in Spanish conversation. The main conclusion of the (2015) paper is that the two evidential markers do not present a complementary distribution in any of the dimensions analyzed (semantics, grammar, interaction). That is, they do not witness restrictions on their evidential readings – all can express different types of indirect evidentiality, be it inferential or reportative – and they do not behave differently in terms of specific position in the turn, although some register preferences are observed: in comparison with *por lo visto*, *al parecer* is more common in formal genres than in spontaneous speech (see also González Ramos 2005).

As a summary of the above literature review, three elements should be emphasized. First, both markers can express different types of indirect evidentiality without a strict distribution between them (Cornillie & Gras 2015; Taranilla 2015; González Ramos 2016). Second, the specific evidential meaning is related to the discourse pattern in which the marker is embedded (Taranilla 2015). Third, both markers can convey mitigation readings (when the speaker is involved in face-work), neutral ones (when they exclusively are concerned with the information source) or dissociating ones (when speakers distance themselves from their own message) (Albelda 2016). The same holds for other less grammaticalized evidential markers as *según dicen* and *según parece*, amongst others.

In line with previous studies (Cornillie & Gras 2015; Albelda 2016; González Ramos 2016), the two markers will be analyzed together, as they belong to a group of closely related expressions. We will do so by means of a qualitative analysis of the interactional activities in which participants are engaged in while they use evidential markers. The general aim of this paper is to deepen our understanding of the discourse function of the two markers. In particular, there are three main objectives: (i) to analyze the evidential markers in conversation with a focus on the socioepistemic status of coparticipants and the knowledge differential (cf. Sidnell 2012, already present in Fox 2001 and Heritage & Raymond 2005), (ii) to account for their location in the sequence, (iii) to examine whether these markers combine with other markers with similar or different functions (more narrow scope than Sidnell's (2012: 315) option to include “all the other practices conversationalist use to modulate the epistemic claims that attend their talk”). Another objective should be to compare socioepistemic negotiation practices with and without evidential-epistemic markers (cf. Fox 2001; Heritage & Raymond 2005).

Yet, this goes beyond the scope of the present paper and, hence, will be left for future research.

The following research questions will guide our analysis:

- (i) What type of actions are coparticipants performing when using evidential discourse markers? Do these actions vary according to discourse genres?
- (ii) What role does the (as)symmetry of knowledge ('right to know') play in the selection of evidential discourse markers in Spanish conversation?

Before we pass on to the analysis, we will first present the methodology of our research.

2. Data and methodology

The analysis presented below is based on qualitative corpus research, although frequency distribution is also taken into account to describe patterns or tendencies of use. The corpus that we used is the *Corpus oral de referencia de la lengua española contemporánea* (Corlec), which contains spoken interaction from the Madrid area recorded at the beginning of the 1990s. More specifically, we worked with the subpart titled Conversations, which constitutes one fourth of the whole corpus (269.500 out of 1.100.000 words), and divided it further into more specific types of conversations. For this paper, we have analyzed the interactional dynamics of 42 contexts in detail. In our sample, we find various subgenres within the realm of conversational Spanish: (i) proper conversations, i.e. spontaneous talk-in-interaction, (ii) interviews, which stands for semi-guided interaction with a journalist, (iii) talk shows, where there is interaction with different coparticipants, (iv) consulting talks, which contain queries about specific content (legal and medical advice) and (v) news, which refers to reporters in situ. The corpus has 28 tokens of *por lo visto* and 22 of *al parecer*, from which 8 have been eliminated, because of their non-evidential use. The distribution of contexts across genres is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of evidential discourse markers across genres in corpus CORLEC

	Talk show	Interview	Spontaneous conversation	News	Consulting talks	Total
<i>Por lo visto</i>	10	6	6	3	2	27
Relative frequency (/10.000)	0,37	0,22	0,22	0,11	0,07	
<i>Al parecer</i>	5	5	1	3	1	15
Relative frequency (/10.000)	0,19	0,19	0,04	0,11	0,04	
Total	15	11	7	6	3	42

The parameters of the analysis are the following: (i) position in the turn and the sequence, (ii) type of interactional activity, (iii) discourse genre, and (iv) socio-epistemic status.

With regard to the position within the turn, we distinguished between initial position and non-initial position of the evidential markers. Moreover, we have examined whether they are used in the first or second position of the adjacency pair. As for the different interactional activities, they have been categorized as questions, answers, assessments, confirmations, disagreements and telling utterances. Also, the tokens were labeled according to the discourse genre, in line with the above-mentioned parts of the corpus.

As for the socioepistemic status of the speaker, we have examined the previous experience and/or knowledge about the referents dealt with in the discourse. Taking into account this status we are in a position to distinguish between situations with epistemic symmetry, when both participants have the same knowledge, and epistemic asymmetry, when one of the participants has more knowledge than the other(s). As argued by García Ramón (2018: 154-162), epistemic (a)symmetry may be due to the general role of participants in interaction, as they also have preestablished roles regarding the topics discussed (e.g. medical doctor-patient, lawyer-client, professor-student, etc.); or may be due to specific epistemic role, which is defined depending on the situation in function of the specific knowledge of participants about the topic of the conversation. Thus, in a doctor patient interaction, the former has a general epistemic status of specialist; yet, the patient may have a specific epistemic status of primacy when talking about the symptoms which (s)he is experimenting. So as to operationalize this parameter, we have done a close reading of the context to determine whether the speaker is the primary knower (K+), whether the coparticipant is the primary knower (K-) or whether both speech participants have the same knowledge (K=).

3. Analysis: evidential discourse markers in spoken interaction

As a general result of the analysis, certain regularities emerge from the intersection of three key concepts: (i) type of action, (ii) socioepistemic status of the speakers ('right to know') and (iii) discourse genres. On the one hand, evidential discourse markers are generally used in communicative activities dealing with exchange of information (tell, ask, answer), and they are only occasionally used in assessment sequences. On the other hand, the socioepistemic status of the speaker sheds light on the strategic use of evidential discourse markers in the interaction with his/her addressee(s): (i) these markers are used to express specific pragmatic effects, such as mitigation or irony, and (ii) they are used in specific slots of the sequential organization. We will turn to each of these points in the remainder of this section.

3.1. Evidential discourse markers and interactional actions

One of the fundamental dimensions of an interactional analysis of a linguistic form is the type of activity that speakers are engaged in when using that form. Previous

Table 2. Distribution of evidential discourse markers according to type of action and genre

Actions of speaker / Genres	Talk show	Interview	Spontaneous conversation	News	Consulting talks	Total
Telling	5	3	3	2		13
Answering	4	2	2	3	2	11
Asking questions	1	6			1	8
Disagreement	3		1			4
Assessment	1			1		2
Confirmation	1		1			2
Total	15	11	7	6	3	42

analyses of evidentials have paid special attention to activities such as assessment⁵ and confirmation (Heritage & Raymond 2005; Sidnell 2012). However, as Table 2 shows, assessment and confirmation are quite infrequent in our corpus. By contrast, evidential discourse markers are used in turns in which speakers deal with transfer of information: telling, asking questions and answering.

The role of evidential markers in telling can be observed in the following extract taken from an informal spontaneous conversation among a group of friends. The speech participants in (1) are talking about a helmet of a common friend, which was stolen some time ago. As the transcription shows, they all have some knowledge about this helmet, but H2 answers some of the questions made by H3. However, when he is asked about the details of how the helmet was stolen (*Y... pero ¿qué? ¿le rompieron el pitón? ¿No tenía pitón, o qué?* ‘And... but what? Did they break his chain? It did not have a chain or what?’), H2 downgrades his own epistemic stance about the referred situation by means of using the evidential discourse marker *por lo visto* as well as other lexical epistemic markers (e.g. *no lo sé* ‘I don’t know’).

(1) Acon006b: A group of friends talk about a helmet that was stolen to a common friend.

<H3> *¿Le han mangao el casco?*
 ‘Have they stolen his helmet?’

<H2> *No, pero ya hace tiempo.*
 ‘No, but already a long time ago’

<H4> *Es un tío, macho... Este siempre tiene suerte. Va llegar a aparcar ¡pumba!*

5. Sidnell (2012: 304) offers the following definition of assessment: “an utterance that expresses its speaker’s positively or negatively valenced stance toward some person or object talked about”.

‘He is a guy, man.... This [guy] is always lucky. He will manage to park... baf!’

<H2> Ya hace, ya hace... tres meses o cuatro meses. Un casco de puta madre que le habían regalado, que valía...

‘Already, already ... three or four months ago. A perfect helmet that he had received as a present, worth...

<H3> ¿El Shoei ese que tenía?

‘The Shoei one that he had?’

<H2> ¿Eh?

Eh?

<H3> Ese que tenía marca Shoei

‘The one who had the Shoei brand’

<H2> No sé qué marca, pero vamos, era, era de puta madre.

‘I don’t know which brand, but it was, was a very good one’

<H3> Era guay.

‘It was awesome’

<H1> Y... pero ¿qué? ¿le rompieron el pitón? ¿No tenía pitón, o qué?

‘And... but what? Did they break his chain? It did not have a chain or what?’

<H2> Este, o sea, tenía un chisme de enganchar el... el casco.

‘He, well, had a thing to lock the... the helmet’

<H1> Ah...

‘Mmm’

<H2> **Por lo visto** le venía bastante justo, y...

‘Apparently he was not too big, and...’

<H1> Sí. Que lo sierran, eso, o... o... lo... o le...

‘Yes... That they saw it, that... or or it or him’

<H2> ...y yo no sé cómo coño...

‘And I don’t know how the fuck...’

<H1> Lo apalancan.

‘They force it’

<H2> ...lo abrieron. No sé.

‘They opened it. I don’t know’

<H4> Pero él ama de cadena, ¿no?... Él ama de esos viejos...

‘But he had a thing with a chain, hadn’t he?... he had one of the old ones’

<H2> Él ama un chisme de estos de dos agujeros pa poner los dos cascos, ahí detrás...

‘He had a thing of those with two holes, to put two helmets, over there in the back’

<H4> ¿Pero uno de esos que son así como una horquilla?

‘But one of those which are like a T-square?’

<H1> No.

‘No’

A possible explanation of the high correlation we have found between evidential discourse markers and actions involving transfer of information may be due to

the type of genres included in the corpus being analyzed. Genres like news, talk shows and consulting talks are more prone to include a high ratio of assertions and question-answer sequences. Our results coincide with those of Albelda (2016), who finds predominantly (almost exclusively) evidential markers with assertive speech acts in three types of corpus: opinion texts, conversations and interviews, and debates related to the state of the nation.

Also, so as to confirm this tendency, we wanted to check whether the same frequency distribution is observed when we turn to a more informal conversation corpus like the *Corpus oral del lenguaje adolescente* (COLA, oral corpus of teenage talk), which only includes spontaneous speech. In the more than twenty examples from the Madrid subcorpus of COLA, evidential discourse markers are used in transfer of information (telling, asking). Consider, for instance, example (2), taken from a conversation between two sisters. They are talking about Juan, a man they both know. Speaker 05 is telling her sister about Juan's past. Like in the previous example, an evidential discourse marker is used in a situation in which information is transferred (a telling turn), in the absence of an assessment, although the presence of the marker has a mitigation effect.

(2) Maesb2 (COLA): Two sisters talk about a man they know.

<05> A Juan en la fábrica de su padre le llamaban el gordo.
'Juan was called "the fat" in his father's factory'

<01> Si no está tan gordo.
'But he's not so fat'

<05> Ya, pero antes pesaba más de cien kilos.
'Yeah, but before he used to weight more than one hundred kilos'

<01> ¿Ese? Pero si mide uno sesenta
'That one? But he's one meter sixty'

<05> Ya, pero es que antes estaba gordísimo.
'Yeah, but he used to be very fat'

<01> No jodas.
'Damn!'

<05> Pero adelgazó mazo en seis meses **por lo visto**.
'But he lost a lot in six months, apparently'

<01> Joder. ¿Y cómo?
'Wow. And how?'

<05> Pues porque hizo una dieta no como las que hace ama sino una en serio.
'Because he was on a diet, but not like the ones mom does, a serious one'

3.2. Evidential discourse markers, socioepistemic status and sequence organization

In this section we will explore the interactional motivations for the use of the two evidential markers and we will argue that the socioepistemic status of the speakers plays a major role in the interpretation of their meaning. Table 3 offers an overview of the distribution of the two expressions under examination across genres regarding the socioepistemic status of the speaker: primary knower (+), coparticipant as a

Table 3. Distribution of evidential discourse markers according to genre and socioepistemic status

Genre / Socioepistemic status	Talk show	Interview	Spontaneous Conversation	News	Consulting Talks	Total
+	7	2	6	3	2	20
-	3	9		3	1	16
=	5		1			6
Total	15	11	7	6	3	42

primary knower (-) or equal knowledge participants (=).⁶ As can be seen, evidential discourse markers tend to be used in knowledge asymmetric contexts, either when speakers consider themselves as primary knowers (relying on their knowledge of their previous experience in the matters discussed) or when the coparticipant is seen as the primary knower.

In the remainder of this section we will analyze the organization of the sequences in which the socioepistemic status of the speaker and coparticipant is correlated with the discourse function of the evidential.

3.2.1. *Symmetric situations*

As we have seen, symmetric knowledge situations are a minority of cases in our corpus. They only occur in two of the spoken genres analyzed: spontaneous conversations and talk shows. In these situations, evidential discourse markers downgrade the epistemic position of the speaker and favor a collaborative interaction with the coparticipants. Consider, example (3), from a talk show, in which several hosts comment on a recent escape from prison. After H3 introduces the topic in his first turn, the rest of hosts elaborate on this topic. In his first turn, H1 goes on and ironically hypothesizes that the goal of the government is to let prisoners escape, instead of keeping them in prison.

(3) ACON034A: Talk show, comment on prison break.

<H3> Sí, eso hay que dárselo al... señor de las cárceles, Antonio Asunción, porque... está llegando al... al extremo de que... de que va a tener de Boletín Oficial de las Instituciones al tebeo; porque se le escapan los presos, serrando los barrotes y atando sábanas, o sea, que... la realidad está copiando a la ficción... ‘Yes, this you have to give it to the mr of the prisons, Antonio Asunción, because... he is reaching the...the extreme point that ... that he will have from the Official Bulletin to the child comic because prisoners escape (from him),

6. In this paper we focus on the epistemic (a)symmetry. By contrast, other research distinguishes between epistemic (in)dependence and (a)symmetry. See García Ramón (2018) for a definition of these concepts and an application to the analysis of spoken interaction.

sawing bars and attaching bedlinens, hence, that.... the reality is copying the fiction'

<H2> Se le va a escap... Se le escaparía hasta el caco Bonifacio.

'They would escape.... Even the dummieest prisoner would escape'

<H3> En realidad, es una nueva política penitenciaria, que consiste en la reinserción por vía rápida...

'In fact, it is a new prison policy, which consists in the reinsertion by fast track'

<H4> Sí...

'Yes...'

<H2> Sí...

'Yes...'

<H3> En vez de puertas abiertas, rejas abiertas...

'Instead of open doors, open bars'

<H2> Rejas abier...Rejas serradas... Rejas serradas.⁷

'Open bars... Sawed bars... Sawed bars'

<H4> Serradas.

'Closed'

<H2> Sí, sí, es verdad.

'Yes, yes, it is true'

<H1> No, pero, **por lo visto**, lo que están haciendo ahora Instituciones Penitenciarias, digo por si sirve para... atenuar este descabello, es una política para sacar presos de la cárcel...

'No, but, apparently, what the Penitentiary Institutions are doing at the moment, I tell you so as to calm down the hysteria, is [applying] a policy to take prisoners away from the prison'

<H3> Claro.

'Of course'

<H1> Y entonces, les están confiando con que las sábanas resisten y dentro de un mes ya van a ponerlas más... livianas...

'And then, they trust them that the bed linens are strong enough and within a month they will make them more.... light'

<H3> Ahá...

'Mm'

<H1> Y cuando </simultáneo> se cuelguen del piso doce van a caer.

'And when they will come down, twelve will fall down'

<H3> Sí...

'Yes'

<H1> Para que no vuelvan, digo.

'So that they don't come back, I say'

<H3> Ah... No sé, no sé...

'Ah.... I don't know, I don't know'

7. H2 is playing with the similarity of two words: *cerradas* ('closed') and *serradas* ('sawed'). These two words have the same pronunciation in some Spanish varieties: [se'radas].

In a conversational context such as (3), in which all participants have equal knowledge of the situation being referred to, the use of a discourse marker that signals indirect access to this situation tends to receive an inferential reading. A reportative reading, i.e. a reproduction of hearsay, would mean that there is a knowledge asymmetry between speaker and coparticipants. The dissociation can be considered a contextual effect emerging from the combination of the encoded meaning of the marker (indirect access), the mutual knowledge status and the world knowledge. In political discourse, these dissociating uses are interpreted as acts of impoliteness, such as criticisms; by contrast, in genres such as talk shows, the effect usually is entertaining, since the criticism does not go directed to the coparticipant, but to a person who is absent (for instance, in this case, it is the Instituciones Penitenciarias).

3.2.2. *Asymmetric situations*

In situations with an asymmetric distribution of the right to know, evidential discourse markers are used as positive face-saving devices (Goffman 1967) in two types of sequence configurations: first position (telling or questions) or second position (answers). In first positions the speaker signals that (s)he probably has a more limited access to knowledge than the coparticipant and invites for a second part confirmation. This is typical of genres in which speakers have differentiated general epistemic roles due to their expert knowledge or their firsthand experience to a situation. This is the case in interviews or consulting talks. In this context, it is worth examining example (4), which comes from a radio program.

(4) PJUR005D: Lawyer consultancy on the radio regarding purchase costs.

<H2> Buenas tardes.
 ‘Good afternoon’
 <H6> Mire usté yo preguntar al abogado.
 ‘Look madam, I [will] ask the lawyer’
 <H2> Venga.
 ‘Okay’
 <H6> Que compré el piso hace tres años.
 ‘That I bought the apartment three years ago’
 <H2> Sí...
 ‘Yes...’
 <H6> Es que el constructor nos cobra... me ha cobrado de la parte... horizontal, esa cosas que se hacen, porque esto, digamos, que era un terreno.
 ‘It is that the construction company made us pay... has made us pay from the horizontal part..., these things happen, because of that, let’s say, that was a piece of land’
 <H3> Sí... sí...
 ‘Yes, yes’
 <H6> Me ha cobrado, **por lo visto**, cosas que no me debía de haber cobrado.
 A ver si ya ha prescrito, porque hace tres años que hice las escrituras.
 ‘He has charged me, apparently, things that he shouldn’t have charged me. Let’s see whether it hasn’t expired, because it’s 3 years ago that I did the writing’

<H3> Bueno, muy bien, pues...
'Well, very well, so...'
<H6> No quiero más... saber más que eso.
'I don't want more... to know more than that'
<H3> Cuelgue y escúcheme por antena.
'Close the call and listen to me via broadcasting'
<H6> Bueno, buenas tardes. Perdone. Adiós.
'Well, good afternoon. Apologies. Bye'
<H2> Mire usted, si el promotor le ha cobrado a usted, según sus palabras, querida... señora, la división horizontal, es absolutamente antijurídico, reitero, absolutamente antijurídico y tiene usted dentro de esos tres años la posibilidad para reclamar la devolución de esa cantidades.
'Look madam, if the promotor has charged you, according to your words, dear madam, the horizontal division is absolutely illegal, I insist, absolutely illegal, and you have up to three years the possibility to reclaim devolution of the amounts paid'

In this fragment, H6 is calling to a radio program to make a question to a lawyer regarding unjustified charges when buying her apartment. By using *por lo visto*, which has an inferential reading here, speaker H6 is downgrading her claim about the appropriateness of the apartment purchase cost and indirectly recognizing the addressee as a primary knower of the situation.

Something similar occurs in example (5), which comes from a radio interview with a judge. In the precedent context, the interviewer (H1) asks the judge about the existence of child trafficking in Spain. In his next turn, where our transcription starts, the interviewer introduces a new aspect of this topic: the lack of recognition of child trafficking as a specific type of crime. In this context, the use of *al parecer* can be seen as a strategy by which the speaker downgrades his epistemic stance and, at the same time, seeks a confirmation in the next turn, which is what happens indeed. In his reply, H3, as a primary knower, confirms and elaborates on the lack of legal recognition of child trafficking.

(5) AENT006C: Radio interview to a judge about child trafficking.

<H1> Parece que este asunto choca con un problema grave, y es que eh... **al parecer**, este... este delito no está eh... tipificado, o estas... estas acciones no tif... tipificadas como delito en España. Hay una... una especie de laguna.

'However, it seems that this matter is confronted with a serious problem, and it is that, eh. Apparently this... this crime is not recognized, or these actions are not recognized as a crime in Spain. There is a kind of gap'

<H2> Sí, el tráfico de niños en sentido puro; es decir, la laguna sería el... el hecho en sí de la... lo que... en lenguaje coloquial podríamos llamar la venta del menor; es decir, el intercambio de un niño por dinero, con fines de adoptar a ese niño quien da el dinero, eso en sí no constituye un delito en nuestro país en este momento. Entonces eh... para poder ir a una represión de este tipo de prácticas, eh... la policía y los jueces... se ven obligados, el ministerio fiscal

a la hora de acusar, se ven obligados a buscar la... otros delitos que pudieran haberse cometido en... en ese proceso.

‘Yes, child trafficking strictly speaking; I mean, the gap would be the fact in itself of the which ... in colloquial speech we could call trade of kids, that is, the exchange of a kid for money, with the purpose to let adopt the kid by who gives money, this as such is not a crime in our country at this moment. So, to be able to start a repression of this type of practices eh... the police and the judges see themselves obliged, the State’s Attorney at the hour of accusing, see themselves obliged to look for other crimes that could have been committed in ... in this process’

It is worth noting that the mitigation effect conveyed by an evidential discourse marker in examples like (5) is not to be attributed exclusively to the discourse marker itself. As Sidnell (2012: 312) points out, “[i]f we are to examine evidential marking from an interactional point of view, the challenge will be to integrate its analysis with whatever else is going on in some particular encounter”. In this vein, other linguistic resources contribute to define the epistemic position of the speaker: the use of evidential *parece que* ‘it seems that’ and downgrading modifier *una especie de* ‘a kind of’. And, in a more general perspective, these lexicogrammatical means interact with sequence organization (first part) and socioepistemic status (low) in that they create a specific interactional setting: they introduce a fact in conversation that needs to be confirmed by a participant who has more knowledge and/or experience of the matter being discussed.

As already mentioned, evidential discourse markers also occur in second positions (answers). In this position of the sequence, the speaker, who is supposed to have a more direct access to knowledge than the coparticipant, signals his/her indirect access to the situation discussed. Contrary to what happens in first parts, the use of evidential markers in second parts do not facilitate turn-taking: the speaker does not invite the coparticipant to take the floor. In this sense, we can consider example (6), in which a journalist (H2) is interviewing a person who participated in a demonstration in Madrid against the Spanish obligatory military service. In previous turns, H2 explained that the protest consisted in three people climbing to the balcony of the Ministry of Justice and chaining themselves there, while the rest of the group stayed on the ground showing a banner. At the beginning of the excerpt the journalist is asking about the people who were on the balcony. The witness replies, but the journalist is looking for more specific information (*¿Estaban ahí arriba?* ‘Where they up there?’). So H1 goes on to give a detailed explanation of the events.

(6) Ccon013f: interview in the news to a person who refuses military service.

<H2>Pero ¿dónde están?
 ‘But where are they?’
 <H1>Eh... los... los... a los tres se... se los han llevado ahora. Bueno, se han enca...
 ‘Eh, the the ... the three have been caught now. Well. They have been cha...’

<H2>¿Estaban ahí arriba?

‘Where they up there?’

<H1>Se han subido arriba. Hemos venido dos disfrazados con un mono, hemos extendido una escalera y los... hemos extendido la escalera y han subido tres arriba. Han desplegao una pancarta y a la media hora o por ahí pues han llegado los guardias jurados y la Guardia Civil y los ha sacado a... a palos prácticamente. Vamos que oíamos los gritos desde aquí y les han atizao bastante. Luego nos han tenido aquí un tiempo sin saber a dónde les iban a llevar, hemos estao gritando “insumisión”, “libertad”, “insumisos presos abajo” y ahora **por lo visto** se les han llevado a la comisaría de... de Leganitos y que a... vamos, que además nos han estado intentando despistar porque en un principio nos han dicho que los llevaban al Luna luego... le... nos han dicho que los han llevado a Leganitos y al final no sabemos dónde están de fijo, ¿no? y bueno, eso es todo.

‘They have climbed up there. Two have arrived disguised as apes, we have put a ladder and we have put a ladder and three of us have climbed up there. We have shown a banner and half an hour later or so have arrived the guards and the Military Police and they were taken away... beaten away in fact. That is to say that we heard them screaming and they have hit them a lot. Then they have taken us here for a while without knowing where they would bring them, we have been screaming “insubmission”, “liberty”, “prisoners free” and now it seems that they have been brought to the station of... of Leganitos, and that... well, that moreover they have been trying to distract us because first they have told us that they would bring them to the Luna and then they have told us that they have brought them to L. and in the end we don’t know where they are, right, and, good, that is all’

When it comes to answering the main question (*¿dónde están?* ‘where are they?’), H1 employs an evidential discourse marker to downgrade his claim regarding this point. He continues to explain his lack of confidence in the police, which is his source of the information. Evidential discourse markers in contexts such as (6) tend to receive a reportative interpretation. It is often made explicit by lexical means why the speaker’s access to knowledge is indirect. In (6) the speaker explains that it was the police who said where the rest of his fellows were taken to.

In (7) we find another example, this time from a consulting talk with a lawyer on the radio. In her first turns, H5 explains the reason for this conversation: the doorkeeper retired, left the apartment where he used to live, but so far has not given the key back. In his reply, speaker H3 uses the evidential marker *al parecer* to signal that he is reporting from H5’s discourse. Note in this respect the use of the quotative phrase *según sus palabras* ‘according to your words’. Evidential discourse markers in these contexts can be seen as positive face-saving devices which speakers use to project a cautious and professional attitude in situations where expert knowledge is at stake.

(7) PJUR005C: Lawyer consultancy on the radio regarding usurpation of a key.

<H5> Mire. Nosotros somos una comunidad de propietarios, resulta que... el portero se jubiló y está viviendo... en la vivienda... de la... comunidad.

‘Look madam/mister. We are a community of landlords. It turns out that The doorkeeper is retired and is living in a unit of the community’

<H3> Sí.

‘Yes’

<H5> Entonces él se ha ido a... la vivienda ya, pero no ha entregado las... llaves. Esto está... en juicio y ha salido <inintelligible> a nuestro favor.

‘So he has moved to the unit (house) already, but he hasn’t given the ...keys. This is now in court and has been judged in our favour’

<H3> Sí.

‘Yes’

<H5> Y ahora... al él no entregar las llaves, ¿nosotros qué medidas tenemos que tomar?

‘And now... him not giving back the keys, what kind of measures can we take?’

<H3> Bueno, pues escúcheme por favor, si es tan amable, por el

‘Well, then listen to me please, if you can be so kind, because of...’

<H5> Sí, muchísimas gracias.

‘Yes, thanks a lot’

<H3> De nada.

‘You are welcome’

<H5> Muy amable.

‘Very kind’

<H3> Gracias a usted por su llamada, señora. Pues las medidas que tienen que tomar es en primer lugar hacérselo constar al ilustre juzgado que haya dictaminado esa sentencia, para que tenga conocimiento de los incumplimientos, **al parecer**, según sus palabras, reiterados, de la parte demandada, es decir, del portero, del emplea... del empleado o ex- empleado de la finca urbana. Y automáticamente, en conformidad con esa súplica a ese juzgado, actuar ustedes siempre con conocimiento del titular del correspondiente juzgado.

‘Thank you for your call, Madam. Well, the measures that have to be taken is in first place make the honourable judge understood that he has emitted a verdict. So that he has knowledge of the breaches, apparently, according to your words, repeated, by the sued part, that is to say, by the doorkeeper, the worker or ex-worker employed at an urban estate. And automatically, in agreement with this plea to this judgment, you act always with the knowledge of the one who is responsible of the corresponding judgment’

4. Conclusions

In this paper we have adopted an interactional approach to evidential discourse markers, which has allowed us to present new insights into the motivations for their use in formal and informal spoken interactions. First, we have shown that,

unlike other evidential and epistemic markers discussed in the literature, Spanish evidential discourse markers are rare in assessments, both in formal and informal registers. Instead, they show a clear preference for interactional actions which involve exchange of information (tell, ask and reply).

Second, we have argued that the joint consideration of socioepistemic status of the speaker and organization of the sequence can help identify specific interactional contexts for specific uses of evidential discourse markers. On the one hand, in most contexts with *por lo visto* and *al parecer*, a knowledge differential or asymmetry can be observed. In asymmetric knowledge contexts, the socioepistemic status of the speaker has a great impact on the use of these markers. Primary knowers use evidential discourse markers in second parts, whether in spontaneous conversations or in formal interactions with well delimited general epistemic roles (interview, consulting talks). On the contrary, non-primary knowers use evidential discourse markers in first parts, which seek a confirmation in the next turn. Interestingly, such a discourse strategy has a mitigation effect, with the aim to save the positive face of the coparticipants. According to our corpus, the latter use occurs solely in genres where general epistemic roles are clearly distinguished.

By contrast, symmetric knowledge contexts are restricted to certain discourse genres, such as talk shows and informal conversations. In these contexts, the two evidential discourse markers under examination tend to receive a dissociating reading (sometimes an ironic one) and favor collaborative construction of knowledge.

In sum, an interactional analysis offers a more contextualized and detailed description of evidential discourse markers and allows us to understand the type of activities speakers are engaged in when using these linguistic means. What remains to be done in future research (on other markers) is examining the relation between epistemic (a)symmetry of speaker and coparticipants and the evidential values conveyed by the markers. Moreover, another prospect for further research is the comparative study of socioepistemic negotiation practices with and without evidential and epistemic markers.

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