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Pragmatic Markers in Oral Narrative: The case of English and Catalan
by Montserrat González

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To Maria Condom Ginestera
In Memoriam

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study deals with the use of pragmatic markers in English and Catalan oral narrative (Labov and Waletzky 1967), a monologued text-genre that presents a regular structural pattern. The main aim is to try to show that pragmatic markers play a decisive role in the telling of the events. In order to be able to cope their significance within the text, the overall structure of English and Catalan narratives is also going to be analyzed and compared.

Pragmatic markers are polyfunctional cues that predicate changes in the speaker's cognition, attitudes, and beliefs and facilitate the transmission of illocutionary force and intentions. They are a feature of oral rather than written discourse. The speaker makes use of them to organize, recover, reformulate and segment the information provided to the hearer. However, narrowing down the domain of markers is not an easy task. Nor is proving all of the above. The literature tells us that pragmatic markers are typical conversational cues. A general claim is also that their use is basically restricted to playing for time to think or/and to letting the interlocutor know that the communicative channel is open. These two rather open functions allow some scholars to refer to pragmatic markers as 'fillers', 'mots crossa', 'omplidors' and 'falques' (in Catalan), or 'muletillas' and 'expletivos' (in Spanish), without exploring further specific traits. Pragmatic markers do have an intrinsic meaning in speech and are not mere fillers of empty spaces. They have a meaning related to the sort of coherence relation they set up with preceding and following propositions and to the pragmatic discourse structure: to the rhetorical, sequential, and inferential components. Due to the grammaticalization process that they have gone through, some of these units still keep some traits that belong to the ideational structure, directly related to the ideas described in the text-world. The coming discussion and empirical analysis will prove that the richness of these lexical units lies in their procedural meaning, which, in some instances, is tightly bound to their referential meaning.

I will try to provide evidence that pragmatic markers are not arbitrarily used in oral speech but are context and genre-dependent. This observation links with my main hypothesis, that is, that markers in oral narratives show semanticopragmatic traits that make them appropriate for their use in specific narrative segments. Hence, when a narrator starts the telling of a past personal experience (a situation of

danger, in this particular case), s/he does not make use of *any* marker, but of one that has a core structural function that permits the framing of the story; similarly, when internal evaluation is embedded within the account, a marker whose functions allow for the sharing of common ground and beliefs will follow. Finally, during the development of the action, markers whose referential meaning makes them useful for the temporal sequencing of the events will mostly be used.

It will be seen that both English and Catalan narrators will use pragmatic markers to help the hearer 'visualize' the event vividly, as a real experience that has in fact taken place, different from a fiction story in a literary book. If we take into account that "narratives are ususally told in anwer to some stimulus from outside, and to establish some point of personal interest" (Labov and Waletzky 1967), we will fully understand the importance of linguistic devices that, without conveying any significant meaning in semantic or grammatical terms, carry out a function which turns out to be fundamental for the full understanding of the story and, what is more important, for the narrator's purpose, that is, show the listener that he *really* was in a situation of danger. In this respect, we can refer to pragmatic markers not only as linguistic devices that help the storyteller go through his personal experience at length, but also as tools that are used to convey the force that his/her words need to convince the listener, not present at the time of the event, that something important took place and that the story *has* a point and is, therefore, worth listening to. In Labov and Waletzky's words (Labov and Waletzky 1967), "he [the narrator] finds himself in a position where he must demonstrate to the listener that he really was in danger. The more vivid and real the danger appears, the more effective the narrative". In this respect, it is proposed that some pragmatic markers must be considered *intensifiers*, a term coined by Labov to define one sort of *evaluative element* that the narrator uses to show his/her perspective (Labov 1972b: 378). An *intensifier* is a linguistic or paralinguistic device that the narrator uses to strenghten or intensify one of the events taking place in the narrative. As opposed to the other three types of evaluative elements (*comparators, correlatives* and *explications*), intensifiers do not interfere in the basic narrative syntax. Gestures, expressive phonology, quantifiers, repetition and ritual utterances are those listed by Labov (1972b: 378). The reason why these elements are called *evaluative* is because the print of the narrator is overtly shown through them in any part of the narrative.

The aforementioned proposal also involves adding one more element to Labov's list of intensifiers, which I consider are linguistic and non-linguistic devices that carry a clear pragmatic function that help sustain the pragmatic structure of the narrative. As previously stated, these units belong to the evaluative elements that the narrator uses to show a personal perspective. The term *evaluative* is clearly related to the *evaluation* stage of the narrative, "a secondary structure which is concentrated in the evaluation section but may be found in various forms throughout the narrative"

(Labov 1972b: 369). The evaluation of the narrative is what conveys the point of the story, its raison d'être, that is, the reason why it was told and what the narrator is getting at. Thus, when finishing a narrative, a good narrator will never hear the listener or listeners say: "So what?" but instead, "he did?" (Labov 1972b: 366). This sort of expectancy on the listener's part is conveyed through the evaluative linguistic and paralinguistic devices that say to us: "this was terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy; or amusing, hilarious, wonderful; more generally, that it was strange, uncommon, or unusual — that is, worth reporting. It was not ordinary, plain, humdrum, everyday, or run-of-the mill" (Labov 1972b: 371). Pragmatic markers in narrative are evaluative devices that *do* carry all that force, not necessarily because of its full descriptive content, but because of its pragmatic functions, which are context-dependent. Thus, it is neither to the grammatical nor to the semantic content of the narrative that the above quotation refers; it is the narrator's attitude towards the events that s/he is reporting by the telling of the story of his/her personal experience.

Considering that most studies on pragmatic markers are based on conversational discourse, a study such as this one is meant as a contribution to the understanding of the role of pragmatic discourse markers in a specific text-genre that takes the form of spontaneous oral monologue. The point made is that the apparent null function of markers is not such on a genre which requires not only an ideational structure but a solid pragmatic one.

The content of this book has been divided in two parts. The first part provides the theoretical and methodological framework of the study. It presents and discusses those general concepts that do not always have a unique reading and therefore require some clarification. This first part includes Chapters 2, 3 and 4. In Chapter 2, terms such as *text, discourse*, and *context* are discussed. A definition of their use in this particular work follows. Chapter 2 also includes the explanation of the text-genre of the database, oral narrative of personal experience, following Labov's model (1972). This involves the definition of narrative and its overall structure, as well as the evaluative elements that Labov proposes. A final recapitulation sums up the most relevant points to bear in mind, which is necessary for the framing of the variable under analysis, that is, pragmatic discourse markers, which are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 accounts for the role that pragmatic markers play in discourse structure and in coherence relations. Taking the notion of *source of coherence* (Sanders et al. 1993, Sanders 1997) as point of departure, it is argued that these linguistic cues set up pragmatic (versus semantic) coherence relations. According to Sanders, "a relation is pragmatic if the discourse segments are related because of the illocutionary meaning of one or both of the segments. In pragmatic relations the CR [coherence relation] concerns the speech act status of the segments." (1997: 122). I sustain that, if the relation that they specify is pragmatic, their

presence can be accounted for through the pragmatic discourse structure components, rhetorical and sequential in particular (Redeker 1990, 1991). From this argumentative line, their role in the narrative text-genre and the significance of linguistic boundary marking is considered. The relevance of discourse markers is argued, at length, in proposals that, to the author's understanding, follow two mainstream views: one that approaches them as pieces that function at distinct discourse planes and, ultimately, as structural pieces, and another that views their role in cognitive-interpretive terms. An intersection of the models belonging to these two approaches will allow for a proposal of an alternative model that may account for their presence in the oral monologued text-genre under analysis. Chapter 3 also deals with the actual use of pragmatic markers in oral narrative and proposes an integration of their functions in a discourse coherence model. The branching of functions into the distinct structural components (ideational, rhetorical, sequential, and inferential) will provide a sound basis for the study of particular English and Catalan markers. Chapter 4, which bridges the gap between part I and part II, from theory to empirical analysis, includes the general aims and hypotheses, information on the corpus and the informants, the methodology used and, finally, the way the transcription and coding of data were done.[1]

Part II includes the rest of the chapters, from 5 to 8, which are devoted to the discussion of pragmatic markers found in English and Catalan narratives and their formal and functional similarities and differences. The detailed study of English and Catalan markers will be done in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 deals with the English markers *well, so, then, I mean, you know* and *anyway*. Chapter 6 deals with the Catalan markers *bé, bueno, clar, doncs, pues, llavors, aleshores, no* and *eh*. At the end of both chapters, the phenomenon of marker pairing, a linguistic phenomenon which has barely been touched on in the literature dealing with the issue, is approached. The results of the empirical analysis will be contrasted and discussed in Chapter 7, following the aforementioned discourse structure branching into ideational, rhetorical, sequential, and inferential components. From that point, a form-function English and Catalan contrast of pragmatic markers, signalling lexical and/or functional equivalences and distinctions will be established. Finally, Chapter 8 recapitulates the findings and points out the most significant results.

Linguistic analysis of natural language involves close observation of data, elaboration of assumptions and subsequent work on the systematicity and regularity of the pattern or variable under study. It also involves taking risks and making predictions that are not always fulfilled. But the ultimate goal of the researcher that investigates a natural language phenomenon is to prove that there is an underlying regularity in what is, apparently, a linguistic chaos of overlappings, repetitions, pauses, and unfinished sentences. I will try to provide plausible explanations that account for the presence of given structural patterns (for instance, marker pairing

or what has been named *compound pragmatic markers*) and functions performed by certain units at given parts of the narrative. My ultimate goal is to make a general contribution to the field of linguistic pragmatics, and to the subdomain of pragmatic markers in particular, bearing in mind the potential applications that the findings and reflections may have for those studying the areas of second language acquisition and translation.

Part I

Theoretical and methodological framework

Chapter 2

Preliminary definitions

2.1 General concepts

The study of pragmatic markers in oral narrative requires working in the field of discourse analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss terminological preliminaries and concepts used in discourse analysis that are going to be referred to in this book, so as to clarify and set their use in the present study.

Discourse analysis is a vast field of study that often presents a lack of definition and precision. As pointed out by Schiffrin (1994a: 5), this is because of the great number of academic disciplines, models and methods from which this field of study has developed, ranging from linguistics to anthropology, sociology or philosophy. Prince (1988: 164) offers still another reason for the "looseness" of the term 'discourse analysis' when claiming that "no one theory or account of discourse has had a wide or strong enough acceptance to have an imperialistic monopoly on it."

In this chapter, formal and functional perspectives on discourse phenomena will be considered. The reason is that the use of pragmatic markers involves taking into account the form (i.e. structure) of the text within which they are found, as well as their function (i.e. use) within the text. Theoretical implications of the terms *text, discourse* and *context* will be equally discussed. The aim is to clarify their features and scope in the domain of pragmatics.

2.1.1 Formal versus functional approaches to discourse

Although formal and functional approaches to discourse do not fully oppose or exclude each other, they apply a different criterion and methodology of analysis. In this section, both perspectives are discussed and the approach that the present study is going to take is determined.

Thus, whereas formal approaches tend to put more emphasis on the linguistic code and on the relationship between constituents and structures, functional approaches refer to social, cultural or communicative contexts. Nevertheless, as Leech (1983) suggests and we will see further on, to a certain extent both perspectives are not, in any case, conflicting:

> "As two approaches to linguistics, formalism and functionalism tend to be associated with very different views of the nature of language… On the face of it, the two approaches are completely opposed to one another. In fact, however, each of them has a considerable amount of truth on its side. To take one point of difference: it would be foolish to deny that language is a psychological phenomenon, and equally foolish to deny that it is a social phenomenon. *Any balanced account of language has to give attention to both these aspects: the 'internal' and 'external' aspects of language. More generally, my conclusion will be that the correct approach to language is both formalist and functionalist.*"[2] (p.46)

In what follows, these two different approaches, which will frame the present study, are reviewed. In the formalist approach, we find disciplines that, building on linguistic structure, seek to determine the function of certain lexical pieces or discourse units. This is the case of *conversation analysis* and the *variationist approach,* which view discourse as "language above the sentence" (Schiffrin 1994a: 23).[3]

Conversation analysis, which follows an ethnomethodological tradition, was developed in the seventies by Goffman, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson. It centers on the sequential structure of conversations to find the underlying discourse functions that participants establish. It subordinates the analysis of the function to the analysis of the structure in such a way that the function of a certain unit or linguistic segment can only be determined by analyzing its location in relation to the other units, that is to say, according to its sequential distribution. *Variation analysis* of discourse, as developed by Labov and Waletsky (1967) and Labov (1972b), aims at discovering the structural regularities of texts. The objective is to find out how linguistic variation (phonological, syntactic and morphological) and syntactic structure help define and form such structural regularities. Labov emphasizes the role of participants (what they say and how they pronounce an utterance) and linguistic structure. According to him, textual coherence builds upon the relationship which is established between clausal structure and the meaning of underlying actions of the utterances (relationship form-meaning). The discourse unit that Labov uses for his analysis is the oral narrative of personal experiences *(narratives)*. According to the author, oral narratives offer a series of advantages that are not to be found in other discourse units: they are independent of the rest of structures that can be found in an oral exchange (a conversation, for instance), they show a functional interdependency between subunits and clauses, they reflect the narrator's print (by means of the *evaluative stage*) and, finally, they provide social information as they come from a specific participant of a particular community. Labov's model of oral narrative will be fully developed in the following section (2.2), since this is going to be the text-genre used to analyse pragmatic markers.

In the functionalist approach, the subdisciplines start out from function to discover structure.[4] Consequently, discourse is viewed as "language use" (Schiffrin

1994a: 31). Such is the principle of *speech act theory*, the *ethnography of communication, interactional sociolinguistics*, and *pragmatics*.

Developed by two philosophers, Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), *Speech act theory* grounds its principles in speaker intention and action and in language functions. Thus, language is not just a linguistic code that describes the world, but a system whose function is to undergo certain actions that take place at the moment a speaker utters a word or segment.

The *ethnography of communication* has its roots in anthropology. Hymes (1971) introduced the notion of *communicative competence* as a reaction to what he considered was a static vision of language, so far provided by formalist linguists (specifically, Chomsky's vision of language as an abstract knowledge of a series of rules).[5] According to Hymes, language should be studied in a socio-cultural context, as a communicative tool used by speakers.[6]

Interactional sociolinguistics builds upon the fields of anthropology, sociology and linguistics. Language is socially and culturally contextualized. Gumperz (1982a) shows how people from different cultural backgrounds, who share a unique grammatical knowledge of a language, contextualize a message differently and get different messages. Interpretation and interaction depend, therefore, on the relationship between social and linguistic meanings. Goffman (1981) and his followers provide another sociolinguistic point of view; in this case, language is studied as a reflection of a specific context and social circumstance.

Finally, *pragmatics,* whose scope as an area of inquiry is extremely wide,[7] views language as a phenomenon whose main constructs are located outside of language, in speaker meaning or intention and in rational communicative principles, i.e. the *cooperative principle*.[8] According to Levinson, pragmatics is "the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of language" (1983: 9). Gricean pragmatics (Grice 1975) breaks with the notion of literal meaning (referential, truth-conditionally based) to step into what the philosopher calls inferred meaning, that is to say, a series of assumptions made by the listener to discover the underlying meaning of the speaker's message. Then, communication will be possible not just because of a shared code, linguistic structures and referential meanings, but because of a speaker-listener cognitive process to make use of a context that will allow a range of inferences. Grice's cooperative principle is formed by four maxims or major norms of cooperation: relevance, truthfulness, quantity, and clarity.

Nevertheless, pragmatic phenomena in language can be treated and, therefore, understood from different perspectives, from a linguistic and thus formal approach, to an applied one, depending mainly on the aspect of language on which we wish to focus. Although it could be argued that, to a certain extent, choosing a particular approach might not be of vital importance if we take into consideration that both

perspectives, formal and functional, often converge and nurture each other,[9] as Schiffrin's approach shows (1994a: 361), in agreement with Vallduví (1992) pragmatics, as an area of linguistic inquiry, must have its different subdomains of inquiry narrowed down:

> "if we want to gain insight into the pragmatic end of language, plausible subdomains of inquiry must be teased apart and their role in the linguistic system and its relationship with other better-known areas of linguistic competence must be studied." (1992: 9)[10]

Vallduví's claim makes full sense when he asserts that whereas linguistic competence is fully reflected in clearly delimited linguistic areas of inquiry such as semantics, syntax, morphology or phonology, the area of pragmatics presents blurred limits within which a variety of phenomena seem to fit, from illocutionary acts, to reference, implicature, information packaging or discourse structure; certainly, the cognitive mechanisms and processes that account for a certain pragmatic subfield do not necessarily apply to them all (Vallduví 1992: 11).

Moreover, there is another important aspect to bear in mind. As it will be argued in the following section, the notion of *context* included in the definition of pragmatics can be understood very broadly since it implies any extralinguistic element that can affect the linguistic structure or semantics of language production. From a situational to a cognitive and linguistic context, taking one or other perspective implies working from a social, psychological or linguistic aspect of language.

The present study is framed in the pragmatic subdomain of discourse structure, adopting Levinson's view of discourse pragmatics, that is, *context* that is "encoded in the structure of language". I will also follow Gricean pragmatics of inferred meanings. As mentioned above, according to Grice (1975), there are pragmatic mechanisms that operate above logic: the cooperative principle facilitates the bridge between truth-based logical semantics and natural language operators.

The first argument held in this work is that pragmatic markers in oral narratives are linguistic devices that signal the speaker's intention, convey the required illocutionary force to the segments, and facilitate the shifting onto the narrative structural realms (sequential, ideational, rhetorical and inferential). In addition, even though they do not have a fully established syntactic and semantic role in the overall structure of the narrative, they have a clear distinctive function in its pragmatic structure, fully reflected in the discourse structure. Following Gricean pragmatics, these lexical pieces facilitate the inferences and, thus, help the listener interpret the message intended by the speaker. In this respect, they fulfil a functional task.

Nevertheless, the text-genre within which these elements are framed — Labov's narrative — is a genre that shows structural regularities at both discourse

and clause levels. As noted above, Labov (1972b) suggests that textual coherence is built upon the relationship between clausal structure and the meaning of underlying actions of the utterances. Accordingly, the second argument is that pragmatic markers help construct the bridge between structure (form) and meaning (not truth-based but inferred) by showing a regular sequential distribution across and within segments or discourse units. In this respect, this study takes a formalist approach since it follows the line of research on discourse structure developed mainly by Redeker (1990, 1991), Grosz and Sidner (1986), Grosz, Pollack and Sidner (1989) and Polanyi (1985b, 1986, 1988). Thus, following this line of inquiry, it can be concluded that discourse markers, or *cue phrases* (as labelled by the above mentioned authors), do not contribute to the semantics of the discourse *per se*, but "convey information about the structure of the discourse containing the utterance." (Grosz, Pollack and Sidner 1989: 443):

> "There are many cases in which it is quite possible to determine the structure of a discourse, or a portion of one, that lacks any cue phrases. Likewise there are many discourses, or portions thereof, containing cue phrases that only suggest the underlying structure or, put another way, provide constraints on the range of possible structures. *Ultimately the structure of a discourse depends on the information conveyed by the utterances it comprises and the way in which that information is interconnected. Cue phrases simplify the task of determining those connections.* It has been shown that the process of determination of intersential semantic relationships (Cohen 1984) and plan recognition (Litman and Allen 1988) can be constrained by taking into account cue phrases." (Grosz, Pollack and Sidner 1989: 444)[11]

The role of pragmatic markers on discourse structure will be fully developed in Chapter 3, when proposals of discourse coherence models will be reviewed.

2.1.2 Text and discourse

A narrative is oral discourse, but it is also a text structure. What do we understand by *discourse* and *text*? Does the term *discourse* always imply oral production? Is *text* always a written product? In this section, it will be observed that there is not an agreement among authors. Both terms will be discussed and their use determined.

Following the formalism-functionalism dychotomy noted above, within the discourse field we find the terms *text* and *discourse,* which also seem to follow such a criterion, though not systematically. Both approaches agree that traditional grammar does not always provide a satisfactory explanation for certain semantic and pragmatic linguistic phenomena and that, consequently, there is a need for suprasentential analysis.[12] However, they do not always agree on the register — oral or written — to which they can be applied, or on the theoretical framework — *text linguistics* or *discourse analysis* — within which they are to be placed. As Coulthard points out:

> "Labels are always difficult; I have chosen to maintain a distinction between spoken *discourse* and written *text*, but this is by no means a universally accepted distinction; many German writers use 'text' to refer to speech as well, while Hoey (1983) and Widdowson *(passim)* use 'discourse' to refer to writing, and to complicate matters further 'pragmatics' as defined by Leech (1983) and Levinson (1983) overlaps substantially with discourse analysis as I conceive it." (1977: 3)

Apparently, there is a relationship between two methodological schools and two distinct research interests: *text linguistics,* that follows the written tradition, and *discourse analysis,* that follows the oral one. Thus, whereas the former is methodologically focused on theoretical models and competence data, the latter is methodologically descriptive and centers its attention on data related to performance. The connection with a more or less formal or functional approach can be easily made: those authors who work with written material and follow the text linguistics school adopt a formal approach; those who follow the oral tradition and apply the discourse analysis techniques take a functional approach.

Linguists such as van Dijk (1977, 1978), Halliday (1973, 1976, 1985a), Beaugrande (1984) and Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), work on the sentential grammar ground to incorporate the notion of discourse *a posteriori.*[13] Van Dijk uses the term *text* to refer to an abstract and theoretical construct, and *discourse* for its realization. The author defines the former as a unity formed by semantic *macrostructures* and superficial *superstructures* (1978: 165–166). Halliday, on the contrary, although coming from a structuralist tradition, develops the concept of function[14] and concludes that a *text* is materialized *discourse:*

> "text is language that is functional… that is doing some job in some context, as opposed to isolated words or sentences… It may be either spoken or written, or indeed in any other medium of expression that we like to think of… a text is made of meanings, it's a semantic unit." (1985b: 10)

Halliday's definition, bridging the gap between a formalist and a functionalist perspective, takes us to those linguists who provide a fully functionalist approach to the terms under discussion. Such is the case of Brown and Yule (1983) and Widdowson (1978), among others, who differentiate *discourse-as-process* from *text-as-product.* According to Brown and Yule (1983: 23–25), the discourse analists' goal should be the study of the process, not of the discourse product. The text as product, point of interest of the above mentioned formalist linguists, is a static object that does not take into consideration the production and reception of the message, or the speaker's intention.[15] Widdowson (1979), instead of relating *text* and *discourse* to the product-process notion, establishes a link with the textual properties of coherence and cohesion: whereas the text shows *textual cohesion,* reflected on the lexicon, grammar and propositional development, the discourse

shows *discourse coherence,* reflected on the subjacent speech acts. Stubbs (1983: 22) makes a practical choice: he prefers to use the term *discourse* not for theoretical reasons, but because, according to him, the term *text* is related to the European *text analysis* school represented by van Dijk's work. He supports his arguments with the claim that his preferred term has the ethnomethodological tradition of *conversation analysis* undertaken by Sacks.

Interestingly enough, the apparently never-ending discussion around both terms seems useless if we take into account the origins of discourse as a rhetorical event (Albaladejo 1991: 51). In ancient Greece, *Rhetorics* didn't present any conflict between the orator's communicative activity, manifested in the *elocutio*, and the linguistic structuring of the event, the *dispositio* and *inventio*. It is highly important, then, not to ignore the origins of the discipline to fully grasp its scope in order to be able to find the intersection between both discoursive *(verba)* and textual *(res)*[16] visions.

Finally, Bernárdez suggests a definition of *text* that, to my understanding, considers both formal and functional aspects of language:

> "*Texto* es la unidad lingüística comunicativa fundamental, producto de la actividad verbal humana, que posee siempre carácter social; está caracterizado por su cierre semántico y comunicativo, así como por su coherencia profunda y superficial, debida a la intención (comunicativa) del hablante de crear un texto íntegro, y a su estructuración mediante dos conjuntos de reglas: las propias del nivel textual y las del sistema de la lengua." (1982: 85)

> "The text is the fundamental linguistic unit, the product of human verbal activity, that always has a social character. It is characterized by its semantic and communicative closure, as well as by its deep and surface coherence, due to the speaker's (communicative) intention to create a complete text and to its structuring by means of two sets of rules: those of the textual level, and the ones that belong to the language system."

The author claims that his definition is just a set of the properties that a *text* should include: (i) the communicative dimension (activity undertaken); (ii) the pragmatic dimension (speaker's intention, situation); and (iii) the structural dimension (those rules governing the textual level). Along the same line, Petöfi's notion of *textuality* provides a similar approach to the term:

> "Textuality is, for us, not an inherent property of verbal objects. A producer or a receiver considers a verbal object to be a text if he believes that this verbal object is a connected and complete entirety meeting a real or assumed communicative intention in a real or assumed communication situation." (1990)

Since the textual structure of the narrative covers all the features highlighted by these two authors, their view of the term *text* will be adopted for the narrative genre;

as for the notion of *discourse*, the anglosaxon functional oral tradition that views *discourse-as-process* seems to be the most appropriate one for the study of pragmatic markers, considering that they are linguistic cues that have a core procedural meaning.

2.1.3 Context

As noted above, within the discourse field this term covers a range of possibilities. Definitions such as: "A highly idealized abstraction of the communicative situation" (Van Dijk 1977: 273), "relevant aspects of the physical or social environment of an utterance" or "any background knowledge assumed to be shared by *s* and *h* and which contributes to *h*'s interpretation of what *s* means by a given utterance" (Leech 1983: 13) give us an idea of the wide scope of the term *context*. If we add Schiffrin's notion of the term:

> "Context is thus a world filled with people producing utterances: people who have social, cultural, and personal identities, knowledge, beliefs, goals and wants, and who interact with one another in various socially and culturally defined situations." (1994a: 364)

we realize that the lack of conciseness is absolute. As we can see, there are several notions in play, from people, beliefs, social, cultural and physical environments to shared knowledge; all of them extralinguistic phenomena. Schiffrin (1994a) suggests a possible classification according to the discourse subdomain the term applies to. Thus, she determines three different types of context: (i) that related to the speaker-hearer shared knowledge; (ii) the situational context; and (iii) the textual context (1994a: 365). Choosing one or another will depend on the type of contextual information that is sought:[17] whereas an ethnographic and social linguistic study will undoubtedly have to take into consideration the situational context,[18] a pragmatic approach will consider the speaker-hearer shared knowledge, that is to say, the cognitive context; finally, a study which focuses on the structural regularities of a text will have to balance both, linguistic and cognitive contexts.

For the present study, I will deal with the aforementioned linguistic and cognitive notions of the term *context*. As far as the cognitive context is concerned, the study of pragmatic markers, as linguistic devices that help narrators get their point across and facilitate the assumptions and inferences made by the listener, involves taking into account the speaker-hearer shared knowledge. Grice's (1975) *cooperative principe* and its maxims conform such context, divided in two different parts by the author: that aspect which comes from the propositional content (1) and that which comes from the implied content (conversational implicatures) (2):

(1) "the conventional meaning of the words used, together with the identity of any references that may be involved";

(2) i. "the CP (cooperative principle) and its maxims";
ii. "the context, linguistic or *otherwise*, of the utterance";
iii. "other items of background knowledge";
iv. "the fact (or supposed fact) that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know or assume this to be the case." (1975: 50)

As Schiffrin (1994a: 368) highlights, Grice's *cooperative principle* makes it possible for the listener to infer the meaning of the message, first of all because of the linguistic information (1) and, secondly, because of the shared background knowledge coming from human nature and rationality (2i), from the text (2ii), from the situation (2iii), and from the world (2iv). However, as the author rightly asserts, Grice doesn't explain how to account for the 'background knowledge' context (point 2iii), or for the implications of '*otherwise*' (point 2ii); whereas the former could be explained in terms of *schema, frame* or *script*,[19] the latter can be interpreted as the situation in which the speaker produces an utterance.

As for the linguistic context,[20] the study of pragmatic markers within a particular text-genre such as the narrative involves taking into consideration the linguistic structure that frames and supports their appearence at both textual and clausal levels of analysis. This point will be developed in the coming section.

2.2 The oral narrative as representation of experience: a text-genre

> "… stories do not just emerge from events — they have to be constructed. Incidents have to be made into talk, by being appropriately prefaced, told and ended in conventional, rule-governed ways. Events have to be translated into speaking terms. Or, as Labov (1972) puts it, experience has to be transformed into narratives." (Stubbs 1983: 26).

The study of oral narrative, as representation of experience, has been the object of analysis of many researchers in the last decades.[21] From law to medicine, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, sociology and education, narrative analysis has become the instrument through which professionals have gone about interpreting human experience of past events. From other fields, such as linguistics, literary theory, developmental psychology and anthropology, the study has focused more on the analyis of the discourse.[22]

The reason why narrative has been so widely studied has undoubtedly been its particular nature. Narrative is always concerned with and related to experience,

which implies someone's telling about something taking place in the past. This telling is addressed to a hearer that tries to understand and grasp the point of the story being told, imagining the scenes in which particular events occur and making associations with similar situations in which he, himself, might have been involved. Tannen (1988) presents storytelling as "an act of mind" in which both narrator and listener are deeply immersed in, thus sharing a universe of experience and understanding of the world: "Storytelling is a means by which humans organize and understand the world, and feel connected to it and to each other" (1988: 92).

The role of the narrator is crucial, in all this sharing of the world. Narrators of personal experiences create their own stories, filling them with assumptions and interpretations, subjectivity and self-identity: "Nature and the world do not tell stories, individuals do. Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations" (Riessman 1993: 2). Narratives can reflect experience (Polanyi 1985a), transform or represent experience (Labov 1972b and Labov and Fanshel 1977) or construct experience (Ochs *et al.* 1992; Bruner 1986) but, in any case, the narrator imposes his subjectivity on the story (Schiffrin 1994b). As we will see in the following sections, the print of the informant is present throughout the whole account, either by means of paralinguistic features or else by the use of evaluative devices, whose main function is to show the listener that the story *has* a point; prosody, repetition and direct quotes are other means used by the narrator for expressive purposes. Authors like Tannen (1988: 90) or Bauman (1984: 161) highlight the centrality of dialogue in conversational storytelling for making the story more vivid and thus become part of the listener's experience. Earlier in time, Wolfson (1978) had gone a step further asserting that "a story may be seen as theatrically staged and the performance features (i.e. direct speech, asides, repetition, expressive sounds, sound effects and motions and gestures) which are employed in its telling are quite similar to those we find in actual theatrical performance." (1978: 217). In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that the ultimate goal of the narrator is to convince the listener, not present at the time of the event, that something important took place in the past and that the account is, therefore, worth listening to.

Even though researchers basically agree that narrative is about experience, they do not fully agree on the definition of narrative. Depending on the use they make of the term in relation to their field of study, their conceptualization changes. As Reissman (1993) highlights, on the one hand there is one group whose definition is so open and broad that it practically includes anything (clinical literature references illness narratives, psychotherapy narration and life stories); on the other hand, there is another group that defines narrative in quite restricted terms, that is, as oral stories about a specific past event. An overall definition of the term could be that offered by Riessman, which includes the most important traits and which coincides with Labov's notion of narrative, to be reviewed later on:

> "talk organized around consequential events. A teller in a conversation takes a listener into a past time or 'world' and recapitulates what happened then to make a point, often a moral one." (Riessman 1993: 3).

In the following sections, Labov's (1972b) model of narrative, which is adopted as textual framework for the study of pragmatic markers, is presented. In the first section, narrative framework and definition will be provided. The second and third sections will be devoted to the overall structure of narrative and narrative syntax, together with the evaluative elements.

2.2.1 Labov's clausal framework of narrative

Narratives have a form of recurrent patterns, both at clause and discourse level. Furthermore, narratives also have a function: they are "verbal techniques for recapitulating experience, in particular, a technique of constructing narrative units which match the temporal sequence of that experience." (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 13). The smallest linguistic unit of expression which defines narrative is the clause, though not all sequences of clauses function as "narrative clauses". In the following example of narrative provided by Labov and Waletzky (1967) it can be seen that the second and third group do not comply with the requirements of a narrative in the strictest sense, since the order of clauses, and thus of events, is altered (p.20):

(1) a. Well, this person had a little too much to drink
b. and he attacked me
c. and the friend came in
d. and she stopped it.

(2) c. A friend of mine came in
d. just in time to stop
a. this person who had a little too much to drink
b. from attacking me.

(3) d. A friend of mine stopped the attack.
c. She had just come in.
b. This person was attacking me.
a. He had had a little too much to drink.

(1) is a narrative; (2) and (3) are not. Despite the fact that we can refer to a sequence of events differently and in a perfect logical order, not all recapitulations of experience result into a narrative. Whereas (2) shows syntactic embedding, (3) presents a sequence of four independent clauses which, nevertheless, the same as (2), do not conform a narrative.

Narrative units are to be defined "by the fact that they recapitulate experience

in the same order as the original events." (1967: 21). Nevertheless, there are clauses that accept mobility within the narrative unit; they are the subordinate clauses. They may be placed anywhere in the narrative without really altering the temporal sequence of events and, therefore, its semantic interpretation. In fact, only main or independent clauses are relevant for temporal reference.

In order to formalize a narrative unit, Labov and Waletzky (1967: 22–24) design a *system of subscripts*, that is a system of symbols which indicate the clause(s) that can precede or follow another clause(s) without altering the temporal sequence and thus the semantic interpretation of the events.[23] The authors differentiate four different types of clauses:

a. *Narrative clauses*: maintain the strict temporal sequence of events. As defined by Labov (1982):

> "They are independent clauses with verbs in the indicative mood and (in English) one of three tenses: the preterit, the historical present, or the past progressive (…) narrative clauses can be identified by the criterion that they are appropriate answers to the criterial question, 'And then what happened? The sequence of narrative clauses forms the COMPLICATING ACTION." (1982: 225)

b. *Free clauses*: can range freely through the narrative. They show no connection with the temporal sequence.
c. *Coordinate clauses*: clauses which can be reversed without altering the temporal sequence or semantic interpretation.
d. *Restricted clauses*: those which cannot move freely over the narrative, but have a wider range of movement than the narrative clauses.

As it has been seen, both free and restricted clauses can range quite freely between two narrative clauses. Because of this, and in order to be able to define temporal relations between two clauses which are not necessarily contiguous, Labov and Waletzky (1967) develop the concept of *temporal juncture:* "Two clauses which are temporally ordered with respect to each other are said to be separated by temporal juncture." (1967: 25).[24] Once the term 'narrative unit' has been clarified, the concept of *narrative* will be defined.

2.2.1.1 *Definition of narrative*

The temporal organization and sequencing of past experience into a linguistic device available to speakers results in a *narrative*, a technical term coined by Labov and Waletzky in 1967 (Labov 1982: 225). Thus, as defined in Labov (1982):

> "A NARRATIVE is then a sequence of two or more narrative clauses, that is, a sequence of clauses separated by one or more temporal junctures." (1982: 226)

The following example (Labov 1972b: 361) is a narrative sequence which contains three clauses, although only two are narrative clauses:

(4) a. I know a boy named Harry.
b. Another boy threw a bottle at him right in the head
c. and he had to get seven stitches.

Since (a) has no temporal juncture, it might be placed after (b) or (c) without altering the temporal order of the events. Thus, only (b) and (c) are narrative clauses. As pointed by Labov (1972b: 361), (a) is a free clause because the fact that the narrator knows a boy named Harry is equally true at the beginning and at the end of the reported event.

As was previously mentioned, only independent clauses can function as narrative clauses. Subordinate clauses do not alter the temporal sequence of events. Thus, in the following examples provided by Labov (1972b: 362) we see that only two clauses contain the events:

(5) a. If you didn't bring her candy to school
she would punch you in the mouth.
b. And you had to kiss her
when she'd tell you.

In (a), first event: you didn't bring the candy; second ordered event: she would punch you. In (b), first event: she told you; then, you kissed her. This is the order of events, although it is not the order of clauses. See how a reversal of the clauses does not alter the semantic interpretation:

(6) a′. She would punch you in the mouth
if you didn't bring her candy to school.
b′. and when she'd tell you
you had to kiss her.

In the following section, we proceed to analyze the narrative functions of the sequencing of clauses, that is, the overall structure of the narrative. It will provide us with the appropriate textual frame within which to develop the study of pragmatic markers later on.

2.2.2 Labov's overall structure of narrative

According to Labov and Waletzky (1967), a fully-formed narrative shows the following parts:

1. *Abstract*
2. *Orientation*

3. *Complicating action*
4. *Evaluation*
5. *Result or resolution*
6. *Coda*

1. *The Abstract*

The starting point of a narrative is sometimes an abstract, that is, "a brief summary statement of the substance of the narrative as viewed by the narrator" (Labov 1982: 226). In the case that the narrative is inserted within a conversation, the abstract is linked to the preceding utterance of the person with whom the conversation is held, at the very beginning of the narrative, as a means to insert the storytelling in the conversation. If the narrative is the result of a previous question asked by the interlocutor (as in the present study), the abstract bridges the gap between question and answer. The function of this first part of the narrative is to "encapsulate the point of the story" (Labov 1972b: 363). The following example,[25] illustrates the point:

(7) (Were you ever in a situation where you thought you were in serious danger?)[26]
@Bg: a
*NAR: I think er # situations of danger really.
*NAR: probably the most common one in my case would be being robbed.
*NAR: thankfully not in Spain but in England I've been robbed three or four times.
@Eg: a
(NAR8 Mike)

Here the narrator, responding to his interlocutor's question, provides a brief summary of what he thought had been a situation of danger, before getting into the sequencing of events. It should be said, though, that in most cases the narrator starts the account of the narrative without any preliminary summary of the events, going straight into the stage following the abstract, the *orientation.*

2. *Orientation*

Before giving an account of the events and, therefore, before any narrative clause is provided, at the outset of the narrative the speaker informs the interlocutor of the time, place, persons and situation of the participants, formally by means of a set of free clauses preceding the first narrative clause. As it will be illustrated later on, sometimes, the orientation section is displaced later, at strategic points of the narrative.

Interestingly enough, Labov and Waletzky (1967: 32) point out the fact that the orientation section is usually lacking in children's narratives and adults whose narratives do not preserve the sequencing of events. Nevertheless, Labov highlights the importance of this section when stating:

> "The selection of the orientation section by the narrator is one of the crucial steps in the construction of the narrative and the theory of causality that supports it." (1982: 229)

As for syntactic properties, in the orientation section the narrator uses many past progressive clauses to sketch what was the 'setting' before the first event of the narrative took place (Labov 1972b: 364). This fact is fully illustrated in the following example:

(8)
@Bg: ei
*NAR: Well # let me think#.
*NAR: when I was #.
*NAR: the most this uh # the most horrendous one and the most dangerous as as I thought.
@Eg: ei
@Bg: otsc
**NAR: about two years ago.*
**NAR: when I was working in Abudhabi.*
**NAR: and I had never been sailing before.*
**NAR: and uh # this uh # this teacher.*
**NAR: that was working in the school.*
**NAR: at the time she was the head of the kindergarten.*
**NAR: took us down to the # to the sailing club.*
**NAR: so we all went out in boats with different people.*
**NAR: and I was given this woman.*
@Eg:otsc
……
(NAR12 Agatha)[27]

In this narrative,[28] Agatha starts with a brief internal evaluation of the events that, as far as she recalls, had been 'horrendous' (the evaluation stage will be fully explained in brief) to go on into the orientation section, informing the listener of the time, space[29] and characters (or participants) of the events that were going to take place. Like in a play, the narrator behaves as an actor that, before the performance starts, sets all the elements that she considers are relevant, and thus necessary, for the audience to fully understand what is about to start. We should bear in mind that the storytelling is about a situation of danger, so it is really important to set the right scenario from the very beginning.

As mentioned above, there are cases in which the orientation section is displaced in the narrative to later points that the narrator considers strategic. The following sections belong to narrative 12 above. The first segment follows the last one just analyzed in (8):

(9)

……

@Bg: ei
*NAR: and from the word go I knew.
*NAR: she was totally incompetent.
*NAR: because she couldn't get the sail up.
@Eg: ei
@Bg: da
*NAR: and there were parts missing of the boat.
*NAR: and she didn't really know.
*NAR: what she was doing.
@Eg: da
@Bg: oc
**NAR: she was a woman in her fifties.*
@Eg: oc
@Bg: da
*NAR: so # she eventually she got the boat # got the boat.
*NAR: and pulled it down to the water's edge.
*NAR: and she put it on the water.
@Eg: da
@Bg: ot
**NAR: it it was a January # it was a January afternoon.*
@Eg: ot

……

Agatha has already started reporting the events when she informs her interlocutor of the age of the woman. She then proceeds with the account, to stop it again and mention the time of the year it was. Both, age of the main character involved in the events (besides herself, of course) and time of the year, are key points Agatha considers that are relevant to have a full picture of the situation: the woman was quite incapable of having the situation under control; her age was a factor to be added to her incompetence, since she was not too young. Besides, the conditions could not be worse; it was January, so winter time and probably very cold. Both pieces of information serve a purpose: they prepare the interlocutor for the events which are about to happen.

As it will be seen when the evaluation sections of narratives are explained and analyzed, these displaced orientation segments often work as evaluative units. Thus, as pointed by Labov, "though the displacement of orientation can sometimes be accounted for on simple cognitive grounds, it often appears to serve an evaluative function." (1982: 226).

3. *Complicating action*

The backbone of the narrative is the section termed complicating action or compli-

cation, a unit formed mostly by narrative clauses that comprise the series of events that take place in the narrative. This section is, therefore, the most important one since it is the one the listener is looking forward to hearing, from the very moment the narrator starts his/her account.

According to Labov (1982: 228), when someone decides to tell a narrative, it is because they believe the event they are about to tell is worth listening to, it is reportable. Moreover, the event has to be credible to the audience, otherwise there will be no interest in it. As for the first property, in terms of responses from the listeners, that author classifies narrative clauses into two types (1982: 227):

1. Type A: responses which consist of expressions of ordinary understanding, such as *I see, Uh-huh, Naturally…*[30]
2. Type B: responses which consist of expressions of ordinary surprise, such as *Really?, Is that so?, You don't mean it!, No kidding!*, etc.

What the narrator aims at, after the storytelling is over, is a type B response. Both reportability and credibility are often intertwined:

> "Reportable events are almost by definition unusual. They are therefore inherently less credible than non-reportable events. In fact, we might say that the more reportable an event is, the less credible it is. Yet credibility is as essential as reportability for the success of a narrative. A narrative that is judged entirely false, 'nothing but a big lie', does not have the impact or acceptability of a narrative that is considered essentially true. And except for certain special storytelling traditions, the reputation of the narrator suffers if he or she is judged to be a liar." (Labov 1982: 228)[31]

If reportability and credibility are met, every narrative clause or event will truly represent the *objective event*, a type of report that, as opposed to a *subjective event*, can be contradicted by a witness present at the time. The *objective event sequence,* then, leaves aside subjective events and evaluative clauses; it "represents the cognitive framework that is provisionally accepted as a true representation of the events reported in the narrative." (Labov 1982: 231). In such a case, each event will answer the question: 'And then what happened?', which makes the sequencing of the narrative move forward.[32]

4. *Evaluation*

A narrative which consists only of orientation, complicating action and result, has *no point.* This is the case of narratives of young children or of narratives of somebody else's experience, the so-called narratives of vicarious experience, not related to the personal experience of the narrator (Labov 1982: 226). What happens in this case is that the referential function of the narrative is accomplished but the account turns out to be quite incomprehensible because it lacks significance. It is

the case of those narratives which, when over, raise the contemptuous rejoinder from the listener: 'So what?'. Labov and Waletzky (1967: 33) illustrate this fact with a narrative that only has complicating action and result:[33]

(10) a. See he - they threw him out, you know.
b. So he wanted to get back in, 'cause, you know, it was sn--raining hard.
c. So he got on this boat
d. and tried to--go somewhere else.
e. And the boat went over.
f. And he tried to swim.
g. And this other man was fishing in the rain.
h. So he seen the pig
i. and went over there
j. and picked the pig up
k. and put it in the boat
l. and brought it back to shore, so he would land there.
m. And that was that.

From the thirteen independent clauses that conform this narrative, twelve are narrative clauses. There are only events, facts, not from the narrator but from a vicarious experience, so the story has no point or raison d'être because the story-teller had probably no stimulus for telling it nor wished to get any point of personal interest across. Thus, in front of a question such as 'Were you ever in serious danger of being killed?',[34] the subject asked finds him/herself in a position where he must not show to the audience that he really was in danger since what he is narrating is an indirect experience from a third person (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 34). It is an unevaluated account of events. As these authors put it:

> "The more vivid and real the danger appears, the more effective the narrative. If the narrative is weak and uninteresting, he will have made a false claim. Beyond such immediate stimulus, we find that most narratives are so designed as to emphasize the strange and unusual character of the situation — there is an appeal to the element of mystery in most of the narratives. Then, too, many narratives are designed to place the narrator in the most favorable possible light: a function which we may call self-aggrandizement." (1967: 34)

When the evaluation occurs, the complicating action is suspended. Stopping the action is a way to attract the listener's attention. It usually happens either at various points of the development of the action or else at the end of it, between the end of the action and the resolution; sometimes, evaluation occurs instead of result or they are both fused (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 35). The following segment, which also serves to illustrate the two types of evaluation we will explain in brief, followed by a coda, shows a case of evaluation instead of result:

(11)

…….

@Bg: ei/e
*NAR: there was nothing to do.
*NAR: but to carry on.
*NAR: yeah # it affects you a lot.
*NAR: though if you've come close to nearly dying or something like this.
*NAR: it makes you think a lot about your life.
*NAR: and what you're doing.
*NAR: and and maybe things you want to change.
*NAR: because you realize.
*NAR: how important it is.
*NAR: and that you don't want to die.
*NAR: you're thinking no # no # no # not now # please!
@Eg: ei/e
@Bg: c
*NAR: that was really the worst # the worst situation I've ever been in.
@Eg: c
@End
(NAR2Lindsay)

From the structural point of view, the evaluative section can take the form of a lexical or phrasal modificator of a narrative clause, it may be a narrative clause itself or it may coincide with the last narrative clause. In fact, this important stage of the narrative forms a sort of secondary structure that runs all through the account, sometimes concentrated in one unit, sometimes penetrating the narrative clauses. As suggested by Labov and Waletzky (1967), this is the reason why the definition of this section must lie on semantic grounds, not strictly structural ones:

> "The evaluation of a narrative is defined by us as that part of the narrative which reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative by emphasizing the relative importance of some narrative units as compared to others. "(1967: 37)

The evaluation section is, therefore, structurally embedded within the narrative by three different means (1967: 37–38):

- It is semantically defined by means of:
  a. a direct statement: "I said to myself: this is it."
  b. lexical intensifiers: "He was beaten up real, real bad."
- It is formally defined by the suspension of the action:
  a. through coordinate clauses and restricted clauses.
  b. by means of repetition: "And he didn't come back, and he didn't come back."