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Sociopragmatic competence in FFL language teaching

Towards a principled approach to teaching discourse markers in FFL

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In Kate Beeching and Helen Woodfield (2015), *Researching sociopragmatic variability*, Palgrave/Macmillan, pp. 253-275.

Sociopragmatic competence is now a widely researched area in linguistics, language acquisition and language learning and teaching, and one of the goals of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001). Several studies in language acquisition demonstrate the benefits of instruction in various aspects of pragmatics, but principally for the teaching of English, and rarely for the teaching of discourse markers. These items are difficult to explain to learners, but they are very helpful to manage a conversation, for example *donc/alors/tiens* are particular ways of opening a conversation, whereas *voilà/ok* can help to close a conversation, and also have a feedback role. The aim of this paper is to propose a model for the creation of relevant fabricated dialogues for the learning and teaching of sociopragmatic competence, especially of discourse markers in French as a Foreign Language. Taking *voilà* as a case study, we explore the ways in which an investigation of the functions and meanings of discourse markers in a corpus of spoken French can inform materials for teaching. We will first provide a definition of sociopragmatic competence and discourse markers in linguistics and in language learning and teaching. We will then present two different methodological approaches to the investigation of discourse markers and their implications for course design, taking as an illustration the analysis of *voilà*. Based on a semantic approach in which *voilà* has a ‘core meaning’ with various contextual functions, we

will propose a course design which involves the construction of model dialogues based on the study of authentic spoken interactions from the *Lancom* corpus (Louvain-Leuven University).

1. Introduction

How can sociopragmatic competence be taught in the language classroom? Sociopragmatic competence is now a widely researched area in linguistics, language acquisition and language learning and teaching, and one of the goals of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001/2011), with a specific focus on pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills such as the knowledge of scripts or patterns of interaction (*ibid.*: 99), the ability to manage an interaction, to formulate appropriate speech acts or the knowledge and use of relational and social markers. Several studies in language acquisition (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig 2001) demonstrate the benefits of instruction in various aspects of pragmatics, – but principally for the teaching of English. This paper deals with the teaching of French as a foreign language (FFL), but proposes a general model for the creation of relevant fabricated dialogues for the learning and teaching of sociopragmatic competence. To illustrate the approach, I will focus on the teaching and learning of Discourse Markers (henceforth DMs) through inauthentic¹ but appropriate exchanges and dialogues. Through such dialogues, DMs can be taught as linguistic realizations of pragmatic competence : *voilà* and *d'accord*, for example, are used to give different feedbacks, while *tiens* vs *alors/donc* are particular ways of opening a conversation. These items, however, are not seriously taken into account in textbook lessons and dialogues for FFL, except by Calbris and Montredon (2011) (see also Delahaie 2012). The question of how to teach DMs therefore remains relevant. Taking *voilà*

¹ We are speaking about 'inauthentic dialogues' to contrast with 'authentic input'. Whereas there is a focus on authentic material in language learning and teaching since the communicative language teaching, we want to show that a fabricated and non-spontaneous materiel, specially designed for language learning, is also very useful.

as a case study, we want to explore the ways in which an investigation of the functions and meanings of DMs in a corpus of spoken French can inform materials for teaching.

I will first provide a definition of sociopragmatic competence and DMs in linguistics and in language learning and teaching. I will then present two different methodological approaches to the investigation of DMs and their implications for course design, taking as an illustration the analysis of the DM *voilà*. Based on a semantic approach to DMs where *voilà* has a ‘core meaning’ with various contextual functions, I will propose a course design which involves the construction of model dialogues based on the study of authentic spoken interactions from the *Lancom* corpus (Louvain-Leuven University). The aim is to show that sociopragmatic variability of DMs is not a constraint on teaching and learning them: the multiple functions of one DM can be reduced to ‘side-effects’ of a core meaning. It should be therefore easier for the learner to understand and use them.

2. Some definitions: sociopragmatic competence and discourse markers in linguistics and language teaching

2.1. Sociopragmatic Competence

Sociopragmatics (Leech 1983) focuses on the relationship between linguistic action and social structure and is concerned with the influence of socio-contextual factors in language as social action. Leech (1983) differentiates between sociopragmatic knowledge, defined as the contextual and social variables that determine appropriate pragmalinguistic choices, and pragmalinguistic knowledge, i.e. the particular linguistic resources for formulating a specific type of speech act. But what does sociopragmatics mean in a language teaching context? In the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001/2011), which describes pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic competence, the association of the two notions in the single formulation ‘sociopragmatics’ does not exist, but it is a very common notion in research concerned with the teachability of sociopragmatic competence. According to Roever

(2009), sociopragmatic competence is the interface between pragmatics and social organization, between pragmalinguistics and contextual factors. These factors are numerous, such as the physical setting in which the discourse takes place, the relationship between the participants (relative power, degree of imposition, social distance), the participants' shared knowledge about the topic of discourse, and social rules and norms. To conclude, sociopragmatic competence is the ability to use available linguistic resources in a contextually appropriate fashion. Particular attention has been paid to the implementation of specific speech acts: compliments, refusals and requests, particularly in English as a foreign language (see Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003, or Grossi 2009). The teaching of DMs has been less investigated.

2.2 Discourse markers: pragmatic description and implications for foreign language teaching and learning

2.2.1 Pragmatic description

Several approaches have been taken to DMs, which are also called 'pragmatic markers' (see Beeching and Aijmer in this volume), or 'connectives' but often with differences in terms of how they are described. However, before discussing the points of disagreement, it is first necessary to give a commonly agreed definition of DMs. According to Brinton (1996) or Schourup (1999), discourse or pragmatic markers are high-frequency items in spoken language, such as *bon*, *donc*, *en fait*, etc. in spoken French, as illustrated by the following example from the *Lancom* corpus, which is presented in greater detail in section 2.2.3:

(1) (a travel agency employee is speaking about a trip to Mauritius)

'la pluie sur l'Océan Indien si vous voulez c'est essentiellement mois d/e février **parc/e que** c'est la période des cyclones **donc** là euh à part les habitués on déconseille vraiment aux gens d'y aller parce que des un cyclone ça dure trois jours à peu près **donc** c'est pas très sympa et sur le: **bon** ça c'est tous les autotours **donc** là [the

employee is pointing at the brochure] vous faites le tour de l'île vous changez d'hôtel tous les jours **sinon** là [the employee is pointing at the brochure] vous allez r/etrouver les hôtels qui sont eu:h qui sont proposés c'est un peu tous les mêmes dans chaque brochure eu:h = **en fait** j'ai fait la cotation sur celui-ci (...)'²

These linguistic expressions are not grammatically integrated into the sentence. They can act as various parts of speech: adverbs such as *donc* and many *-ment* discursive adverbs such as *décidément*, *justement* and so on; conjunctions such as *parce que* or *puisque*; prepositions (*après*); or grammaticalized expressions (*dis donc* for example). DMs mainly have pragmatic functions (especially expressive and social): they convey information about speakers' attitudes and actions, about shared knowledge (or lack of it), about exchange structure and so on. They are often considered as lacking in conceptual content (see for example Blakemore 1987) and merely constraining the interpretation of utterances they appear in, but opinions differ on this matter. Schourup (1999: 246), following Sperber and Wilson (1995), demonstrates that *frankly* –like *franchement* in French- not only has a procedural meaning, but is semantically complex. Likewise, Moeschler (2002) shows that there is a continuum between procedural information and conceptual information, so that many DMs are both procedural and conceptual.

This last point indicates that, while there is a general consensus among both francophone and anglophone researchers (see eg. Dostie and Pusch 2007, and Rodriguez Somolinos 2009 for the francophone area), there are many controversial points. One point concerns the meaning of the DMs, and especially the relation between this meaning and the context. DMs are indeed

² An approximate translation is: 'the rain in the Indian Ocean if you like it's generally in February because it's the cyclone season **so** at that time, except for the regular visitors, people are advised not to go there because a cyclone lasts approximately three days **so** it's not much fun and on the: **well** here you have all the coach tours **so** with these you do a tour of the island you change hotels every day **otherwise** with these other ones you will find the recommended hotels it's more or less the same in every brochure = **well** eh I've done the quotation for this one [...]'

considered as closely linked to the context, and therefore, in treating the different theories dealing with DMs, a distinction must be made, one that is particularly relevant to language learning and teaching of DMs, between a ‘data-driven approach’ and a ‘theory-driven approach’.

In the ‘data-driven approach’, data are used as the starting point for an account of the use and distribution of DMs in everyday discourse, and to outline a pattern of use. For example, Schiffrin (1987) argues that each marker is primarily associated with one of the five planes of talk (ideational structure, action structure, exchange structure, participational framework and information state). On the basis of sociolinguistic interviews, Schiffrin examined each interactional context to describe the meaning of the DMs she studies. Like Schourup (1999) later, she identified the core meaning of a DM by comparing its various discourse uses and attempting to determine what these uses have in common. Unsurprisingly, this exercise produces conflicting results, depending on the data analysed and the interactional parameters that are taken into consideration. For instance Schourup (1999: 250) mentions that the DM *well* has more than a dozen cores varying across the different studies. The problem here is that DMs are seen as ‘context-sensitive’ (Schiffrin: 1987), and in conversational analysis, they are seen as interpretable only through the context. A complete study of exhaustive data would lead to reanalysis and an improvement in the descriptions, but, as Schourup (1999: 253) says, ‘there will still be no guarantee that hypothesized semantic cores will converge on the correct solution as more and more data is considered’.

A ‘theory-driven approach’ involves a very different method of analysing the semantic meaning of a DM. For most theory-driven approaches, context is not considered to be the most important element in explaining a DM’s meaning. Rather, the meaning of a DM in

context is the surface phenomenon of a deep meaning which cannot be understood merely by examining the context. Seen from this perspective, each DM has one core meaning which can explain all the uses in context; if not, they are considered as different semantic entities (see Anscombre et al. 2013). The *Dictionnaire raisonné des marqueurs discursifs du français*, project undertaken by Paillard (see Paillard 2012) in collaboration with the University of Hanoï and the *Agence universitaire de la Francophonie*, develops this method to describe and explain DMs in French as a linguistic and pragmatic system (according to Culioli's Enunciation Theory). This description is followed by a thorough didactic model for teaching and learning this system based on modeled dialogues (Delahaie 2012 in Paillard 2012). This work has also resulted in training plans for the teacher of language department of Hanoï, with the support of the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie*. There are many theory-driven approaches to DMs, and I will not favour here one approach; I will demonstrate that a semantic theoretical approach of DMs integrates well with the 'data-driven' methodology, that is to say an empirical corpus-based quantitative methodology that takes communicative situations into account.

2.2.3 How to describe discourse markers? An illustration with the DM *voilà* in the *Lancom* corpus

I will illustrate these two different ways of dealing with DMs through the analysis of data from the *Lancom* corpus. This is a native/non native corpus, half of which consists of role plays recorded in secondary school classrooms in the Flemish part of Belgium, while the other half consists of role plays or spontaneous conversation with native speakers of French in the same situations (registered in 1993 and 2006, 260,000 words). This corpus, which is the property of the University of Louvain-Leuven and is available online (<http://bach.arts.kuleuven.be/elicop/>), was created to enhance the learning and teaching of spoken French in secondary schools by providing new material for textbook dialogues and

lessons (Flament-Boistrancourt 2001). From a linguistic perspective, the comparison between non-native talk and native talk provides a great deal of information about what is significant in the native talk and what is not used by non-native speakers. Briefly, it could be said that the non-native talk of secondary learners is generally influenced by a traditional teaching approach, which focuses on grammar, and mainly on the written register. This is not surprising and many researchers have found the same (see for example Andersen 2006 for Danish secondary school learners of French). Native speakers, in contrast, use structures which are not described in the textbooks, and which are often not in French grammars either. For example, the way of asking a question is very different in our data, with native speakers of French using yes/no questions far more than Wh-questions for reasons of politeness, even if the speaker expects more than a yes/no answer; conversely, the Flemish learners mainly use Wh-questions (see Debrock, Flament-Boistrancourt and Gevaert 1999: 55): ‘*vous habitez sur Marcq ? vs vous habitez où ?*’³. The way in which a topic is introduced is also very different (see Delahaie and Flament 2013): the Flemish-speaking learners and the teachers⁴ in the *Lancom* corpus use the traditional thematic introducers classified in grammars such as *en ce qui concerne*, *au sujet de* and so on. The native speakers however do not use this type of thematic introducer in the *Lancom* corpus; instead, they most often use non-traditional introducers such as *en termes de*, *au niveau de* ou *par rapport à*. These expressions are never indexed in French grammars and even prohibited by the famous *Académie française*⁵:

(2) - et **là au niveau des tarifs** ce s/era combien là sur la Réunion ? (*Lancom*, travel agency, native speakers, spontaneous talk)

³ Do you live in Marcq ? vs Where do you live ?

⁴ Four teachers were recorded in their classrooms for the corpus. They are all Flemish except one who comes from the Francophone part of Belgium.

⁵ See the webpages in the section ‘dire ne pas dire’: <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/au-niveau-de>, <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/en-termes-de>, <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/par-rapport>

(3) - eu:h et **en termes de tarifs** eu:h j/e pense que vous trouv/erez de toute façon i/l y a celui-là qu/e vous aviez repéré aussi? (*Lancom*, travel agency, native speakers, spontaneous talk)

(4) - hm donc sinon **par rapport euh: à la rémunération** je pense que vous avez vu un petit peu ce qu'on proposait (*Lancom*, job interview, native speakers, role play)

(5) - et **pour la date** c'est encore libre du euh premier au huit du au huit septembre ? (*Lancom*, travel agency role plays, learners of French)⁶

For DMs in French, this corpus makes some largely unstudied items salient. We will focus here on the DM *voilà* in spoken French and show the differences of analysis between a data-driven approach and a theory-driven approach.

This very frequent DM in French has numerous functions and numerous translations in English, and can index various contextual parameters. To present these functions, I will use only part of the *Lancom* corpus, namely transcriptions of 13 spontaneous interactions in a travel agency (30,000 words, 1993/2006) in France (Lille), because they illustrate a wide range of functions. In these data, *voilà* appears to be very 'context-sensitive'. As already mentioned, each corpus will produce a specific typology of the uses of a DM. The same caveat holds for the contexts in which *voilà* has been studied by Bruxelles and Traverso (2006) and Druetta (1993). Based on the travel agency data alone, the DM *voilà* can already be shown to have many uses, as illustrated in the grid below:

| Main Uses of <i>voilà</i> in the travel agency conversations (112 occurrences) | Occurrences | Percentage |
|--|-------------|------------|
| | | |

⁶ It is difficult to translate these sentences, because the construction of the sentence in English is different. The following is a literal translation: 2. As regards the cost how much is it for La Réunion? 3. In terms of price I think you'll find -anyway you've seen this one? 4. Well otherwise as regards the compensation I think you've seen what we offer? 5. And for the date is it still available from the first to the eighth of September?

| | | |
|--|----|-------|
| Affirmative response to a confirmation | 57 | 50,9% |
| Serves to close a turn or a conversation | 34 | 30,3% |
| Indicates an object | 16 | 14,3% |
| Serves to open a conversation | 5 | 4,5% |

Table 1. Main uses of *voilà* in the travel agency conversations

In most cases, *voilà* serves as an affirmative response to a request for confirmation:

(6) E- c'était l'hôtel X hein c'est ça hein ?

C- voilà à Lesbos et il y a une semaine à Kyos⁷

(travel agency, 'Lesbos', 2006)

Such requests for confirmation should not be confused with genuine questions, to which *voilà* cannot serve as an answer:

(7) - est-ce que c'est l'hôtel X ?

- oui

- ??voilà/ ?? voilà c'est ça

Its second most common function is to conclude, at the end of a turn in dialogue:

(8) E- [...] alors on va regarder ce qu'on peut ce que je peux regarder parce que en fait si vous voulez le samedi pendant les vacances les euh tour-opérateurs ferment plus tôt (nom) ferme à seize heures trente et (nom) ferme à dix-sept heures et euh **voilà**⁸

(travel agency, 'Chypre', 2006)

⁷ It was hotel X wasn't it ?/Yes, that's it, in Lesbos, and there's a week in Kyos.

⁸ 'so we'll have a look at what we can what I can because tour operators close earlier on Saturdays during holidays (X) closes at 16h30 and (X) closes at 17 and er **voilà** (there we are)...'

Voilà occurs especially frequently during what we might call the ‘closure sequence’ of an interaction:

(9) C- bon j/e peux m/e permettre de l’emmener ?

E- bien sûr sans souci sans souci

C- à c/e moment-là j/e vais le j/e vais cogiter un peu

E- et donc euh **voilà** sachez qu’e pour l’aérien donc i/l y a pas de souci

C- oui oui

E- en aller simple en aller-retour ou en retour simple

C- tout à fait

E- et qu’à côté d’e ça euh si c’est pour l’hiver effectivement euh ce s/era plus eu:h à partir du mois d’e septembre

C- pour l’hiver oui d’accord

E- OK ?

C- donc j/e verrai demain je n/e sais pas j/e vais **voilà**⁹

(travel agency, ‘Suède’, 2006)

Therefore, *voilà* is very useful for managing the interaction, at a microstructural level (the exchange with two or three turns) and at a macro level (the structure of the interaction).

Voilà is also frequently used to indicate an extra-linguistic object or a linguistic one. According to Bruxelles and Traverso (2006: 76), these occurrences of *voilà* that they call ‘déictique/présentatif/eurêka’ ‘apparaissent à l’issue d’une activité locale de recherche d’un objet, au moment où l’objet est “trouvé”’ (‘appear after searching for an object, when the object is found’). These occurrences are very frequent in our travel interactions, where they

⁹ Here C is a client, and E the employee: C- well can I take it?/ E- of course no problem/C- for the moment I will think a bit about it/E- and so well you know that for the plane there’s no problem/C- yes/ with a single a round trip or just a return/E-exactly/C- and otherwise if it’s for the winter it’ll be from September/C- yes for the winter/E-OK ?/C- so I’ll see tomorrow I don’t know I’ll ... **voilà** (you know)

are used to signal the end and the result of a process within a speaker's turn. It can be a concrete process:

(10) [The employee is looking for a holiday package on the computer]

E- bon c'est des voyages très très bien hein au niveau des prix alors là c'est voyages diffusion (nom) hein donc c'est des produits (nom) mais avec peut-être des hôtels qui sont un peu moins bien mais bon très corrects hein ce qui fait alors je sais qu'ils ont un circuit **voilà** sur la Thaïlande¹⁰

(travel agency, 'rude customers', *Lancom*)

or a cognitive one:

(11) [The customer is talking about her son studying abroad in Sweden]

C- il part à côté de Stockholm à l'université de **je ne sais plus son nom** maintenant = bref <INT> turn 33 </INT> [...]

C- alors ça s'appelle le Linköping **voilà** ça me revient tiens là où il est <INT> turn 152 </INT>¹¹

(travel agency, 'Suède', *Lancom*)

In this example, the customer could not remember the name of a famous university in Sweden (turn 33) and finally recalled it at turn 152.

More rarely, *voilà* is used at the beginning of the exchange as a way of opening a conversation:

(12) [beginning of a telephone call]

E- alors en fait **voilà** je voulais vérifier parce que j'aurais éventuellement une personne qui souhaiterait se rajouter [...] ¹²

(travel agency, 'Lesbos', 2006)

¹⁰ E- it's trips proposed by (X) so they are (X) products but maybe with less good hotels but well very nice so I know they have a guided tour yes **voilà** (here it is) for Thailand

¹¹ C- He's going to the University near Stockholm I don't remember its name now = well/ its name is Linköping **voilà** (that's it) I remember now that's where he is.

¹² E- So in fact **voilà** (the thing is) I wanted to check because I'd like to add perhaps a passenger

To conclude, *voilà* is a very useful item in interaction, with different functions. However, a semantic analysis shows that *voilà* in its different uses has common properties. Its first common characteristic is its deictic function: the referent of *voilà* has to be found through the discursive or situational context. This is very clear in cases where *voilà* is used for confirmation, as in example (6). In this exchange, the implicit referent of *voilà* can be found via the expression ‘l’hôtel Kalimera’, situated in the immediate linguistic context of *voilà*. The referent of *voilà* has likewise to be found through the construction ‘un circuit sur la Thaïlande’ in example (11). This means that in its discursive functions, *voilà* has the same properties as *voilà* used as a presentative, as in this example:

(13) ‘te voilà/voilà le bus qui arrive’¹³

There is a second most important characteristic of *voilà* in all its uses: while the referent has to be retrievable through the situational or textual context, it is considered to be expected by the speakers. This phenomenon of ‘already known’ can work in various ways. When *voilà* serves as a response to a request for confirmation, it is used as an answer to a question, which is partially an assertion, as Labov has already shown (‘the rule of confirmation’, 1970: 80). When *voilà* is employed within a monological conclusion, a sentence can be finished without proceeding to a normal grammatical closure, as in example (8). So, when *voilà* helps to close a turn, it is sometimes used to replace an explicit explanation. Finally, in the travel agency interactions, when *voilà* appears at the end of the interaction, it indicates the end of a script (with a set of expected sequences, exchanges and speech acts) as a conclusion (example 9). For this reason, it is used less frequently in conversational interactions without a predetermined script.

¹³ Here you are/here is the bus.

I will not develop all the semantic and pragmatic properties of *voilà* here (see Delahaie 2009). The aim was just to show that the two approaches, the data-driven one and the theory-driven one, are very different but complementary. The two approaches are used below to build relevant dialogues for learning and teaching FFL.

3. How should sociopragmatic competence and discourse markers be taught (and learned)?

3.1 The use of DMs by FFL learners

In the travel agency role plays in the *Lancom* corpus, the Flemish learners of French (with a level of proficiency approaching *Common European Framework* Level B1), DMs are not frequently used. In fact learners have no problem with grammar, but they find it hard to manage the interaction. The result sounds very strange for a native speaker, indicating that it is a pragmatic problem: learners do not provide non grammatical, incomprehensible output, but use the language inadequately with respect to the situation. The comparison between the two dialogues below highlights the differences between native speakers and FFL learners:

(14) [A travel agency role play, FFL speakers]

E1- bonjour asseyez-vous ('good morning sit down')

E2- bonjour ('good morning')

E1- qu'est-c/e que je peux faire pour vous ? ('what can I do for you')

E2- euh nous voudrions euh réserver un séjour à Paris ('er we'd like er to book at stay in Paris')

E1- oui à Paris et ce serait pour quelle période↑ ('yes in Paris and that would be for what period?')

E3- le quatre cinq et six juin ('the 4th. 5th. And 6th. Of June')

E1- oui et vous êtes avec combien d/e personnes ('yes and you are with how many people')

E2- euh nous sommes avec quatre personnes deux adultes et deux adolescents un de seize ans et un de dix-huit ans ('er we are with four people two adults and two adolescents one of sixteen years and one of eighteen years')

E1- hm hm ('mhmm')

E3- on aim/erait loger dans un hôtel à quatre étoiles comm/e ici dans le dépliant avez-vous quelque chose à nous faire essayer ? ('we'd like to stay in a four star hotel like this one in the brochure have you got something for us to try ?')

E1- euh oui le Hilton est très connu pour son serve son service remarquable là vous avez euh deux téléés un lit un grand lit confortable deux lits séparés et cetera il y a aussi un mini bar ('er yes the Hilton is very well known for its serve its exceellent service there you have two TVs a bed a comfortable double bed two single beds etc there is also a mini bar')

E3- et le prix ? ('and the price ?')

E1- euh ce n'est pas très cher ça coûte cent euros par nuit donc mille deux cents euros pour trois jours ('er it's not very expensive it costs a hundred euros a night so one thousand two hundred euros for three days')

Native speakers manage the interaction differently:

(15) M- messieurs dames bonjour ('messieurs dames (ladies and gentlemen) good morning')

E1- bonjour ('good morning')

E2- on recherche un séjour pour le mois d'août ('we're looking for a stay for the month of August')

M- hm hm ('mhmm')

E2- euh les si ('er the if')

E1- plus les Baléares ouais ('plus the Balearic islands yeah')

E2- ouais les Baléares l'Espagne si possible ('yeah the Balearic islands Spain if possible')

M- oui pour combien de: de temps↓ ('yes for how long')

E2- pour eu:h dix ou quinze jours ('for er ten days or a fortnight')

E1- entre dix et quinze jours ('between ten days and a fortnight')

M- **d'accord** vous avez déjà regardé des choses repéré des choses↑ ou pas du tout↓ ('OK have you already looked at things found anything or not at all')

E1- bah on est venu eu:h i/l y a un ou deux mois et d/emi ('well we came er a month or two months and a half ago')

E2- ouais ('yeah')

M- oui ('yes')

E1- **puis après** on a laissé tomber puis on revient **voilà** ('then afterwards we forgot about it and now we're back **voilà** (and that's it)')

E2- **voilà** (**voilà** 'that's it')

M- **d'accord mais** vous n'avez rien vu ('OK but you haven't seen anything')

E2- **mais** on n'avait rien vu de spécial ('but we hadn't seen anything special')

E1- non non non ('no no no')

M- **OK** et vous êtes combien d/e personnes à partir↑ ('OK and how many of you are there who are going ?')

E1- deux ('two')

M- **d'accord** vous cherchez plutôt du: de l'hôtel du club ? ('OK are you looking for a club hotel')

E1- hôtel club ouais hôtel club ('club hotel yeah club hotel')

M- plutôt du club hein ('preferably a club then ?')

E2- euh tout inclus si possible ('er all inclusive if possible')

E1- ouais ('yeah')

M- **d'accord** et **au niveau d/e votre budget** vous vous êtes fixés une euh↑ ('OK and as far as your budget goes have you got er?')

E1- pas plus d/e mille euros pas personne pas plus de mille euros ('not more than a thousand euros per person not more than a thousand euros')

M- **d'accord par contre** en formule all inclusive o: forcé obligatoirement ou de la pension complète ça peut aller↓ ('OK but in the all inclusive package yo : have to have or full board that might work')

E2- non pension complète ('not full board')

E1- pension complète ça peut aller aussi ('full board that might be OK too')

M- **oui ? d'accord = OK donc** vous êtes disponibles à partir de quand vous m/e dites euh ? ('yes ? right = OK so you are free from when did you say er?')

E2- douze août ('12th. August')

E1- douze août ('12th. August')

M- **OK** et retour grand maxi quand ? ('OK and the last possible date you can come back?')

E2- euh le ('er the')

E1- eu:h j'ai pas d/e calendrier euh ('er I have got a calendar er')

E2- fin août ('end of August')

M- pardon <INT> M tend un calendrier à E1 </INT> ('sorry [M hands E1 a calendar]')

E1- merci = septembre bah nous on reprend le quatre septembre ('thanks = September well we go back on the 4th. of September')

M- **d'accord** = et **donc** quinze jours eu:h retour grand maxi donc_euh ('OK = and so a fortnight last possible return date er')

E1- **voilà** le deux ou **voilà le** deux c'est un samedi ('that's it the second or hang on the second is a Saturday')

M- **d'accord OK = au niveau de l'aéroport de départ** ça peut être Lille ou Bruxelles↓ ('right OK – in terms of airports you can leave from Lille or Brussels')

E1- ouais ('yeah')

M- **d'accord ('OK')**

(*Lancom*, 'Baléares')

In both dialogues, speakers produce a list of questions, but the non-native language lacks expressions used to weave the speakers' utterances together, such as :

- thematic introducers : 'et au niveau de votre budget vous vous êtes fixés une euh ?' vs 'et le prix ?'

- discourse markers : *par contre, donc, en fait* are never used by the Flemish learners

- DMs used to indicate an affirmation: Flemish learners of French use almost exclusively *oui*, whereas francophone speakers use *voilà, d'accord, O.K.* with specific values.

Now, how should this sociopragmatic competence be taught?

3.2 The teachability of sociopragmatic competence

It is well known that teaching pragmatic skills can have positive effects on learners' proficiency as shown by a considerable literature on the subject (Bardovi-Harlig 2001; Rose and Kasper 2002; Kasper and Roever 2005; Roever 2009). Most of the studies show that immersion is insufficient for the acquisition of pragmatic skills; according to Rose (2005: 386) following Schmidt (1993), 'simple exposure to the target language is insufficient – pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are often not salient to learners and so not likely to be noticed even after prolonged exposure' (Schmidt 1993). Similarly, Comprenolle and Williams (2013: 303) show that 'learners do indeed benefit more from explicit instruction

than simple exposure. Even an explicit comment or explanation made in passing may be somewhat beneficial to learners'. There are different kinds of instructional methods: focus-on-form, feedback, discourse completion tasks and recasts, viewing and identifying pragmatic infelicities, followed by role play (Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin 2005), but a distinction must be made between explicit and implicit teaching of pragmatic skills.

Implicit teaching gives 'a provision of enriched input via input enhancement techniques and recasting of pragmalinguistic errors that arise out of meaning-focused communication' (Kasper and Roever 2005: 318). In fact, Kasper and Roever (2005) show that, in order to be acquisitionally available, the input must seem relevant and worthwhile for the learner. Learners' attention should be drawn 'to the linguistic forms by which [an] action is implemented, its immediate interactional or textual context' (2005: 318). This means that an authentic context may be insufficient to focus on specific linguistic features, because they are not highlighted and hard to 'notice', but textbook dialogues are often deceptive: Bardovi-Harlig (2001), in a review of current studies in this area, showed that the speech act realisations presented in textbooks may not reflect the manner in which native speakers commonly perform them. A possible reason for this imprecision may be that such teaching materials, rather than being based on empirical research, are derived from native speaker intuitions, themselves unreliable in nature.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of explicit teaching has been demonstrated in many ways. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) reported that explicit classroom instruction about speech act realisations can benefit ESL learners from different backgrounds even if more advanced learners may develop awareness without instruction. Soler (2005), too, showed that instruction has a positive effect, especially when it includes reference to linguistic rules, which are explained to the learners, and direct and indirect awareness-raising tasks.

But how should DMs be taught?

The research in pedagogy has mainly focused on how to teach and learn to perform particular speech acts, that is to say, using an appropriate speech act in a given speech event and selecting appropriate linguistic forms to realize this speech act. By contrast, little has been proposed for DMs in terms of pedagogy. Some researchers (Wichmann and Chanet 2009, Dewaele and Wourm 2002) suggest increasing learners' awareness of DMs, and teaching with authentic spoken data (video and transcriptions). With this type of material, the solution could be to explain the different meanings of DMs in association with different interactional contexts. This is, for example, the pedagogical approach proposed by Lee (2003) in order to teach the DMs 'well' and 'oh'. Here the DM is 'context-sensitive' (Schiffrin 1987), and the way DMs are taught refers to 'data-driven approaches'.

Another way to teach DMs could be to make lists of them, but the danger here is the 'paradigmatic curse' identified by Beacco (1989) concerning vocabulary in foreign language teaching: giving learners lists of words to memorize, completely out of context. This is nevertheless precisely what the *Référentiels pour le français*¹⁴ do: lists of sentences or DMs are provided, linked to particular speech acts – for example to 'confirm': *oui, tout à fait, si, bien sûr que si* ; or to 'conclude': *(bon ben) voilà quoi, voilà, enfin, donc, bref, etc.* (*Niveau B2 pour le français, un référentiel* 2004: 72 and 114). We have seen that *voilà* for example has a particular value when confirming, and cannot be replaced by *bien sûr que si* or *tout à fait* in any context. As Zheng says in this volume, discourse markers could be taught only if we have, as a first step, an adequate description of their usages.

This all seems to support the idea that DMs are very difficult to explain, and that all that can be done is to gloss a given example depending on the context. However, this makes the gloss more of an explanation of the whole context than of the DM itself. In addition, if a DM is assumed to have only a procedural meaning, it will be more difficult to explain because, in

¹⁴ The *Référentiels pour le français* are didactic tools for teachers, curriculum and material developers. They refer to the *Common european framework for languages* and describe the language skills at a particular level (from A1 to B2).

traditional language teaching, what is explained is the meaning of the content, or how it describes the world. Explaining, for instance, ‘how to manage an interaction’ with DMs, does not fit into any of the traditional grammatical/semantic categories. Therefore, pragmatic explanation is separated from grammatical explanation.

3.3 Teaching DMs in context: other propositions

Based on these studies, it seemed interesting to provide relevant material for both implicit and explicit instruction of DMs. The aim is to illustrate the most frequently used functions of one or several DMs through various contexts, and how the core meaning interacts with these contexts. But in order to focus on this meaning, it is useful to build a specific context, that is to create a dialogue, which helps to underline the main semantic traits of the DM. It is a kind of enriched, though inauthentic, input. I will keep to the example of the DM *voilà*, as a starting point that will help to deal with other DMs.

As seen above, *voilà* should first be shown in the various contexts with which it is most frequently associated. Learners can then be asked to explain the use of this DM in different contexts. But it would be interesting to offer, at least for learners at B1 level, another way of teaching DMs without resorting to daunting explanations, but with the help of exchanges modeled on authentic data.

Example 1: contrastive exchanges

In order to highlight the relevance of the semantic and pragmatic meaning of *voilà*, contrastive, binary models of exchanges might be proposed that focus on two different DMs. For example, *voilà* could be opposed to *d'accord* as a binary pair of responsive speech acts:

(16) C- là vous attendez une confirmation d'AQUATOURL ? ('Are you just waiting for confirmation from AQUATOURL?')

E- voilà ('that's right')

C- d'accord ('OK')

(travel agency, *Lancom*)

D'accord is frequently the third 'evaluative' move of an exchange (36.9% of the evaluative responses in our data by native speakers in travel agency exchanges), and serves to ratify new information. *Voilà* cannot have this function, because as we have seen it conveys an anaphoric and deictic meaning, so that the information ratified by *voilà* is considered to be expected. So, in order to increase awareness of the differences between these two affirmative DMs, which are both very frequent in spoken French, one might propose inauthentic model exchanges:

| In a travel agency, C is the customer, and E is the employee | |
|--|---|
| E registers the information (2) | C- je voudrais partir aux environs du 30 août si possible ('I'd like to leave around the 30 th . August if possible') E – d'accord ('OK') |
| C confirms (1) E registers the information (2) | E – et donc vous rentrez quinze jours après c'est ça? ('and you're coming back a fortnight later, is that it?') C- voilà ('that's it') E- d'accord ('OK') |
| C answers the question | E- est-ce que vous avez une idée de voyage? ('have you got an idea of what kind of trip you'd like?') C – oui ('yes') - ??d'accord/??voilà ('??OK/??that's it') |

Table 2. Contrastive exchanges

These kinds of exchanges help to highlight the most important semantic traits of these affirmative DMs that are differentiated by the trait new information/expected information. With these stereotyped exchanges, it would be easier for the teacher to explain this semantic opposition.

Application 2: models of contrastive interactions

How might *voilà* be presented as a concluding or opening marker? The aim is also to show the core meaning of *voilà*: in concluding or opening an interaction, *voilà* the same meaning. *Voilà*, as a consensual marker, is used at the end of a script, as confirmation of an expected conclusive sequence. It rarely occurs in conversational interactions (without a script), where it is replaced by *tiens* (opening) or *bon* (conclusion), as Traverso (1996) has demonstrated.

Thus a teacher might want to compare two different types of interaction, in order to increase learners' awareness of the different uses of the DMs.

| Colloquial/familiar conversation: meeting friends on the street (revised version from <i>Lancom</i>) ¹⁵ | Interaction with a script: at a travel agency (revised version from <i>Lancom</i>) |
|--|---|
| (C1 and C2 meet each other in the street) C1- tiens salut Bertrand, comment ça va ? ('oh hi Bertrand how's it going?') C2- très bien et toi ? ('Fine – how about you?') | (at a travel agency) E- bonjour Monsieur ('Morning') C- bonjour madame voilà je voudrais connaître le prix des billets d'avion Paris-Londres s'il vous plaît ('good morning it's just I'd like to know the price of plane tickets from Paris to London please') |

¹⁵ This dialogue is simulated in the corpus, it looks here a bit forced and could be improved, but the aim here is just to underline the differences of uses of DMs between the two types of dialogues.

| | |
|---|---|
| C1- bah ça va je suis en train de faire des courses là ('not too bad I'm just doing my shopping') | E- oui départ quelle date ? ('yes what date?') |
| C2- ah ok, ben moi je vais chercher un copain à la gare ('ok, and I'm going to take a friend at the station') | C- le 5 novembre pas avant, parce que je ne peux partir avant et euh voilà ('the 5 th . of November not before because I can't and er that's it (that's the situation)) |
| C1- ah d'accord ('all right') | E- d'accord en seconde classe ? ('OK in second class') |
| C2- tiens au fait tu as des nouvelles de Jérémy il devait partir en Angleterre? ('oh by the way any news about Jeremy he was supposed to be going to England') | C- en seconde oui ('in second yes') |
| C1- oui il a réussi à partir pour quinze jours ('yes he managed to get away for a fortnight') | E- et il vous faut un retour ? ('and do you need a return?') |
| C2- ah oui c'est bien ('very good') | C- et pas de retour non ('and no return ticket no') |
| C1- il rentre dans une semaine ('he'll be back in a week') | E- alors vous avez un vol le 5 novembre au matin à 150 euros l'aller ('so you have a flight on the 5 th . of November in the morning at 150 euros single') |
| C2- ah d'accord il faudra que je l'appelle ('ah Ok I have to call him') | C- ah c'est pas mal ('ah that's not bad') |
| C1- bon ben il faut que j'y aille de toute façon on s'appelle hein ? ('well I've sort of got to go let's keep in touch OK?') | E- par Air France ('with Air France') |
| C2- d'accord allez salut ! ('OK bye | C- d'accord ('OK') |
| | E- voilà ('there you go') |
| | C- bon ben je vais réfléchir et euh voilà , je repasserai ('right well I'll think about it and er sort of I'll come back') |
| | E- d'accord pas de problème ('OK no problem') |
| | C- voilà merci au revoir ('right thanks bye') |

| | |
|-------|--|
| then' | |
|-------|--|

Table 3. Contrastive dialogues

Conclusion

Teaching DMs in FFL or other foreign languages is a real challenge. We have proposed here a basis for helping teachers to do that. We have shown that the use of DMS in French is very important in conversation, but very difficult to explain. They vary according to the context, and after all according to sociopragmatic parameters. Explaining DMs only through the context where they appear leads to multiply the functions of one DM depending on one particular context. As a result, teachers and learners might feel lost by the extreme variability of the DMs. Our approach tries to reduce this variability, as it demonstrates that DMs prescribe linguistic systems and do not only vary according to external contexts. It is obvious that learners should not use the dialogues presented above for repetition. They are suitable for raising 'metapragmatic' awareness by making the frequent functions and main semantic traits of a DM salient. To conclude, this type of dialogue and exchange is not aimed at imitating the reality of spoken language, but at stylizing it. The goal is to build an ideal model of dialogue based on statistical and semantic studies, with the intention of exaggerating reality: certain semantic traits and functions are highlighted, whereas they are often invisible in a spontaneous conversation.

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