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Evidentials, politeness and prosody in Spanish: A corpus analysis

Abstract: This paper analyzes three Spanish particles, namely *al parecer, por lo visto* and *según parece*, whose status as pure evidentials (i.e., elements that only convey "source of information") has been put into question. The aim of this study is twofold: firstly, to observe the incidence of prosody in triggering the contextual meanings usually expressed by evidentials, i.e., politeness, impoliteness and self-image activities; secondly, to find out whether their prosodic behaviour provides any hint of their core meaning being "source of information". In order to carry out this analysis, a corpus of circa three million words of Peninsular Spanish has been compiled, which aims to reflect a variety of registers (formal and informal) and genres (both confrontational and nonconfrontational). The study reveals different prosodic behaviours exhibited by pure evidentials on the one hand, and contextual meanings on the other. Theoretically speaking, the concept of "relational work" embraces all the contextual meanings, and therefore explains the prosodic difference more effectively than other concepts. On the other hand, data show a high number of cases in Spanish where evidentials are used with their pure meaning, thus supporting the existence of elements exclusively conveying "source of information", without any further contextual nuance.

Keywords: Relational work, politeness, evidentials, prosody, Spanish, oral corpora

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1 Introduction

Evidential markers and expressions, as in example (1), primarily convey a meaning of "source of information" (see Aikhenvald 2004: 3). However, in

Spanish at least, other nuances can emerge contextually, such as some politeness-related meanings, for instance in example (2):[1]

(1)   A: *y dice el noruego*↑ *que también hicieron* <u>*unas estadísticas*</u> *(...) y que* ***por lo visto***↑*// era curioso porque (...) del centro de Noruega al NORTE*↑ *el norte de Noruega*↑ *que* ***por lo visto***↑ *sí quee es verdad que en general era maayor la infidelidad*↓
       [<u>The Norwegian guy says</u> they also did <u>some statistics</u> (...) and ***apparently*** ... it was funny because (...) from the centre to the north of Norway- in the north, in the north of Norway, ***apparently*** it is true that infidelity was more frequent] (Val.Es.Co. 2.0, 218a1)

(2)   H1:   *¿Existe, podemos ... podemos constatar que existe tráfico de menores?*
       [Is there, can we ... can we affirm that child trafficking exists?]
       H2:   *Hombre, podemos constatarlo porque ya en algún caso ha habido actuaciones (...) Y de hecho, pues como ... en estos últimos días hemos comentado, eh hay algunas investigaciones abiertas (...)*
       [Well, we can affirm it because there have already been some (police) interventions (...) And in fact, as ... we have said in these last few days, erm, some investigations are underway (...)]
       H1:   *Sin embargo,* <u>*parece que*</u> *este asunto choca con un problema grave, y es que eh* ***al parecer****, este – este delito no está eh tipificado, o estas – estas acciones no tif – tipificadas como delito en España. Hay una-* <u>*una especie de*</u> *laguna.*
       [However, <u>it seems</u> that this matter faces a serious problem, and it's that, ***apparently***, this – this crime is not defined, or these actions are not defined as a crime in Spain. There is a <u>sort of</u> loophole]

Example (1) is an excerpt of a colloquial conversation where a woman explains some statistics about infidelity in Norway. Speaker A states that the source of her knowledge is a Norwegian man who presented the results of the survey on TV (*y dice el noruego*↑ *que también hicieron unas estadísticas*). Later, speaker A provides information coming from that survey, using *por lo visto* to keep pointing to the external source of information, i.e., the Norwegian man. Example (2) contains an interview between a journalist and an expert on the topic of child trafficking. H2 (the expert) asserts that some measures have been taken in order to avoid this crime, but H1 (the interviewer) objects, and states his

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1 The transcription symbols are explained in Hidalgo and Cabedo, this volume.

doubts about the success of the measures taken given that the crime is not defined in the Spanish Criminal Code. It must be noted, however, that H1 in his objection uses a number of attenuating devices (underlined), such as *parece que* ('it seems that'), *al parecer* ('seemingly, apparently') and *una especie de* ('sort of'). Of these, the former two are evidential markers, whereas the latter is a mitigating mechanism only. In this context though, all of them perform the same task: they try to minimize the objections alleged by H1 to H2. Consequently, (2) is a polite use of *al parecer*. In example (3) a third value of *al parecer* is illustrated; it is an intervention by a Spanish politician addressing the Parliament:

(3)   *hay una pregunta que se hacen todos los ciudadanos/ ¿por qué el exte- sorero del partido popular tiene treinta y ocho millones de euros y yo no? (...); es decir/ ¿qué ha hecho Bárcenas para conseguir/ treinta y ocho millones de euros?/ y la pregunta tiene una respuesta que conocen→/ TOODOS los ciudadanos/ TODOS/ todoos↑/ bueno / TODOS no /aa- /**al parecer**↑ el señor Rajooy/ la señora Cospedal y los responsables del pepé ↑/no la conocen↑/ y siguen mirando hacia otro lado↑*

     [Every citizen is wondering: Why does the former treasurer of the Popular Party have 38 million euros while I do not? (...) that is to say, what has Bárcenas[2] done to obtain thirty-eight million euros? And the question has one answer known by ALL Spaniards. ALL. All ... well, maybe not all of them. **Apparently** Mr. Rajoy[3], Ms. Cospedal[4] and the leaders of the Popular Party do not know it, and they keep looking the other way]

In example (3), an impolite intention can be observed. The speaker reproaches two members of the Government for ignoring a severe political crisis in Spain. He uses *al parecer* to perform two different but related tasks: to accuse the culprits (Mr. Rajoy and Ms. Cospedal) and, at the same time, to distance himself from any personal responsibility.

     Finally, in example (4), a self-image activity is revealed:

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2 Luis Bárcenas, former treasurer of the Popular Party (PP), the conservative political party currently ruling in Spain. Bárcenas has been accused of having misappropriated funds (38 million euros) from the PP and diverting them to a Swiss bank account, thus evading Spanish taxes. The media have also accused the PP of obtaining those funds illegally.
3 Spanish Prime Minister, from the PP.
4 Deputy Prime Minister of Spain, from the PP.

(4)   H6: *¿La Guerra Mundial, dices, o la de España? La de España con coñac*
      [The World War, you say, or the Spanish [Civil] War? The Spanish
      war, with cognac]

   H1: *Con <vacilación> ... las demás con vodka, ¿no?*
      [With <hesitating> ... the rest with vodka, right?]

   H6: *La otra con vodka.*
      [The other one, with vodka]
      (...)

   H5: *Porque crees, por lo visto ... <u>Hablé con un fulano</u>, con un director de
      un periódico que había esta<(d)>o en la guerra <u>y me dijo que</u> cuando
      se tomaba coñac <u>que</u> creías que eras inmortal. <u>Que</u> luego no te dabas
      cuenta del peligro ... prácticamente te lo daban y cargabas. (...)*
      [Because you think, <u>it seems</u> ... <u>I talked</u> to a guy, the editor of some
      newspaper who had been in the war, and he told me that, when
      cognac was drunk, you thought you were immortal. <u>And he said
      that</u> afterwards you were not aware of the danger anymore ... practi-
      cally you were given [a weapon] and you charged (...)]

Example (4) appears to be quite similar to (1). Both illustrate how a speaker
(here, H5) invokes a third person, who is the source of the information given
by him/her. The difference here lies in the content and in the grammatical
person chosen to express the example. The conversation in (4) is about different
alcoholic drinks given to soldiers in the early 20th century to enhance their
bravery and diminish their panic in the front. Speaker H5 says that the Spanish
spirit was cognac – not vodka – and begins an explanation for this claim. If
all the evidential markers underlined in (4) are eliminated, the result is the
following:

(4')   H5: *Porque crees ... cuando se tomaba coñac creías que eras inmortal.
      Luego no te dabas cuenta del peligro ... prácticamente te lo daban y
      cargabas.*
      [Because you think ... when cognac was drunk, you thought you
      were immortal. Afterwards you were not aware of the danger any-
      more ... practically you were given [a weapon] and you charged (...)]

Using the second person singular in this context (*Porque **crees** ... cuando se
tomaba coñac, **creías** que eras inmortal. Luego no **te dabas** cuenta del peligro ...
prácticamente **te** lo daban*) will most probably make the listener assume that
the speaker knows these facts about cognac from his/her own experience. That
would imply, of course, that the hearer a) has drunk cognac and b) has believed

he/she is immortal, at least on one occasion. In order to elude this plausible assumption that could potentially harm the speaker's public image, he/she uses two evidential mechanisms: a particle, *por lo visto,* and a straightforward mention to the source, *hablé con un fulano (...) y me dijo que ....* These strategies are deployed with the purpose of locating the source of the information elsewhere and, by doing so, preventing the hearer(s) from drawing inconvenient conclusions. In other words, evidentiality is used here with a third contextual meaning (differing from examples [2] and [3]); the protection of the speaker's self-image.

On the basis of examples such as (1) to (4), the present paper aims to study the different uses of a set of Spanish evidential particles[5] (namely *al parecer, por lo visto,* and *según parece*) and intends to observe their prosodic behaviour in different contexts, in order to find out whether different prosodic patterns apply for each use. Bearing this purpose in mind, a corpus of oral materials was created, classified and finally analyzed, aiming to observe if there is a prosodic mark associated with evidentials when they convey a polite or an impolite meaning in a specific context.

1.1 Evidentiality and politeness: The case of Spanish

The present study aims to observe the role of prosody in the identification of different contextual meanings in the same linguistic form. More specifically, this study focuses on evidentials, due to their dual, twofold behaviour; despite the core meaning of evidentials being evidentiality, they are nonetheless very suitable forms to attenuate. Evidentials often express an external source of information, this "external" character enabling speakers to reduce responsibility for the content asserted. Thus, using evidentials is a common strategy deployed by speakers in order to achieve im/polite effects in their communicative exchanges.

In the following section, the two theoretical issues presented – evidentiality and politeness – will be addressed. Firstly, the status of *al parecer, por lo visto*

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5 There is no consensus in the literature about the categorization of these elements. Adopting a broad perspective, we refer to elements like *al parecer*, *por lo visto* and *según parece* as discourse particles, but their status is again very controversial. See, for instance, the variety of categorizations posited by Briz et al. (2008) and Santos (2003) on the one hand, and Fuentes (2009) and Martín and Portolés (1999: 4146–4147) on the other hand. The latter, in fact, consider *por lo visto* a DM, but not *al parecer* (Martín and Portolés 1999: 4160); the section on evidentials was written exclusively by Martín-Zorraquino), given that its process of grammaticalization is not complete (*al parecer **de unos y de otros**, a **mi** parecer*).

and *según parece* as evidential forms will be discussed and, related to this latter discussion, the question will be raised of whether evidentiality itself can be said to exist in languages such as Spanish, which is traditionally considered non-evidential (1.1.1). Secondly, the definition and limits of the concepts *face, im/politeness* and relational-work will be presented (1.1.2). Finally, the relationship between politeness and evidentiality will be briefly outlined (1.1.3).

1.1.1 Are there true evidentials in Spanish?

There are different approaches to the phenomenon of evidentiality. The main theoretical discussion in the literature is the grammatical nature of evidentiality. Several scholars (Anderson 1986; Lazard 2001; Aikhenvald 2004) argue that Spanish, English or Portuguese, as well as most major European languages, do not have evidentials. It does not mean, however, that these languages cannot express evidential meaning, but rather that they do it by means of lexical expressions; in other words, evidentiality is not grammaticalized in Spanish, Portuguese or English. From another theoretical perspective, a number of studies do not consider evidentials only as morphemes or purely "grammatical" forms, and state that every single language can refer to the source of information in many ways (Chafe and Nichols 1986; Biber and Finnegan 1988).

The specific forms analyzed in this paper, *al parecer, por lo visto,* and *según parece*, have been considered discourse markers, discourse particles, etc.[6] The question is, are these elements part of the grammar of languages? If the answer is "no", Spanish would not have grammaticalized evidentials. We, however, following Biber and Finnegan (1988), Martín and Portolés (1999) and RAE (2009), will consider discourse particles a part of the grammar, and will leave the discussion about the grammatical nature of evidentiality aside. For the current purposes, Spanish has evidentials such as the ones to be studied here.

In our corpus, *al parecer, por lo visto,* and *según parece*[7] always express evidential meanings and, less frequently, also modal meanings such as attenuation (politeness and self-image) or impoliteness (see Section 2.4). Evidentiality is the core semantic meaning, which is present in every occurrence of the particle, and the modal meanings are exclusively pragmatic meanings that emerge only contextually and cannot be considered part of the semantic nucleus. This is also the received opinion of most scholars (Briz et al. 2008; Martín and Por-

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6 See endnote no. 4.

7 *Al parecer* and *por lo visto* tend to express *indirect*, *reported* or *inferential* evidence (González Ramos 2005; Marcos 2005; Cornillie 2010; Kotwica 2013, in press).

tolés 1999; Santos 2003, Fuentes 2009). The use of evidentiality as a means to mitigate, which leads to polite effects, will be studied in Section 1.1.3. Prior to that, a better delimitation of the concept of *politeness* adopted in this paper will be provided in Section 1.1.2.

1.1.2 Im/politeness, self-image and relational work

General studies on face-work (Goffmann 1967; Brown and Levinson 1987) take two directions into account; the care of both the speaker's and the hearer's face. *Politeness* focuses only on one of these two directions, the one aiming to protect the addressee's face,[8] whereas those strategies deployed by the speaker to protect his/her own face are not regarded as instances of polite linguistic behaviour.

Our initial hypothesis was that there might have been a prosodic distinction between im/polite examples of evidentials and the rest; however, according to our data (see below Section 3.2), no major prosodic divergences between im/polite and other examples are detected. Nonetheless, there are indeed two main distinct groups of examples in our corpus, namely those prosodically marked (i.e., showing prosodic *prominence*) and those unmarked; even so, the boundary between the latter and the former conforms rather to Locher and Watts' (2005) concept of *relational work* (see also Holmes 2005; Haugh 2007; Terkourafi 2008). In other words, examples showing any kind of *relational work* and examples that do not, behave in a different manner prosodically. *Politeness*, as a mere subspecies of *relational work*, does not explain *all* the prosodically marked examples; instead, a wider concept such as *relational work*, which encompasses *politeness*, *impoliteness* and *self-image* activities, does seem to have a role in triggering marked prosodic behaviours.[9] Table 1 illustrates these theoretical differences schematically.

In Table 1, A is the addresser, B is the addressee and the letter in brackets represents the topic A and B are talking about. The situations a) and b) affect at least one of the conversationalists: if the topic is (A'), i.e., is mainly related

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8 Notwithstanding any face-work, be it self-image or addressee to others, there is always a need to keep a balance between the interactants' faces, i.e., in searching the addressee's benefit, the speaker is also working to preserve/improve his/her own face (Hernández-Flores 2004).

9 For the current purposes, both the terms *relational work* and *politeness-related operations* will be used as synonyms. We will assume that these terms comprehend *politeness* proper, *impoliteness* and *self-image* activities.

Table 1: Comparison between relational-work approach and traditional approach to politeness.

Relational work		
a)	A------(A')--------B	self-image
b)	A------(B')--------B	politeness / Impoliteness
c)	A-----(X)---------B	Neutral

to the addresser, the fragment has traditionally been considered as an instance of self-image activity, following Bravo (2002), Hernandez-Flores (2004, 2006), Albelda (2007, 2008), Bernal (2007) and Barros (2011). In case the topic is (B'), i.e., related to the addressee, following Bravo (2005) again the example has been considered an instance of a politeness-related activity, be it polite or impolite. In situation c), the topic (X) is not related to the addressee or to the addresser but relates to something/someone else. Those cases meeting the criteria in c) are not considered an object of analysis either in the postmodern or in the traditional paradigm of politeness/relational work.

In summary, given the results of our corpus, we could talk about evidentiality, prosody and *relational work* (rather than *politeness*) as intersecting categories, since the concept *relational work* better accounts for the differences in prosodic behaviour of the evidentials studied. Further empirical data will be offered in Section 3.2.

1.1.3 Attenuation, relational work and their links with evidentiality

Attenuation[10] is one of the most common linguistic strategies used to be communicatively polite (Briz 2007; Albelda 2010; Briz and Estellés 2010). It is a discourse strategy to minimize the risk a speaker runs when uttering an assertion that could not only threaten the hearer's face or rights, but also his/her own face. Attenuation and politeness-related activities are different phenomena, but they frequently co-occur and have therefore been often considered synonyms in the literature (Holmes 1984; Fraser 2005, and so on).

Nonetheless, not every case of attenuation is politeness-related, and not every instance of relational work is expressed by means of an attenuating strat-

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10 In this paper, we will consider *attenuation* as a synonym for *mitigation* (Fraser 1980, Locher and Watts 2005, Caffi 2007).

egy.[11] On the one hand, politeness can be expressed by using boosting, intensification devices (Holmes 1984; Held 1989; Hernández-Flores 2004; Albelda 2007; Bernal 2007; Barros 2011; Rees Miller 2011; Maíz Arevalo 2012, etc.); on the other hand, attenuation, just like intensification, is a pragmatic category that can apply to virtually any level of language in order to produce specific pragmatic effects (Briz 1998; Albelda 2007; Albelda and Cestero 2011). Among these, politeness-related effects are a major group, but not the only one.

Three general functions have been established for attenuation: (a) *self-protecting* (b) protecting the hearer by *preventing* him/her from receiving any face-threat, or (c) *repairing* any face-threat that the hearer has received (Briz and Estellés 2010). Brown and Levinson (1987) establish the main task attenuation performs for politeness: it mitigates potential damage towards the addressee's face.[12] On the basis of the latter idea, evidentials are very adequate forms for expressing attenuation (González Ruiz 2007; Albelda and Cestero 2011; Kotwica 2013, in press). The underlying reason why speakers use evidentials as attenuating devices is that, through using them, speakers are no longer the source of the utterance, which is attributed to someone else. Consequently, when the speaker expresses his/her lack of responsibility towards these words, he/she can legitimately disagree with their content (Ohta 1991; Kotwica in press), thus soothing the damage caused by the message contained in the utterance, be it damage towards the addressee (as in Brown and Levinson 1987), or towards him/herself. In short, evidentials mitigate potential damage towards any conversationalist's face.

In Spanish there is a productive group of evidentials[13] that often perform mitigation/attenuation tasks, including *al parecer, por lo visto,* and *según parece,* but also *se ve, por lo que cuentan, parece ser,* or *aparentemente* (all of them roughly meaning 'seemingly') (Marcos 2005; Albelda and Cestero 2011).

As seen in example (3), our corpus study reveals how these evidential markers can also develop an impolite value in some contexts. In the Spanish parliamentary genre, the speaker often communicates a face-attack intentionally and what he/she says causes – or is presumed to cause – offence to the hearers (Culpeper 2005: 38, 2011: 59). The desire for this effect triggers the use of *al parecer, por lo visto* and *según parece* in our Parliament corpus. In these

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11 Locher and Watts (2005) argue that Brown and Levinson's (1987) proposal is not in fact a politeness theory, but a study on the mitigation of face-threatening acts.

12 Against the idea of politeness relating only to face-threatening acts, see the definition of *face-flattering act* (FFAs) in Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1996), Hernández-Flores (2004), Albelda (2007) and Barros (2011).

13 Both in the narrow and in the broader sense of evidentiality.

cases, attributing the responsibility of the contents to a source other than the speaker him/herself is used as a strategy for expressing criticism or disagreement towards the content, the source of the information and/or even the addressee of the message. In such cases, the analyst will interpret an impolite intention through two parameters:

(i) Genre: The context where the strategy is used is a confrontational one; the politician talking is addressing a MP belonging to a rival party. Parliamentary debates in Spain are especially confrontational, that is to say, it is expected or context-adequate to criticize or discredit rivals. Therefore, despite being impoliteness, it is an adequate, expected impoliteness, since the genre calls for it. Besides, the previous co-text also tends to reveal disagreement and critical attitude.[14]

(ii) Common shared knowledge: Both the extralinguistic and the discursive context offer some hints that help recognize the information introduced by *al parecer, por lo visto* or *según parece* as known information: it recovers information that other people previously said in that same context, or that is obvious for everyone.

Therefore, what these evidential particles convey is not new, unknown information anymore, as would be expected of any pure evidential. It is rather well-known information, uttered with the added intention of discrediting or disagreeing with the content itself, the source of the information or especially the addressee, always within the context of Spanish Parliament interventions. See for instance example (5):

(5) *Señor Rajoy, le agradezco sinceramente su intervención porque hasta ahora usted y su Gobierno no se dignaban a contestarnos. Hoy, por lo visto, ya no le ha sido posible y la verdad es que eso es un avance muy importante para nosotros.*
     [Mr. Rajoy, I sincerely thank you for your intervention, given that until now, you and your administration have not consented to give us an answer. Today, it seems, you had no choice, and that is a great step forward for us]

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14 Applying Locher and Watts' (2005: 12) schema about the relationship between appropriateness and positive/negative markedness, the parliamentary Spanish debate does not fit any of the situations considered. It would rather be described as negatively marked, non-polite and politic/appropriate. In Terkourafi's (2008) terms, it is not an instance of impoliteness, but of marked rudeness or rudeness proper.

Example (5) is a fragment of an intervention by Mr. Coscubiela, a MP of the *Izquierda Plural* party (left wing), uttered immediately after an intervention by Mr. Rajoy (right wing). The genre presents an attempt to damage Mr. Rajoy's image as expected. The shared knowledge between MPs allows Mr. Coscubiela to say/infer that "por lo visto" *today Mr. Rajoy could not keep avoiding the questions of the MPs*, echoing the opinion on Rajoy's behaviour shared by all the non-PP politicians.

Thus, (5) is an example of an indirect impoliteness, containing irony. According to Culpeper (1996, 2011) and Culpeper et al. (2003), "the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations" (Culpeper 1996: 356). The mitigating function that could in principle be expected for an evidential marker in an interactional context, expected to be perceived as polite, is reversed here; the face-threatening act is performed in an indirect way, through an off-record impoliteness strategy.[15]

1.2 Im/politeness and prosody

Some studies – although not many – highlight the importance of the phonic component, especially prosody, in the expression of im/politeness (Roldán 2000; Wichmann 2000; Culpeper et al., 2003; Briz and Hidalgo 2008; Hidalgo 2009, 2011; Winter and Grawunde 2010; Culpeper 2011; Estellés in press, among others). To a greater or to a lesser extent, they conclude that prosody is an influential factor in recognizing and expressing politeness. Many subjective perceptions on prosody have been alleged to support the importance of this phonic level, but studies providing actual parameters or standards are still scarce. The project *Fonocortesía* (*Phono-politeness*), developed in the University of Valencia, intends to partially collect these specific prosodic values in Spanish, especially in colloquial conversation (Briz and Hidalgo 2008; Hidalgo 2009; Devís 2011; Albelda 2012; Cabedo 2012; Hernández-Flores 2012). The methodology developed by *Fonocortesía* proposes three areas of phonic analysis, namely *segmental*, *suprasegmental* and *paralinguistic*. We will focus on the suprasegmental, i.e., prosodic level, and will consider four prosodic parameters in our analysis: pitch, intensity, speech rate and pauses (see Section 2.4).

The majority of studies on politeness and prosody revolve around two dimensions. On the one hand is the scope of speech acts: the correlations

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15 About the relationship between evidentiality, irony, impoliteness and the parliamentary genre, see Estellés (forthcoming).

between utterances and their social effects (Roldán 2000; Hidalgo 2006; Waltereit 2005; Cabedo and Cornillie 2011). Quite logically, suprasegmental phenomena are commonly monitored on the basis of their incidence in specific fragments of speech. On the other hand, a number of specific segmental and suprasegmental phenomena have been described which were found in experimental tests and/or corpora, because they have often been associated with the expression of im/politeness, mitigation and/or intensification. Hidalgo (2010, 2011) studies articulatory relaxation, phonic lengthening and several phonic hesitations as segmental correlates of some attenuation marks.

If studies on im/politeness and prosody are scarce, study of the interface between discourse markers and prosody is even more so (Briz and Hidalgo 2008: 391; Hidalgo 2010). Some works highlight the crucial role played by prosody in configuring the values developed by some polysemic DMs (see, in the case of Spanish, Martin Butragueño 2006; see also Dorta and Domínguez 2001 for *pues*; Elordieta and Romera 2002 for *entonces*). In these studies, prosodic diversity is often related to functional diversity in DMs. Therefore, it is interesting to explore the implications of this assumption, and to extend the study to other elements like the ones under analysis, namely evidential particles, in order to reveal a possible incidence of prosody in the expression of politeness-related meanings, given that:

> Pragmatic differences between politeness/impolitenesss are thus straightforwardly reflected in prosody: the inflection in interrogatives is different from directives; it is a set of prosodic strategies, pitch modulations, (...) that supply politeness to utterances (Hidalgo 2009: 178. [Our translation]).[16]

According to Hidalgo (2009: 173), intonation performs

a) a *Modal Primary* function, which generates objective, stable meanings (associated to neutral modal values, such as the declarative, interrogative or, more arguably, the imperative mode)

b) a *Modal Secondary* (expressive) function, which can generate a great variety of subjective nuances, some of which are produced by "manipulating" the primary or neutral melodic contours.[17]

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16 "Las diferencias pragmáticas entre lo cortés o lo no cortés se reflejan, pues, de forma inequívoca en la prosodia: la inflexión de la interrogación no es igual a la de la exhortación; son un conjunto de estrategias prosódicas, las modulaciones de la F0 (...) las que otorgan cortesía a la frase".

17 "a) una función Modal Primaria que construye significados objetivos, estables (asociados a los valores modales neutros como el aseverativo, el interrogativo o, más discutiblemente, el imperativo)

b) una función Modal Secundaria (expresiva), capaz de generar una gran variedad de matices

Prosody contributes to the achievement of a politeness-related meaning in two ways: as a supporting component of other linguistic aspects (syntax, lexicon, etc.), or as the only politeness-related mark, i.e., in the absence of any other linguistic index that might convey or imply any politeness-related nuance. Most works have focused on the first way, as lexical and syntactic devices have been seen as the main object of study and have been said to work as mitigating devices in combination with prosody (Labov and Fanshel 1977; Holmes 1984). Nevertheless, some studies explore the second way and state that:

> In those utterances with no attenuation resources other than the particular intonation with which they are uttered, the prosodic characteristics (...) are much more marked. That is to say, when intonation is the only attenuating device in an utterance, its very presence compensates the lack of other attenuating devices. Thus, the repetition of attenuating resources is avoided (Roldán 2000: 118. [Our translation]).[18]

Briz and Hidalgo (2008) and Culpeper (2011), among others, also explain how prosody becomes relevant when the sentence information is ambiguous or insufficient. In other words, what was a secondary element can in some contexts become primary (see also Leonetti and Escandell 2004; Waltereit 2005). It is precisely this role of prosody in cases of ambiguity that justifies the need for studies such as the present paper. Our aim therefore will be to determine whether the different contextual values of evidentials in Spanish can be expressed by using different prosodic patterns. In the following, the case study on Spanish evidentials will be explicated. Section 2 will illustrate the method, and Section 3 will analyze the results. Finally, Section 4 will draw conclusions.

2 Methodology

2.1 Step 1: Corpus selection

The data collected for the present research consist of recorded materials coming from a) a set of oral macrocorpora, as detailed below (cf. Table 1), and b) a

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subjetivos, algunos de los cuales se producen a partir de la 'manipulación' sobre los contornos melódicos primarios o neutros".

18 "[E]n los enunciados que no presentan otros recursos de atenuación más que la entonación particular con que se emiten, las características prosódicas (...) se dan de forma mucho más marcada. Es decir, cuando la entonación se presenta como recurso único de atenuación en un enunciado, su presencia suple la falta de otros atenuadores. De este modo, pareciera evitarse la redundancia de recursos".

personal corpus compiled *ad hoc,* consisting of parliamentary interventions. This selection of materials has been made on the basis of three main criteria:

Table 2: Characteristics of the corpus: sizes and varieties considered.

	Number of words	Social dialect (diastratic)			Register (diaphasic)		
		High	Medium	Low	Formal	Semi-formal	Informal
Macrocorpora							
MC-NC Sevilla & Madrid	80,000	x			x		
PRESEEA Valencia	420,000	x	x	x		x	
PRESEEA Alcalá	160,000	x				x	
PRESEEA Granada	100,000	x				x	
PRESEEA Castellón	575,000	x	x	x		x	
PRESEEA Málaga	160,000	x				x	
Habla culta de Granada	300,000	x	x			x	
Cogila (Granada)	36,000	x	x	x			x
Val.Es.Co. (2002 and 2.0)	350,000	x	x	x			x
Corlec[1]	1,100,000	x	x	x	x	x	x
COLAm	450,000		x	x			x
Personal corpus							
Parliament and Senate interventions	1,350,000	x			x		
Total	3,083,000						

[1] The CORLEC (Cresti and Moneglia 2005) consists of a variety of genres and communicative spheres (Legal Practice, Science, Humanities, and so on). Entertainment examples, as well as colloquial conversations and interviews, have been considered informal. The rest of the cases are formal.

1. The samples analyzed were restricted to the *European Spanish* dialect. No American varieties have been considered in the present study, in order to preserve the homogeneity of the sample. Sticking to the European variety should avoid any dialectal bias.
2. Once the diatopic selection has been made, and given the variationist approach taken in this work, the corpus used has been designed to be maximally representative of *all the diaphasic and diastratic varieties* of European Spanish. However, only the diaphasic variety has finally been

taken into account. It was only possible to retrieve the diastratic informa-
tion in some of the corpora included, so in order to avoid incomplete or
partial conclusions, the diastratic dimension was ultimately not considered
in our analysis.

Additionally, in order to study the (different) prosodic behaviour depending on
the meaning, several genres have been considered, ranging from the most to
the least confrontational (political debates / monological and informative gen-
res, respectively).

   Parliament examples demonstrate complex relational work due to the
expectations raised by the parliamentary debate genre. In this genre, being
confrontational is the default option, so what might be interpreted as a mitiga-
tion device in other contexts is processed with an impolite, confrontational
intention in Parliament:

(3')   *la pregunta tiene una respuesta que conocen→/ TOODOS los ciudadanos/*
        *TODOS/ todoos↑/ bueno / TODOS no /aa- /**al parecer**↑ el señor Rajooy/*
        la señora Cospedal y los responsables del pepé ↑/no la conocen↑/ y
        siguen mirando hacia otro lado↑
        [Every citizen is wondering: Why does the former treasurer of the Popu-
        lar Party have 38 million euros while I do not? (...) that is to say, what
        has Bárcenas done to obtain thirty-eight million euros? And the question
        has one answer known by ALL Spaniards. ALL. All ... well, maybe not
        all of them. ***Apparently*** Mr. Rajoy, Ms. Cospedal and the leaders of the
        Popular Party do not know it, and they keep looking the other way]

Imagine example (3') in two different contexts. The first situation was men-
tioned in example (3), where an MP criticizes two politicians of another political
party. However, imagine this fragment uttered in another context: an important
political analyst is participating in a TV debate on the current situation in
Spain. This analyst is a well-known supporter of Mr. Rajoy and Ms. Cospedal's
ideas. If the analyst were to utter these words, hearers would interpret them as
a mere justification of the facts attributed to them, never an attack on them.
That is, he would be on their side, not against them. The only difference
between both interpretations is our knowledge of the world, a great part of that
knowledge coming from the familiarity with the specific genre and (in Spanish,
at least) discourse traditions; it is to be expected that politicians in Parliament
will systematically discredit other politicians of a different political conviction.

3.   Lastly, preference has been given to those corpora with available transcrip-
     tions. Following the list of corpora in Briz and Albelda (2009), the most

easily available materials were selected that met the above criteria, thus creating the final corpus (cf. Table 2). There are, indeed, more oral corpora available; however more materials would have been too hard to manage.

2.2 Step 2: Collection of fragments

2.2.1 Selection of contents

We searched occurrences of *al parecer*, *por lo visto* and *según parece* in the transcriptions of the corpora, which were all available in a searchable format (.doc(x), .pdf, .html).

The first corpus analyzed was the Parliament corpus. The availability of this material was highly restricted, since the audio files can only be downloaded from May 2012 to the present, finally rendering 17 examples. Table 3 illustrates the total number of examples collected. According to the data, evidential markers *al parecer*, *por lo visto* and *según parece* have an absolute frequency of 42.8 hits per million words. The 132 occurrences collected in Step 1 have been submitted to a further filter, explained in Section 2.2.2.

Table 3: Total number of occurrences after Step 1.

|	Occurrences of evidentials
Macrocorpora (non-confrontational)	38
Parliament (confrontational)	17
Total	55

2.2.2 Audio filtering

Parliament recordings have an excellent audio quality, so all of them were considered; the rest of the samples, however, offer a variety of qualities. Those recordings with background noises (i.e., birds, traffic), recorded with poor quality devices etc. were discarded. After audio filtering, the total number of examples was significantly reduced. Circa 50 % of the examples did not meet the quality standards. Therefore, our database is definitively established as follows:

According to the parameters of register and genre, the final distribution of our examples was as follows:

Table 4: Final number of occurrences.

	occurrences
Macrocorpora	
MC-NC Sevilla and Madrid	9
PRESEVAL	4
PRESEEA Alcalá	9
PRESEEA Granada	4
PRESEEA Castellón	4
PRESEEA Málaga	16
Habla culta de Granada	26
Cogila (Granada)	0
Val.Es.Co. (2002 and 2.0)	3
Corlec	40
COLAm	0
Parliament	
Parliament interventions	17
Total	132
	(42.8 occurrences/million words)
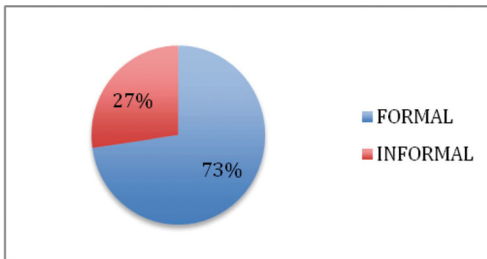
Figure 1: Distribution of examples with formal/informal registers.
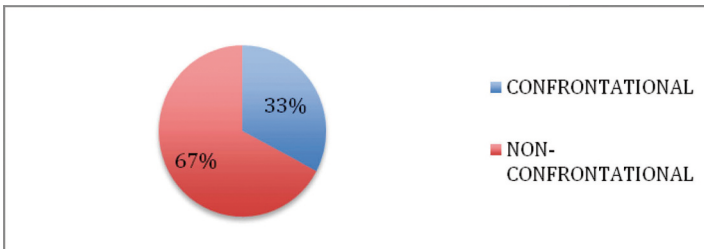
Figure 2: Distribution of examples from confrontational/non confrontational genres.

2.2.3 Annotation

The segments containing *al parecer, por lo visto* and *según parece* were searched within their audio stream and isolated. Shorter audio files (10–15 seconds long) were created and later annotated with PRAAT software. The transcription was aligned with the corresponding audio, as Figure 3 illustrates:
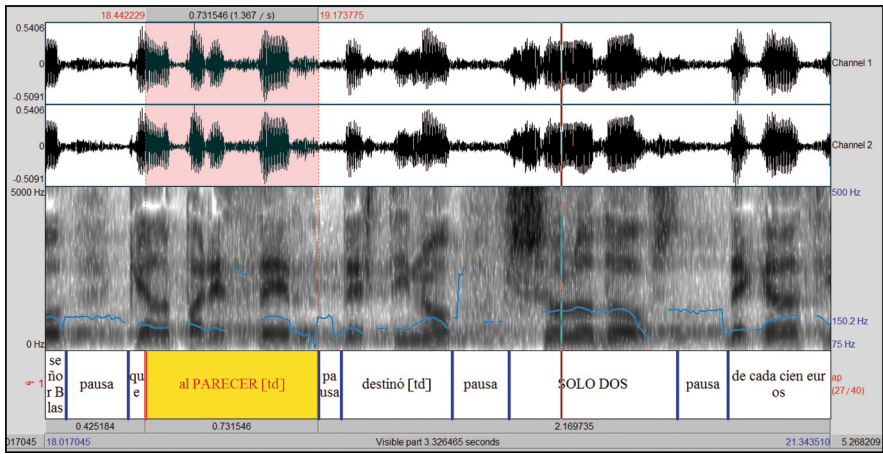

Figure 3: Annotation with PRAAT of one fragment containing *al parecer*.

2.3 Step 3: Classification of fragments

Examples of *al parecer, por lo visto* and *según parece* were included in a database where they were classified according to their contextual meaning. This sort of classification is often a highly personal choice; therefore, in order to minimize subjective bias, the schema in Table 5 has been used as a guide. As mentioned before, evidential particles can convey either purely evidential content (example 1) or they can add an extra, pragmatic nuance often resulting in a relational-work meaning (examples [2], [3] and [4]). Thus, all selected examples have been tagged as either "self-image", "polite", "impolite" or "neutral", the latter meaning that no *relational work* nuances is perceived, i.e., only evidential meaning is conveyed:

Table 5: Criterion to classify examples.

Relational work		
a)	A------(A')--------B	self-image
b)	A------(B')--------B	politeness / Impoliteness
c)	A-----(X)---------B	Neutral = Pure evidentials
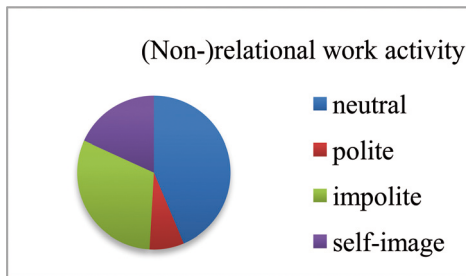
Figure 4: (Non-)relational-work activities: distribution in the corpus.

2.4 Step 4: Data processing

Once classified according to their meaning, all 55 examples were analyzed phonically with PRAAT. Four acoustic parameters that are closely related to the expression of prosodic prominence have been considered, namely intensity, pitch, and speech rate, as also analyzed by Culpeper (2011: 60).[19] The values for each archive were obtained by applying the script *Analyse Tier* (Hirst 2012). The *Analyse Tier* script rendered a large amount of data, of which the following were considered (Table 6).

According to Section 1.2, when prosody behaves in an unexpected, different manner, it signals an extra meaning. Thus, building upon Levinson's (2000) M-heuristic, our hypothesis could be phrased as *what is prosodically marked indicates a marked meaning*, too. Therefore, major variations for each parameter have been sought.

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19 He also considers the nucleus and the voice quality in his study, but later (Culpeper 2011: 61) presents these categories as "composites of some of the other groups. For example, a voice quality such as breathy involves low pitch; a tone group nucleus is primarily comprised of loudness and pitch". Therefore, only speech rate, intensity and pitch, as "primary" categories, have been considered.

Table 6: Acoustic parameters analysed.

	Speaker values	Particle values
Intensity	Mean	Mean
Pitch	Mean	Mean
Duration	Total	Total
Pause(s)	Mean	Total pauses prior and subsequent to the particle (if any)

Table 7: Acoustic data analysed.

	Non-phonic parameters			Phonic parameters			
.wav file name	(non)relational work activity	Register	Genre	Deviation (pitch) St. Deviation = 1330	Deviation (intensity) St. deviation = 1670	Deviation (speech rate) St. Deviation = 2,57	Number of marked parameters
2013_03_13_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	334	778	4,208089	1
2013_03_13__2_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	209	39	0,228921	0
2013_03_20_par	self-image	FOR	conf	1415	3072	0,892534	2
2013_03_20_2_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	246	1111	2,067413	0
2013_03_21_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	3850	1236	1,574618	1
2013_04_10_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	727	340	0,791539	0
2013_04_10_2_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	462	922	0,663069	0
2013_04_16_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	2639	2917	0,981768	2
2013_04_18_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	298	2042	0,935533	1
2013_04_24_ap_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	79	1005	0,729401	0
2013_04_24_sp_par	impoliteness	FOR	conf	2146	2926	3,895589	3
218_A_1plv	neutral-evidential	INF	non-conf	79	189	1,264936	0
218_A_1_Plv	self-image	INF	non-conf	1806	2171	1,414072	2
Acie016a_AP	neutral-evidential	FOR	non-conf	1431	616	0,957651	1
Acie034a _AP	politeness	FOR	non-conf	3832	1646	0,439517	1
Aent006c_AP	politeness	FOR	non-conf	1128	192	2,770208	2
Ahum031a_AP	neutral-evidential	FOR	non-conf	50	2038	1,154749	1
Alud030a_PLV	self-image	INF	non-conf	690	1679	4,725425	2

As table 7 portrays, for intensity and pitch, the standard deviation has been calculated. Only those *particle values* showing values considerably[20] above or below their corresponding *speaker mean* have been classified as *marked*. As for speech rate, PRAAT does not provide this parameter directly. The script lists

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20 By *considerably*, we mean a deviation superior to the standard deviation in our corpus. For pitch, those values have been considered *marked* that deviated from their corresponding speaker mean in more or less than 1'33 semitones; for intensity, 1.67 dB. Finally, the standard deviation of speech rate was 2.52 syllables/second. Those particles with a speech rate more than 2.52 syllables faster or slower than the speaker mean were also considered marked.

the total duration of each intervention, the duration of each particle (previously isolated between boundaries), and the mean duration of each intonation group. The speech rate is obtained by combining the duration values with the number of syllables in each intervention/intonation group/particle respectively. Again, all particle values differing in more than the standard deviation value have been tagged as "marked". As a result, each example has been classified according to the number of parameters tagged as "marked" (0, 1, 2 or 3 out of three parameters considered).

Examples with 0 marked parameters therefore do not differ at all from the rest of the utterance in which they are included. The greater the number of marked parameters, the stronger the prosodic markedness of the particle, ranging from only one parameter (which could be considered insignificant, or almost anecdotal) to three out of three, which represents a noticeable degree of markedness.

3 Results

The results of the present study can be divided into two main categories: general results on the articulation of the notions *relational work*, *evidentiality* and *prosody* (Section 3.1), regardless of the phonic data; and phonic results (Section 3.2), related to the phonic values obtained.

3.1 General results

The general results are based on the three non-phonic parameters represented in Table 7 above, namely *relational-work activity*, *genre* and *register*. Despite all the parameters being interrelated, the results will be explained on the basis of the categories *genre* and *register*.

According to the relational-work activity shown, neutral examples (pure evidentials) are the most frequent category (Figure 5), with circa 44 % of the total. Impolite examples represent 30 % (17 occurrences); self-image activities 18 % (10 occurrences), and finally polite examples represent only 7.2 % (4 occurrences). Thus, the evidential meaning is the most frequently found. This fact supports the initial claim that pure evidentiality in Spanish can appear without any modal nuances at all, and that this pure evidential meaning is the most frequent meaning.

In terms of genre (Figure 6), all the neutral examples are non-confrontational. This fact makes sense, given that the *confrontation* intrinsically involves
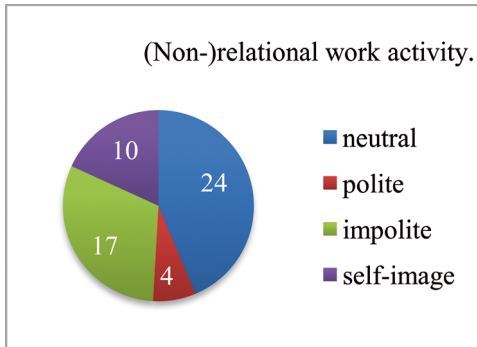
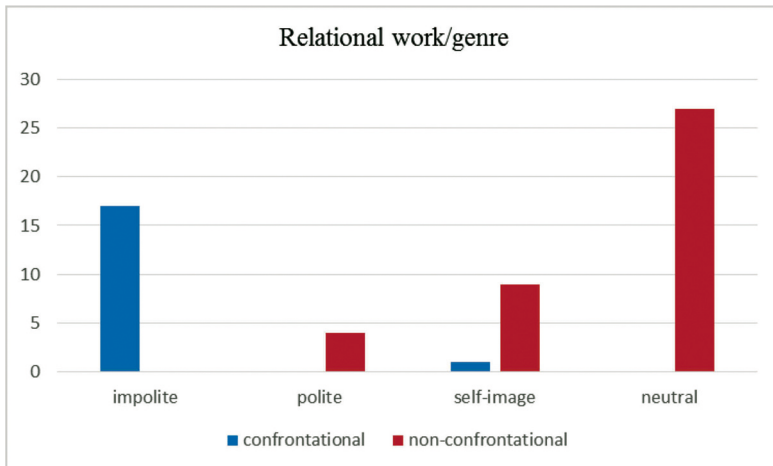**Figure 5:** Distribution of (non-)relational-work activities in the corpus (Number of examples).

Figure 6: Relationship between (non-)relational work activity and genre.

relational work, i.e., the relationship between both conversationalists. In fact, the focus of the relational work in confrontational genres is presenting the relationship between speaker/hearer as problematic. There is also a striking correspondence between genre and relational work in the case of impolite examples, as all impolite examples in our corpus are found in the confrontational genre (the parliamentary debate). Polite examples are, quite logically, found in non-confrontational genres.
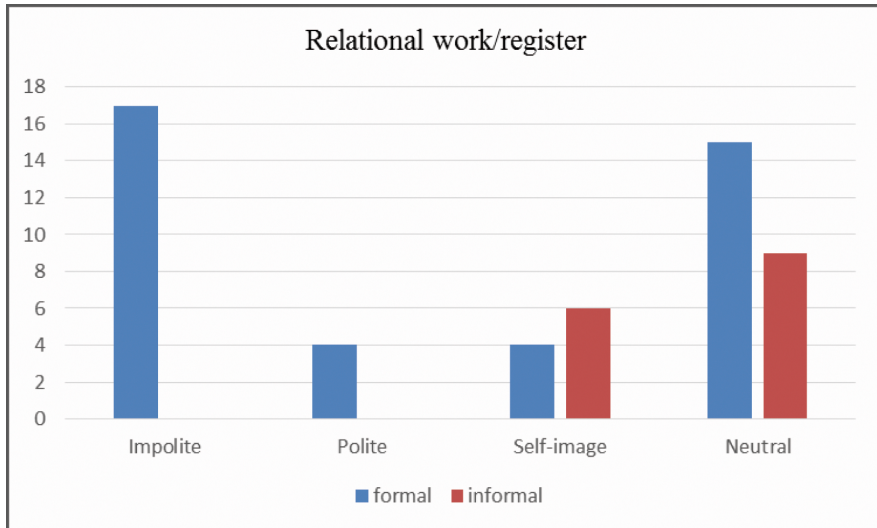
Figure 7: Relationship between (non-)relational work activity and register.

Self-image activities do not show a clear specialization. Examples of self-image activities are scattered in both confrontational and non-confrontational genres, and also in formal/informal registers (Figure 7). However, a slight tendency can be seen:

a) There is only 1 case of self-image activity in the confrontational genre.[21] The self-image activity found in Parliament perfectly fits the confrontational character of the genre: it is uttered by a politician who is defending himself from a prior attack (example 6). When applied to a confrontational context, a self-image protection does not prevent any damage, as was the case in example (4), but rather defends the speaker from an already uttered attack (Estellés forthcoming).

(6)   *Lo que sucedió, señoría −deberîa usted saberlo−, es que se produjo sencil-*
      lamente un incidente fortuito entre la patrullera Cabaleiro y esa patera
      *que **al parecer** iba con veinticinco inmigrantes irregulares a bordo y que*
      ese incidente fortuito fue fruto de una averîa sobrevenida en el sistema de
      propulsión y gobierno de la patrullera de la Guardia Civil

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21 A few more examples of self-image activities were discarded during the audio filtering: they were prior to May 2012, and therefore not available for downloading.

[what happened, your Honour (as <u>you should know</u>) is simply that a fortuitous incident happened involving the patrol boat Cabaleiro and that 'patera' boat that, ***apparently***, was carrying 25 illegal immigrants on board, and that this fortuitous incident was the result of a breakdown in the propulsion and steering system of the Civil Guard's patrol boat]

In (6), the Spanish Minister of Internal Affairs responds to a previous intervention where a MP asks him for an explanation of an accident involving a Coast Guard patrol boat and a 'patera' boat, i.e., a precarious boat taking migrants to Spain. As a result of the accident, one immigrant died and six of them disappeared. The MP accuses the Minister of overlooking the accident and not offering any explanations about the unclear circumstances. Therefore, the Minister does not only give an answer, but also defends himself from the accusation. Note the defensive mood of the whole intervention: it is noticeable, for instance, in the fragment *you should know that*, which is uttered as a reproach to the MP who first accused the Minister. In summary, (5) was intended to be an active reaction to an attack.

b)   As for register, there is also a tendency for self-image activities to appear in informal registers; 40 % of informal examples in our corpus (6 out of 15) are self-image activities, whereas only 10 % of formal examples (4 out of 40) belong to this group.

Only 7.2 % (4 occurrences) of the examples in our corpus are labelled as *polite*. It has been mentioned that all of them appear in non-confrontational genres,
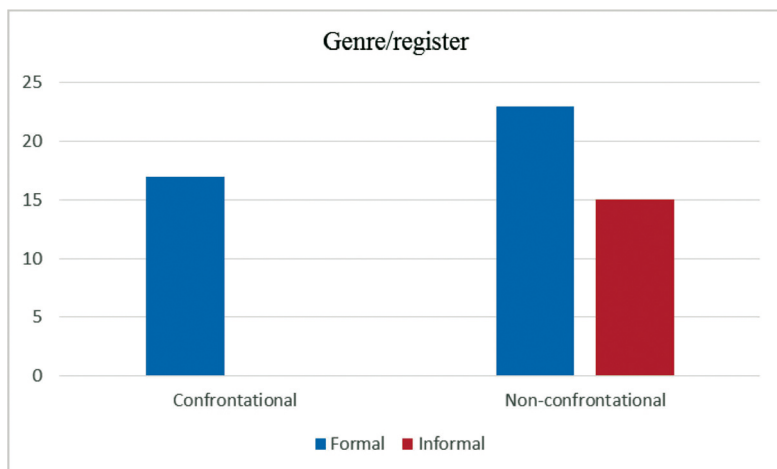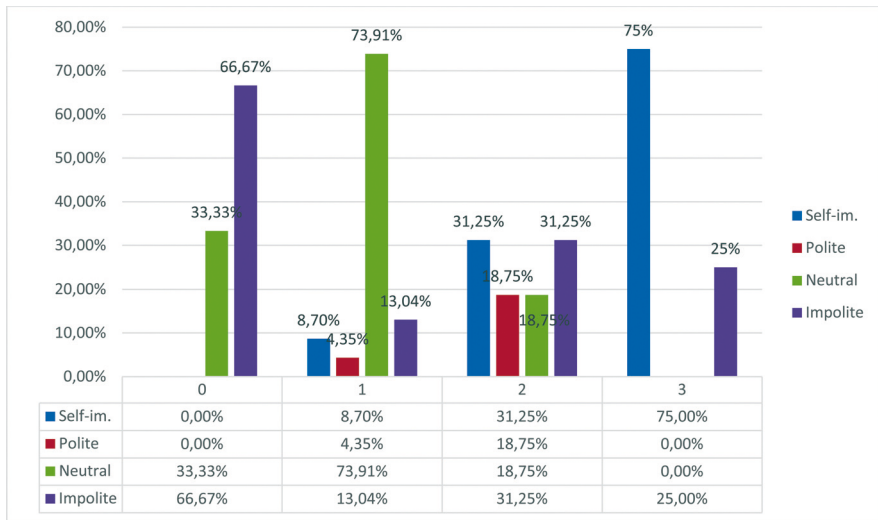

Figure 8: Relationship between genre and register.

but in addition to this (which is most interesting), all of them are found in fragments with a formal register. Two conclusions can be drawn from this data; firstly, *al parecer*, *por lo visto* and *según parece* are not used frequently as polite strategies in Peninsular Spanish (at least, not as frequently as impolite or self-image protection strategies); secondly, those contexts where a formal register is used (formal contexts) favour a distance between speakers that is often linguistically materialized by deploying polite strategies.[22]

3.2 Prosodic results

As mentioned in Section 2.4, our results have been studied according to the number of prosodically marked parameters. Figure 9 shows the distribution of examples for each (non-)relational-work activity, according to the number of marked parameters registered. Henceforth, we will refer to them as P_0 (zero marked parameters), P_1 (one marked parameter), P_2 (two marked parameters), and P_3 (three marked parameters):

	0	1	2	3
■ Self-im.	0,00%	8,70%	31,25%	75,00%
■ Polite	0,00%	4,35%	18,75%	0,00%
■ Neutral	33,33%	73,91%	18,75%	0,00%
■ Impolite	66,67%	13,04%	31,25%	25,00%

Figure 9: Relations between relational-work activities and number of parameters prosodically marked.

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22 Informal register is triggered when the speakers a) are not hierarchically equal, b) are not familiar with each other, c) talk about a specialized topic, or d) their physical interactional frame is not familiar to them (Briz and Val.Es.Co. 2002).

Figure 10: Relations between number of occurrences and prosodically marked parameters.

Assuming that any deviation from the core, default meanings ("evidentiality") is often accompanied by alterations in the prosodic pattern (Section 1.2), a high number of marked parameters co-occurring would make it very likely an evidential particle is used with an additional, contextual meaning, i.e., with a meaning other than its core, default meaning. The total numbers in our corpus (Figure 10) reveal that the most frequent result in our corpus is P_0 and P_1. Marked options are logically less frequent; in fact, only four examples show P_3.
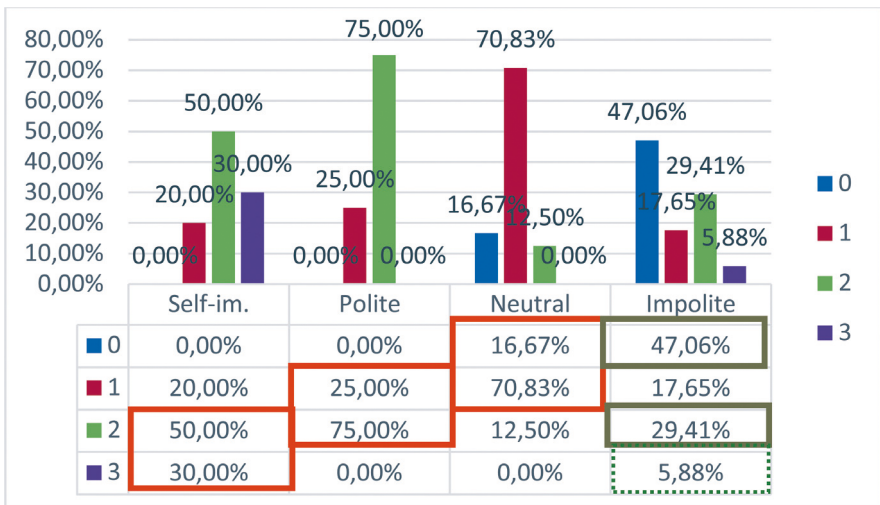

	Self-im.	Polite	Neutral	Impolite
■ 0	0,00%	0,00%	16,67%	47,06%
■ 1	20,00%	25,00%	70,83%	17,65%
■ 2	50,00%	75,00%	12,50%	29,41%
■ 3	30,00%	0,00%	0,00%	5,88%

Figure 11: Distribution of marked parameters per group.

Perhaps the most striking result is that, from the data in Figure 11, a scale can be interpreted (Figure 12) ranging from the least to the most prosodically marked groups, the first being the neutral (evidential) examples and the latter the self-image activities.

Least marked ←————————————————————→ Most marked

        Neutral/evidential   Impolite**/ Polite   Self-image

Figure 12: Scale from the least to the most prosodically marked groups.

In general, self-image activities are the most prosodically marked group, whereas pure evidential (neutral) instances are clearly the least marked. The polite examples are located in the middle of the graphic, and the impolite occurrences are unevenly distributed. Each group will receive particular attention in the following.

The extremes of the scale are quite self-evident. Figure 11 illustrates the distribution of marked parameters in the self-image group: 50 % of the examples have P_2, 30 % have P_3 and 20 % only have P_1. The self-image group shows the highest degree of prosodic markedness. In our corpus, only 4 of 55 occurrences show P_3, but three of them (75 %) are self-image activities. It is also striking that no examples of self-image activities with P_0 have been found in our corpus. On the opposite side of the scale, the neutral, i.e., pure evidential, examples are the least marked. 70.83 % of the neutral examples show only P_1, and around 17 % more show P_0, whereas only three out of 24 neutral examples (12.5 %) reflect P_2. Finally, as mentioned above, no neutral examples reflect P_3.

It is difficult to determine whether polite or impolite examples are more marked, but taken together, they would appear somewhere in the middle of the gradient presented in Figure 12. On the one hand, 75 % of the polite examples report P_2, and 25 % only P_1. However, as their total number is as low as four, no general conclusions can be drawn, other than the scarce use of evidentials as polite strategies, as mentioned above (see Section 3.1). On the other hand, impolite examples constitute an oddly behaving group, as one instance with P_3 together with instances with P_0 can be found. The oddity of this group can be best explained on the basis of the genre to which it is ascribed: parliamentary debate.

In our corpus, evidentials are used almost exclusively as impolite strategies in parliamentary debate. The parliamentary genre itself raises expectations, amongst which is mutual discredit. In other words, in the Spanish tradition, being impolite is *expected* in this genre, given its confrontational character (most interventions are addressed to MPs from rival parties). As a result, impoliteness may be seen as the default option in interpersonal sequences. Consequently, a lack of any prosodic mark would not seem unlikely. We will not go deeper into the latter assumption, but the importance of the genre in defining expectations and default options, and its influence on the prosodic behaviour

of linguistic elements, is a theoretical issue still to be worked out (see Cabedo 2007; Estellés forthcoming).

In any case, circa 30 % of the total impolite occurrences show P_2, and on just one occasion (5 %), P_3. Hence, the markedness of this impolite category is much more evident than in the case of neutral examples.

The gradient in Figure 12 has implications for the description of the role played by prosody in conveying relational work-nuances. Additionally, empirical data provided here might shed some light on the theoretical status of evidentials in Spanish. These implications will be developed in Section 4.

4 Conclusions

On the basis of a corpus of the Spanish evidential particles *al parecer, por lo visto* and *según parece*, the present study corroborates Culpeper's (2011: 59) claim that "prosody plays a key role in triggering evaluations that an utterance is impolite"[23]. However, a slight theoretical expansion must be added: according to our data, variations in prosody do not indicate im/politeness only.

Prosody seems to delimit two distinct groups, one including only proper evidentials (i.e., particles conveying only the "source of information", see Aikhenvald 2004), and the other encompassing three kinds of examples: polite, impolite and self-image activities. What the latter activities have in common is what distinguishes them from pure evidentials: they are instances of relational work (Locher and Watts 2005). Therefore, at least in our corpus of Spanish evidential particles, prosodic patterns tend to be altered when the members of the interaction are involved (be it the addresser or the addressee), and remain relatively unaltered when they are not.

Data can also be viewed in a more general light: prosody generates a great variety of modal and subjective nuances produced by manipulating the primary or neutral melodic contours, and, reversely, if intonation is not modulated, objective, stable meanings with neutral melodic contours are constructed (Hidalgo 2007: 173). Assuming this idea, it is reasonable to accept that neutral prosodic patterns correspond to core, basic meanings, whereas altered prosodic patterns correspond to modal, subjective nuances (i.e., contextual meanings). In terms of markedness, consequently, a general assumption can be made: neutral examples seem to be noticeably less marked than other groups. In other

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23 What we want to point out in this quote is the role of prosody in triggering pragmatic meanings in a more general interpersonal sphere, not exclusively in triggering *impoliteness*.

words, neutral examples have no special prosodic configuration that singles them out from the rest of the utterance, which is equivalent to stating that they have neutral prosodic configurations. Therefore, the meaning of neutral examples, namely pure evidentiality, is the core, default meaning of the particles *al parecer, por lo visto* and *según parece.*

Further conclusions can be drawn that involve non-phonic data. In our corpus, impolite examples depict a particular prosodic behaviour: there are instances of impolite meanings containing zero, one, two or three prosodic marks, whereas the other groups show a certain degree of coherence in the number of marked parameters exhibited. The underlying reason for this odd behaviour has to do with the fact that all impolite examples in our corpus are ascribed to one and the same genre, namely parliamentary debate. This genre is characterized, in the Spanish tradition, by its confrontational nature; interventions in the Spanish Parliament are meant to be impolite, in the sense that MPs are expected to discredit, attack and/or rhetorically confront their political rivals. Using evidentials in this sort of confrontational contexts allows speakers to avoid responsibility for the utterances, but yet permits a direct verbal attack to be carried out. Using formally mitigating devices to perform impolite activities can essentially be seen as a kind of irony, and thus interpreted as an off-record impoliteness strategy (Culpeper 1996; Culpeper et al. 2003).

However, if some form of impoliteness is expected to take place between MPs, are we really entitled to talk about *impoliteness*? Can an appropriate, politic activity like attacking rival parties fit the schema of impoliteness (Locher and Watts 2005)? Analyzing the Parliament examples in our corpora has, in sum, revealed the need for adopting a postmodernist approach. Relational-work activities must be regarded and evaluated from a discursive perspective, within a context; and the parliamentary setting provides a context where the expectations on how to behave (and how to behave linguistically) are strongly established.

Bionotes

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