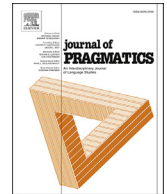


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Disagreement, epistemic stance and contrastive marking in Catalan parliamentary debate

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to offer a qualitative analysis of the relationship between disagreement, epistemic stance and contrast in parliamentary debate. To this end, all disagreeing moves including both an epistemic stance marker and a contrastive marker equivalent to *but* have been identified in a corpus of parliamentary debates in Catalan. The epistemic stance markers have been classified considering three main factors: type of marker (epistemic, evidential, attitudinal), epistemic scale (certainty-uncertainty) and position (either in the thesis or in the antithesis). The approach adopted encompasses interactional linguistics and pragmalinguistics as it considers how context variables, such as those related to genre, have an influence on the use and discourse effects of markers of epistemic stance and contrast. The main research questions are two: (i) how genre norms have an incidence on the expression of disagreement and the interpretation of epistemic stance markers, and (ii) how epistemicity and contrast interact with disagreement in parliamentary debate in order to reinforce the speakers' argumentation and block the opponent's opinion, as either questionable or shared knowledge. The analysis shows that disagreeing moves in the corpus establish a long-distance relation with a previous stretch of discourse and trigger a polyphonic strategy that can be expressed through a contrastive construction where epistemic markers qualify either the thesis or the antithesis. In both cases, the disagreeing argument (i.e. the antithesis) is thus reinforced not only when the epistemic stance marker expresses certainty but also when it expresses uncertainty.

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1. Introduction

Disagreement is a complex discourse function by which the speaker expresses an opposing view. Disagreement can interact both with contrastive markers in a thesis-antithesis construction ('P *but* Q') and with epistemic stance markers as expressions related to knowledge management. As an agonistic genre (see [Bayley, 2004](#); [Ilie, 2006](#)), parliamentary debate (henceforth, PD) seems to be a good starting point to explore the way in which disagreement, contrast and epistemic stance relate.

A disagreeing move can be defined as a reactive discourse unit indicating opposing views ([Angouri and Locher, 2012: 1551](#)). As a response unit, usually the second move of an adjacency pair (i.e., a reply to a previous speaker's intervention), it is linked to dialogicity.

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Dialogicity and opposing views are also essential to understand ‘thesis-antithesis’ constructions. Contrast can be defined as a negative coherence relation involving the comparison of two discourse segments that express propositional contents or states of affairs presented in an antonymic relation (Cuenca et al., 2019: 5). In contrastive constructions, the speaker “not only combines but also compares the two co-occurring SoAs [states of affairs], conceiving them in their conflicting properties” (Mauri 2008: 121). Contrast can be construed as adversative contrast (the antithesis –Q– is the marked segment, i.e. ‘P but Q’) or as concession (the thesis –P– is the marked segment, i.e. ‘although P, Q’). When using a ‘P but Q’ construction, the speaker confronts two contents and considers the second one as argumentatively stronger for a certain conclusion. By means of this polyphonic strategy, the speaker rejects P and adheres to Q. Adversative contrastive constructions are vehicles frequently used to express disagreement.

Disagreement is based on intersubjectivity and stance. Stance can be defined as “the particular viewpoint or enunciatonal position of the speaker/writer or of some other subject of conception, which reflects their attitudes, assessments and knowledge concerning the designated event and/or the communicated proposition” (Marín Arrese 2011a: 259). According to the ‘stance triangle’ proposed by Du Bois (2007), stance is the result of the interplay of the stancetaker, a proposition (the stance object) and the addressee, a subject with whom the stancetaker aligns or disaligns. Specifically, epistemic stance accounts for the assessment of “the likelihood of an event and/or the validity of a proposition designating an event” (Marín Arrese, 2011b: 790). Epistemic stance includes epistemicity, evidentiality and other concepts related to the expression and representation of knowledge in interaction.

Adopting an interactive perspective on the previous concepts, the present study investigates how disagreement, epistemic stance and adversative contrast inter-relate by analyzing two Catalan parliamentary debates (see Section 4.1). This relation is especially significant in a genre such as PD, where argumentation is pervasive and the communicative purpose is to prevail over the opponent. The approach adopted here encompasses the main assumptions of interactional linguistics, i.e. linguistics studying ‘talk-in-interaction’ (e.g., Schegloff, 1998; Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 2001; Lindström et al., 2016) and pragmalinguistics (see, e.g., Ilie, 2003, 2006, the contributions to *Journal of Pragmatics* vol. 44 (2012) or vol. 106 (2016), and the volume edited by Cabedo and Figueras, 2018). I also assume that genre is social action (Levinson 1979; Bazerman, 2011) and that grammatical and lexical markers are to be interpreted interactionally by considering discourse context and genre norms.

On these grounds, the main research questions are two: (i) how disagreement and epistemic stance are conditioned by genre norms that explain why their discourse behavior exhibits particularities as compared with other genres, e.g., conversation; and (ii) how epistemicity and contrast interact with disagreement in PD in order to reinforce the speakers’ argumentation, their own image and the image of their parties while blocking the opponent’s opinion.

To answer these questions, a qualitative analysis of the cases of disagreement moves in the two examined parliamentary debates was performed. Using corpus-linguistic methods, a collection of cases was built based on the occurrence of (a) an adversative contrastive marker (b) co-occurring with an epistemic stance marker and (c) linking an antithesis defended by the speaker to a thesis attributed to an interlocutor and thus realizing a disagreeing move. The main factors in the analysis were: The marker’s epistemic value (certainty, uncertainty), the type of epistemic stance marker (epistemic, evidential or attitudinal), and the position of the epistemic stance marker regarding the contrastive marker (either in the thesis or in the antithesis).

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 is devoted to disagreement in PD as a genre which imposes specificities affecting the use and interpretation of disagreeing moves. In Section 3, epistemic stance in political discourse is discussed and the previous contributions to epistemic stance markers in Catalan are summarized. Section 4 describes the corpus and the methodology used for the analysis. Section 5 presents the results and discusses the use of certainty and uncertainty markers in contrastive disagreeing moves in the corpus. The conclusions (Section 6) summarize the results, which point to the fact that the degree of certainty expressed by the epistemic stance marker and its position in the contrastive utterance, either in the thesis (i.e., before the contrastive marker) or in the antithesis (following the marker), are significant in argumentative terms and have an effect on how disagreement functions in non-cooperative interaction.

2. Disagreement in parliamentary debate

Disagreement is a complex umbrella notion whose formulation depends on the context to a great extent:

What we understand as disagreement, the way we do it and the force of our utterances depend, to a significant extent, on who we are with, what it is we disagree about, the repercussions this may have on our relationship with others and the norms of the communities of which we are members. (Angouri and Locher, 2012: 1549)

Some of the seminal analyses of disagreement from a discourse perspective come from Conversation Analysis, as in the case of Pomerantz’ (1984) account of agreeing and disagreeing with assessments. Pomerantz points out that agreement is generally preferred with assessments.

... across different situations, conversants orient agreeing with one another as comfortable, supportive, reinforcing, perhaps as being sociable and as showing that they are like-minded. [...] conversants orient disagreeing with one another as uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, risking threat, insult or offense. (Pomerantz, 1984: 77)

However, disagreement can be a preferred option (e.g. after self-deprecating assessments). This is also the case of PD, where ideas are most often confronted than not.

The distinctive features relevant to interpret disagreeing moves in PD are the following¹:

- (i) PD can be defined as an “institutionally ritualised confrontational interaction” (Ilie, 2004: 81). Members of Parliament (hence MPs) “need to promote their own image in a competitive and performance-oriented institutional interaction” (Ilie, 2006: 191). Thus in PD disagreement is expected, and face-threatening acts are the norm, not an exception. Contrary to general conversational contexts, the expected structure in PD, at least between contrary parties, corresponds to ‘disagreement expected’ inasmuch as adversariality is an intrinsic feature of political discourse (Ilie, 2003; Fuentes, 2010). When the MPs seem to agree, it may well be the case that agreement is sarcastic or an indirect way to express disagreement.
- (ii) The positions are fixed and the debate does not aim at arriving at any kind of agreement. Agreements between political parties have been reached before the debate, especially in the case of investiture debates. MPs do not really talk to convince the opponent but rather to show argumentative superiority, which explains why contrastive constructions and disagreeing moves are characteristic in political discourse.
- (iii) PD is dialogic but its structure differs from that of conversation. Debates consist of a sequence of orderly interventions according to hierarchical criteria, mainly, representativeness in the Parliament (Van Dijk, 2004: 358). Each participant performs an intervention according to their role—candidate for the presidency, supporting spokesperson or opposition. In Catalan investiture debates the interventions can be programmatic, in the case of the candidate's first intervention, supportive, in the case of spokesperson representing parties that support the candidate, or antagonistic in the case of rebuttals (by members of the opposition, who do not support the candidate, or by the candidate when responding an opponent's previous intervention).

The interventions in the corpus are long, which implies lack of adjacency between the disagreeing move and its reference point. This results in what can be called ‘long-distance disagreement’, that is, the disagreeing move occurs well after the discourse move acting as its antecedent has been performed. Let us analyze the excerpts in (1), corresponding to a disagreeing move and its antecedent.

- (1) Jo no he vingut a donar lliçons, però tampoc no accepto que me'n donin, de democràcia, vostès. I, a més a més, jo no he parlat «en nom de tot el poble», he parlat «per a tot el poble». He parlat perquè tot el poble es pugui sentir representat per una presidència que pot tenir i que té, òbviament, les idees que té, però que té el deure de representar a tothom [...]. (Puigdemont, Candidate, DIPuig, 43)
- I did not come here to teach any lesson, but I do not accept that you teach me lessons of democracy. Moreover, I have not spoken “in the name of all the people [of Catalonia],” I have spoken “for all the people.” I have spoken so that the whole [Catalan] people can feel represented by a presidency that can have and that obviously has its own ideas, but that has the duty to represent everyone [...].*
- Antecedent: Vostè no pot parlar en nom de tot el poble de Catalunya. I ho ha fet en diferents ocasions de la seva intervenció: vostè no parla en nom de tot el poble de Catalunya. (García Albiol, PPC, DIPuig, 29)*
- You cannot speak on behalf of the whole people of Catalonia. And you have done so on different occasions in your speech: You do not speak on behalf of the whole Catalan people.*

In (1) the candidate, Carles Puigdemont, disagrees with García Albiol's previous words, who argues that the candidate intended to talk in the name of the whole people of Catalonia, even if 52% of the population is against his position. Puigdemont acknowledges that his ideology is not shared by all Catalan citizens, and marks this idea as *obvious*, partially assuming García Albiol's critique, and then counter-argues that he has the duty to represent everyone, implying that he will do so, thus blocking the inference derived from his opponent's argument. This is a clear case of long-distance disagreement, as Puigdemont's words are on page 43 of the session transcript, whereas the reference point for the disagreement is on page 29.

Disagreement is hence differently expressed in PD and in conversation. In order to interpret how disagreement works in interaction and how it relates to epistemic stance and contrast markers, the genre norms of PD must be taken into account.

3. Epistemic stance markers

3.1. Basic theoretical notions

Epistemic stance markers express a particular viewpoint or enunciativational position reflecting the knowledge of an event or proposition (Marín Arrese, 2011a: 259). Epistemic stance is typically expressed by epistemic markers, which highlight “an evaluation of the chances that a certain hypothetical state of affairs under consideration (or some aspect of it) will occur, is occurring, or has occurred in a possible world which serves as the universe of interpretation for the evaluation process, and which, in the default case, is the real world (or rather, the evaluator's interpretation of it)” (Nuyts, 2001a: 21). Epistemic modality can be represented on a scale that “goes from absolute certainty that a state of affairs is real to absolute certainty that it is not real. In between these two extremes there is a continuum including probability to possibility” (Cornillie, 2009: 46). In other words, the epistemic scale stretches “from certainty that the state of affairs applies, via a neutral or agnostic stance towards its occurrence, to certainty that it does not apply, with intermediary positions on the positive and the negative sides of the scale” (Nuyts, 2001a: 21–22).

¹ On parliamentary debate as a genre, see, among others, the volume edited by Bayley (2004), Cuenca (2014, 2015), Fuentes (2010), Ilie (2003, 2006), Soler (2019: § 3.2.2) and Van Dijk (2000, 2004, 2009: chapter 2).

The concept of epistemic stance does not only cover epistemic modality but also evidentiality and other modal markers implying an evaluation of the possibility of an utterance being true. This is the case of evidentials, which express source and mode of knowledge, but can encode epistemic information when they “suggest or imply a certain degree of probability of the state of affairs” (Nuyts, 2001a, 27; see also Boye, 2012).² The same holds for some attitudinal markers such as opinion predicates (e.g. *I believe* or *I think*), which can be defined as markers that “refer to the speaker’s intentions, opinion or evaluation about the basic message” (Cuenca, 2015: 365), but often extend their meaning into the neighbouring conceptual domains, too. They may have epistemic extensions, usually in the sense of firm conviction and hence certainty, and evidential extensions, usually signaling inference (Cuenca, 2015: 376).

Epistemic stance is interactional in that it indicates “the speaker’s commitment to what s/he is saying” (Ilie, 2003: 79) and is “meant to emphatically contextualize and overstate/understate the speakers’ discursive contributions with respect to the degree of involvement, topical explicitness and interpersonal vs. institutional understanding/dissent patterns” (Ilie, 2003: 80). In PD, epistemic stance markers can be used in dissent patterns based on a contrastive construction to overstate the antithesis (i.e. the speaker’s view) or to understate the thesis (i.e. the hearer’s view).

3.2. Epistemic stance markers in Catalan

Epistemic modality and evidentiality are becoming popular topics in linguistics and the interest is also growing in Catalan linguistics. González has made several contributions to the analysis of epistemic and evidential markers in Catalan, starting with what she labels as a “preliminary work on Catalan evidentiality” (González, 2005: 537), directly based on Chafe’s (1986) description of English evidentials. Latter contributions by González focus on specific markers: (i) two markers of indirect evidence in Catalan, namely, the impersonal predicate *es veu que* (‘one can see that’) and the periphrasis *deure*+INF (‘must+INF’) (González, 2011), (ii) the expressions *claro/clar* (‘clear’/‘of course’) and *la veritat/veritat* (‘the truth’) in Spanish and Catalan as intersubjective markers with an emphasizing effect (González, 2014), and (iii) *no sé* (‘I don’t know’) as marker of epistemic stance in Catalan and Spanish oral opinion reports (González, 2018).

Cuenca and Marín (2012) explore the features defining the polyfunctional Catalan marker (*és clar* (‘is clear’) in face-to-face conversation and focus on its use as a DM. When introducing an utterance, *és clar* indicates certainty and shared knowledge and it can be used as a mitigation device that shows agreement, solidarity and co-orientation in argumentation.

Cuenca (2015) describes the use of the evidential markers (e.g. *òbviament* ‘obviously’, *evident* ‘evident’, *és clar* ‘(it) is clear’, *se sap* ‘(it) is known’, *sembla que* ‘(it) seems that’) and epistemic and opinion markers related to evidentiality (e.g. *cert* ‘true’, *veritat* ‘truth’, *probablement* ‘probably’, *potser* ‘maybe’, *(jo) crec* ‘I think’) in the 2012 Investiture Debate at the Parliament of Catalonia. The analysis concludes that in Catalan PD evidentiality is often expressed as an extension of the epistemic meaning, that inference is the most frequent mode of evidence and that certainty markers are more frequent than uncertainty markers.

More recently, Sentí (2022) offers an overview of evidentiality in Catalan and focuses on indirect evidentiality, as expressed by the verbs *semblar/parèixer* ‘seem’, modal auxiliaries, mainly *deure* ‘must’, and adverbs such as *evidentment* ‘evidently’ and *òbviament* ‘obviously’. Special attention is paid to reportative constructions such as *diuen que*, *es diu que*, *diu que* (‘it is said/they say that’), *es veu que* (‘it seems that’), the predicate *resulta que* (‘it turns out that’) or the construction *es coneix que* (‘it is known that’). This overview is based on previous synchronic and diachronic works on Catalan auxiliaries and verbal constructions with epistemic and evidential meaning (see, e.g., Antolí, 2017; Antolí and Sentí, 2020; Sentí, 2015, 2017, 2018).

The contributions reviewed in this section are used as a starting point to identify and classify the epistemic stance markers in the corpus under study and to interpret their contribution to the expression of disagreement.

3.3. Epistemic stance markers in political discourse

Political discourse is one of the preferred fields for the analysis of epistemic markers in interaction. Hart (2011: 757) identifies epistemic positioning in political discourse with the legitimization of assertions as an argumentation strategy which consists of “an (unconscious) attempt on behalf of the speaker to influence the hearer’s epistemic stance toward the proposition in such a way that their logico-rhetorical module is satisfied and the assertion is thereby accepted.” Hart considers that evidentiality manifests an epistemic positioning strategy of ‘objectification’, that is, a strategy suggesting that “the speaker’s assertion can be verified or that it is corroborated by others” (2011: 759). In contrast, epistemicity implies a sub-justification strategy, since the “legitimizing device relies solely on their reputation as a reliable source of information with perhaps privileged access to certain states of affairs or means of knowing” (2011: 759).

Marín Arrese (2011) also analyzes the use of stance markers as legitimizing strategies in political discourse. She compares the use of effective stance markers (i.e. those related to “the ways in which the speaker/writer aims to exert control on the realization of the event, by expressing the necessity of the event occurring, or their attitudes and assessments with regard to

² The concepts of epistemicity and evidentiality are not easy to differentiate, especially in languages, such as Romance languages, that do not mark evidentiality grammatically. Several perspectives—sometimes contrary—on the relations and differences between the two concepts can be found in the literature. For a discussion of the concepts of epistemicity and evidentiality, see also the overviews included in Ifantidou (2001: 17–22), Cornillie (2009: 47–49), Barbet and Saussure (2012), Cabedo and Figueras (2018: 3–10) and Musi (2020: 49–54).

the event” (Marín Arrese, 2011: 285)) and epistemic stance markers (i.e., those related to “the knowledge of the speaker/writer regarding the realization of the event and/or to their estimations of the validity of the proposition designating the event” (2011: 285)). From a cross-linguistic corpus study, the author concludes that English resorts to an extensive use of epistemic stance markers (*We all know, We have experienced ...*), whereas Spanish favors effective stance markers (i.e., *must, cannot, It is essential ...*) (2011: 286).

Fuentes (2010) argues that parliamentary language imposes a specific interpretation of some stance markers (e.g. *yo creo* ‘I think’, *probablemente* ‘probably’, *desde luego* ‘of course’ in Spanish), which are not used as qualifiers of the assertion properly but as rhetorical devices (the self as a warrant, possibility as a mitigation device aimed at creating empathy or evidentiality as reassurance).

Parliamentary debate and genre norms are also considered key in Cuenca (2015) (see Section 3.2). This study of markers related to evidentiality in Catalan political discourse identifies genre-conditioned uses and concludes that the scarcity of markers of uncertainty “is coherent with the characteristics of the genre: politicians must show that they are sure of what they say and uncertainty is usually a rhetorical strategy used to attack the opponent in a more effective way” (2015: 380). This tendency is contrary to the use of epistemic stance markers in other fields and genres, especially in conversation, where cooperation and face-work are essential to achieve successful communication (Berlin and Prieto-Mendoza, 2014; Fuentes, 2010; Soler, 2018, 2019).

Among the markers that can indicate either certainty or uncertainty depending on the context, the most frequently analyzed are those based on mental state verbs such as *think* and *believe* (e.g. Fetzer, 2014; Simon-Vandenberg, 1998, 2000 in English; De Saeger, 2007; Fuentes, 2010; González Ruiz, 2014; Soler, 2018, 2019 in Spanish; and also some references in Cuenca, 2015: 376–379; González, 2005: 527 and Sentí, 2022: § 2.1 in Catalan). The studies in question, most of which deal with political discourse, have described the various configurations in which these markers occur, namely, as a matrix verb and as a parenthetical, with an implicit or explicit subject, either preverbal or post-verbal in languages such as Spanish and Catalan. The markers receive different interpretations (as evidentials or as opinion verbs) and implement various pragmatic effects. Two contradictory meanings have been identified, namely, weak epistemicity and (firm) belief. The weak epistemicity reading implies uncertainty and lack of commitment. In the belief reading, which characterizes non-cooperative genres, opinion verbs suggest “authority rather than hesitation” (Simon-Vandenberg, 2000: 60) and reinforce the assertiveness of the utterance while showing commitment, since the speaker is the source of the assertion and the warrant of a proposition that has been put into question (Fuentes, 2010).

Other epistemic markers frequently used in political discourse are those related to the notion of truth. According to Fuentes (2012), ‘truth’ is a cognitive frame in political confrontation. The markers related to the notion of truth are used as a legitimization strategy by which the speakers are the warrant of their own argumentation and impose on the hearer their beliefs as shared knowledge. Several analyses of *la verdad* in Spanish and *la veritat* in Catalan (‘the truth’) have described their different configurations and uses (parenthetical and introducing a subordinate clause). These contributions (e.g., Fernández Gómic and Soler, 2020; Fuentes, 2012; González, 2014; Fernández and Maldonado, 2007; Soler, 2015: § 3.2.2; Soler, 2017) show that the epistemic markers based on the notion of truth (e.g., *verdad/veritat* ‘truth’ and *cierto/cert* ‘true’) indicate counter-expectation and often combine with contrastive markers. Pragmatically, they can serve a mitigation strategy (preventing a negative effect of what is said) or be used as reinforcers of the contrast introduced by the connective.

In summary, the previous contributions to epistemic stance markers in political discourse show a specific use as compared with conversation related to the overall purpose of communication in the political arena. Certainty markers are more frequent than uncertainty markers, which, moreover, are mainly used as rhetorical devices to downgrade the opponent’s view. Epistemic stance markers can be considered strategies to legitimate or reinforce the speaker’s position by either objectifying or subjectifying an assertion.

4. Data and methodology

4.1. The corpus

The corpus analyzed in this paper includes two Plenary Investiture Sessions: (i) the debate held in the Parliament of Catalonia on 20 and 21 December, 2012, by which Artur Mas was re-elected as the president of Catalonia’s Regional Government (Generalitat de Catalunya) (DIMas), and (ii) the debate held on 10 January, 2016, by which Carles Puigdemont was elected as the president of Catalonia (DIPuig).³ The debate transcripts have been produced by an administrative unit of the Catalan Parliament, the *Departament d’Edicions*.⁴ They have been published by the Catalan Parliament without restrictions of

³ *Diari de Sessions del Parlament de Catalunya*. X Legislatura, Sèrie P núm. 3. Primer període. Debat del programa i votació d’investidura del diputat Artur Mas i Gavarró, candidat proposat a la presidència de la Generalitat de Catalunya (tram. 201-00001/10). On-line transcript: parlament.cat/document/nom/10p002.pdf; parlament.cat/document/nom/10p003.pdf. Access: 01/03/2013. *Diari de Sessions del Parlament de Catalunya*. XI Legislatura, Sèrie P núm. 7. Primer període. Debat del programa i votació d’investidura del diputat Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó, candidat proposat a la presidència de la Generalitat de Catalunya (tram. 201-00002/11). On-line transcript: <https://www.parlament.cat/document/dspcp/163501.pdf> Access: 01/06/2020.

⁴ https://www.parlament.cat/web/composicio/administracio-parlamentaria/centre-gestor/index.html?p_co00=EDICIONS.

use. Within the present research, the anonymization policy of the original publicly available transcripts has been maintained, i.e. proper names have not been anonymized.

Plenary Investiture debates are especially adequate to analyze disagreement because their aim is to confront ideas and proposals boldly, which implies disagreeing. MPs argue in favor or against the candidate's program to justify their support or rejection to the candidate.

In order to contextualize the examples, it is important to identify each MP's position in the political spectrum. The Parliament of Catalonia includes 135 seats distributed among seven different groups, whose leaders, according to their role (candidate, supporting party, opposition party), take the floor in turns to agree or disagree about the candidate's aptness to become president of Catalonia.

1. *Convergència i Unió (CiU)*, a right-wing Catalan Nationalist Coalition whose leaders were Artur Mas and Carles Puigdemont, candidates for president in 2012 and 2016, respectively.
2. *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)*, a left-wing Catalan Independence Party, whose leader was Oriol Junqueras (2012 and 2016).
3. *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC)*, the Catalan Socialist Party, whose leaders were Pere Navarro (2012) and Miquel Iceta (2016).
4. *Partit Popular de Catalunya (PPC)*, a right-wing Spanish Nationalist Party, whose leaders were Alicia Sánchez-Camacho (2012) and Xavier García Albiol (2016).
5. *Iniciativa-Verds & Esquerra Unida i Alternativa (ICV-EUiA)* in 2012, and *Catalunya Sí que es Pot* in 2016, the Catalan Green Socialist and Communist Coalition, whose leaders were Joan Herrera (2012) and Josep Lluís Franco Rabell (2016).
6. *Ciutadans (C's)*, a liberal anti-Catalan Independence Party, whose leaders were Albert Rivera (2012) and Inés Arrimadas (2016).
7. *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP)*, an extreme left-wing Independence Party, whose leaders were David Fernández and Joaquim Arrufat (2012), and Anna Gabriel (2016).⁵

CiU won the 2012 election and ran the Catalan Government with ERC as a stable parliamentary support since December, 2012. The main point of the 2012 campaign was the right to decide about self-determination in the context of the 2008 economic crisis. CiU and ERC ran for the 2016 election together as *Junts pel Sí* ('Together for Yes'), a coalition with the common aim of declaring Catalonia's independence.

4.2. Methodology

To investigate the role of epistemic stance markers in disagreement in the context of PD, the utterances including both an adversative and an epistemic stance marker were selected and a qualitative analysis of a collection of cases was performed.

The selection of the instances relevant for the analysis was a three-fold process. Firstly, all cases including *però* 'but' or synonymous adversative markers were searched for in the corpus. Most examples included *però* 'but', used both intra-sententially and extra-sententially. Some examples included synonymous contrastive markers (e.g., *tanmateix*, 'however', *en canvi* 'in contrast', *això sí* 'however', *ara* 'now', *en tot cas* 'in any event').⁶

Secondly, the basic collection of adversative contexts was narrowed down to 117 cases also including an epistemic stance marker (i.e. expressions related to certainty or uncertainty). In this phase, a list of markers was used that had been established on the basis of previous research about epistemic stance in Catalan (see section 3.2. above). The epistemic stance markers were categorized according to their semantic properties. Three factors were considered:

- (i) the epistemic value, either certainty or uncertainty;
- (ii) the type of epistemic stance marker depending on whether the marker codifies degree of knowledge (epistemic), degree and source of knowledge (evidential) or degree of knowledge and opinion (attitudinal);
- (iii) the position of the epistemic marker with respect to the adversative contrastive marker either in either the thesis (position 1) or the antithesis (position 2).⁷

The 117 contexts including an adversative contrastive marker and an epistemic stance marker identified are summarized in Table 1.

⁵ The composition of the Parliament in the 10th and the 11th legislature is shown in <https://www.parlament.cat/pcat/parlament/que-es-el-parlament/resultats-electoral/#11leg>.

⁶ A list of adversative DMs in Catalan can be found in Cuenca et al. (2019).

⁷ The analysis initially also included the type of antecedent, either explicit or implicit, of the disagreeing move and the kind of stimulus it refers to (e.g., words, verbal action, intervention). These differences, although interesting, proved not to be productive for the analysis and will not be discussed here.

Table 1
Contexts including an adversative contrastive marker and an epistemic stance marker.

Type of stance	Epistemic value	N
Epistemic	certainty	48
	uncertainty	33
Evidential	certainty	10
	uncertainty	9
Attitudinal	certainty	17
total		117

Thirdly, those cases that indicate disagreement regarding a previous intervention (49 examples) were identified by checking if the thesis P was clearly attributable to a different speaker. The relevant portion of discourse to interpret the thesis and the antithesis in their scope was identified for each example. This entailed not only the identification of the immediate context ('P but Q') but sometimes also the search for portions of discourse long before the intervention where the disagreeing move was found, in order to contextualized the denied thesis and establish its antecedent precisely.⁸

Once the relevant examples were selected and classified, all the cases were analyzed in depth, considering both formal features (position of the epistemic stance marker) and semantic features, distinguishing:

- purely epistemic markers (indicating degree of knowledge alone, e.g. *certament* 'truly');
- evidential markers with epistemic extension (indicating source of knowledge and, secondarily, degree of knowledge, e.g. *obvi* 'obvious');
- attitudinal markers with epistemic extension (indicating opinion and, secondarily, degree of knowledge, e.g. *estic convençut* '(I) am convinced').

Finally, the examples were globally analyzed in order to establish their contribution to the ongoing argumentation and how contrast, epistemic stance and disagreement interacted.

5. Results and discussion

The epistemic stance markers found in disagreeing moves and combined with a contrastive marker are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Epistemic stance markers in contrastive disagreeing moves.

Epistemic value	Marker	Type of stance	Position (in corpus)	
Certainty	<i>(és) cert</i> '(it is) true', <i>certament</i> 'truly'	epistemic	1	
	<i>efectivament</i> 'as a matter of fact'		1	
	<i>la realitat</i> 'the reality'	evidential	2*	
	<i>és veritat</i> '(it) is true'		1, 2	
	<i>és clar</i> '(it) is clear'		2*	
	<i>obvi</i> 'obvious', <i>òbviament</i> 'obviously'		1	
	<i>evident</i> 'evident'		1, 2	
	<i>resulta que</i> '(it) results (that)'		2	
	<i>(jo) crec</i> '(I) think', <i>creiem</i> '(we) think'		attitudinal	1, 2
	<i>estic convençut</i> '(I) am convinced'			1
Uncertainty	<i>crec</i> '(I) think' (parenthetical)	epistemic	2*	
	<i>no ho sé</i> '(I) don't know it'		1, 2	
	<i>pot</i> ('can')	evidential	1	
	<i>potser</i> 'maybe'		1, 2	
	<i>probablement</i> 'probably'		1	
	<i>hauria</i> 'should'		2	
	<i>deu</i> 'must'		1	
	<i>suposo</i> '(I) guess'		2	
	<i>entenc que</i> '(I) suppose', <i>entendrà que</i> '(as) you may understand'		1, 2	
	<i>segons sembla</i> '(it) seems' (parenthetical)		2	

Position 1: In the thesis (before the contrastive DM); Position 2: In the antithesis (after the DM); Position 2*: Immediately after the DM.

As Table 2 shows, the epistemic stance markers identified in disagreeing moves are first classified according to the epistemic scale into those indicating either certainty—which, in turn, can be epistemic, evidential or attitudinal—or uncertainty—either epistemic or evidential—. The contrastive discourse markers found in disagreeing moves are *però* 'but' and, less frequently, similar markers, namely, *en canvi* 'in contrast', *això sí* 'however', *ara* 'now', *en tot cas* 'in any event'. The position of the marker, either in the thesis (1) or in the antithesis (2), proves to be relevant in the analysis of its contribution to the interpretation of disagreement.

⁸ I conducted the selection of instances and their analysis individually, based on the formal and semantic criteria indicated in this Section.

The following sections illustrate and discuss the main results taking into account these parameters.

5.1. Disagreement and certainty markers: agree to disagree

Certainty markers occurring in disagreeing moves in the corpus can be either epistemic (4), evidential (5) or attitudinal (6). They usually qualify the thesis (position 1, as in (4) and (5)), but can also strengthen the argumentative force of the antithesis (position 2, as in (6)).

- (4) Senyor Puigdemont, *és cert*, els independentistes en aquest Parlament tenen majoria parlamentària, però aquesta majoria parlamentària, aquesta majoria, vostès no la tenen a la societat (Albiol, PPC, DIPuig, 48)
Mr. Puigdemont, it's true, the pro-independence activists in this Parliament have a parliamentary majority, but this parliamentary majority, this majority, you do not have it in society.
- (5) I *és evident* que hem de canviar la relació de Catalunya amb la resta d'Espanya; nosaltres ho hem dit en moltes ocasions, i per això tenim aquest model federal que nosaltres hem explicat. Però hem d'actuar, hem d'actuar immediatament. (Navarro, PSC, DIMas1, 29)
And it is obvious that we must change Catalonia's relationship with the rest of Spain; we said so many times, and that is why we have this federal model that we have explained. But we must act, we must act immediately.
- (6) Doncs, miri, el senyor Lula da Silva, sap què deia? Va dir moltes coses, però crec no ho va escoltar tot: 'Cuidar els pobres és molt barat i dóna excel·lents resultats; cuidar els rics és molt car i mai estan contents.' (Herrera, ICV-EUiA, DIMas2, 42)
Look, Mr Lula da Silva, do you know what he used to say? He said many things, but, I think, you didn't hear it all: 'Caring for the poor is very cheap and offers excellent results; caring for the rich is very expensive and they are never happy.'

In (4) Albiol admits ('it is true') that pro-independence parties are the majority, but adds an antithesis to this idea (this majority is not to be found in society). Similarly, in (5) Navarro resorts to an evidential marker ('it is obvious') to qualify a thesis. In (6), Herrera qualifies an antithesis by adding an attitudinal marker ('I think' meaning 'in my opinion') to a face-threatening act ('you didn't hear at all').

As examples (4) and (5) show, a contrastive disagreeing move often consists of a thesis with which the speaker seems to agree followed by the antithesis that contradicts it. Agreement can be expressed by a certainty marker (e.g., *és cert* in (4), *és evident* in (5)) and also by an explicit agreement predicate, as in (7).

- (7) *No li dic que li falti raó* en el sentit de la manca d'agilitat; *té raó*, li ho reconec; però també *és veritat* que s'ha fet una part de la feina que també s'ha de valorar. (Mas, Candidate, DIMas2, 42)
I'm not saying you are not right about the lack of agility; you are right, I admit it; but it is also true that part of the work has been done which must also be acknowledged.
Antecedent: Els hauria de caure la cara de vergonya que cap institució, cap govern, cap municipi, hagi aturat un sol desnonament (Fernàndez, CUP, DIMas2, 41)
You should be ashamed that no institution, no government, no municipality, has stopped a single eviction

In (7) Mas admits that the actions to avoid evictions have not been quick enough, but disagrees with Fernàndez' previous intervention arguing that the government has not acted. This 'agree to disagree' move ('you are right we were not quick but part of the work has been done') is frequent in political discourse. Agreement is therefore a rhetorical way to justify disagreement.

5.2. Certainty, truth and reality

Some markers of certainty are related to the notions of fact, truth and reality, as *veritat* 'truth' in the previous example (7) or *realitat* 'reality' in the following (8):

- (8) No, no, ara ja se n'adonen però fins fa dos anys no. Però la *realitat* és que aquest és el marc que hem de combatre i el que hem de definir és un full de ruta per resoldre'l. (Herrera, ICV-EUiA, DIMas2, 25)
No, no, now you realize, but you didn't until two years ago. But the reality is that this is the framework that we have to fight and what we have to define is a roadmap to solve it.

In (8) *la realitat* reinforces Herrera's argument (*Hem de combatre el marc que vostès han ignorat fins fa poc* 'we have to fight the framework that you ignored until recent') presenting it as a fact that cannot be denied anymore.

The differences in the interpretation of 'reality'/ 'truth' markers are related to their position. When occurring in the thesis, the contrastive and the epistemic marker are argumentatively anti-oriented: The dialogic nature of the contrast is foregrounded, the speaker's antithesis is presented as shared knowledge—an obvious truth—, whereas the thesis is downgraded. When occurring in the antithesis, the contrastive and the certainty marker are argumentatively co-oriented: The adversarial nature comes to the front and the antithesis is intensified.

Example (9) is an interesting case of the use of epistemic markers both in the thesis and the antithesis.

- (9) Jo li demanaria que fos capaç d'entendre que la societat catalana és plural, que fos capaç d'entendre que *és cert* que hi ha una part de la població que defensa postulats independentistes, però que *no és menys cert* que existeix un 52 per cent dels catalans que volem ser profundament catalans [...] però que no volem que ningú ens obligui a renunciar al nostre sentiment de ser espanyols. (García Albiol, PPC, DIPuig, 30)
I would ask you to try to understand that Catalan society is plural, try to understand that it is true that there is a part of the population that defends pro-independence postulates, but that it is no less true that 52 percent of Catalans want to be deeply Catalans [...] but do not want to be obliged to surrender our feeling of being Spanish.

The first *és cert* in (9) occurs in the thesis. It contributes to retrieve the antecedent (*there is a part of the population that defends pro-independence postulates*) and expresses some kind of agreement that announces the disagreement ('yes, but'). The

marker following *però* ‘but’ (*no és menys cert que*) presents the antithesis (*52 percent of Catalans want to be deeply Catalans but not to be obliged to surrender our feeling of being Spanish*) as a ‘truth’ that cannot be denied.

Fuentes (2012: 148) analyzes a similar example in Spanish with the noun *verdad* ‘truth’ in both thesis and antithesis and concludes that the first segment acts as an argumentative background used to ‘force’ the admission of the second one. The use of this polite strategy allows to legitimate divergent opinions.

It can be concluded that, in first position, epistemic certainty markers can be used as mitigation devices linked to an agreement that announces disagreement. In the second position they reinforce the assertion by presenting it as a ‘truth’ that contrasts with other options—the antecedent in a disagreeing move—and by blocking the implicatures derived from those opinions (Simon-Vandenberg, 2008: 1531). Both when the thesis is mitigated and when the antithesis is intensified, the disagreeing argument becomes reinforced.

5.3. Certainty and evidentiality

Some modal markers (e.g., *evident* ‘evident’, *obvi*, *òbviament* ‘obvious(ly)’, *clar* ‘clear’) present the stance object as a fact based on external sources of knowledge. The truth of the proposition is presented as shared knowledge, so that the audience is supposed to accept it.

- (10) En primer lloc, per dir-li que certament nosaltres hem perdut diputats. Això és *evident*, i a més a més ho hem reconegut des del primer moment. És *obvi*, i, com vostè *deu* comprendre, a ningú li agrada, perdre diputats. *Però* és la realitat en aquest moment del nostre país, és la realitat d'aquestes eleccions, i nosaltres el que fem és prendre'n nota i acatar el resultat de les eleccions. (Mas, Candidate, DIMas2: 21)
First of all, let me tell you that we have certainly lost deputies. This is obvious, and, moreover, we have acknowledged it from the start. It is obvious, and as you may understand, nobody likes to lose deputies. But this is the reality at this moment in our country, the reality about this election and we take that into account and accept the result of the election.

The excerpt in (10) includes evidential markers (*evident* ‘evident’, *obvi* ‘obvious’, *deu* ‘must’) and also several epistemic markers that semantically refer to truth and reality (*certament* ‘truly’, *la realitat* ‘the reality’). This disagreeing move is a response to Herrera’s intervention in (11):

- (11) *Antecedent*: Jo vull començar fent una primera reflexió. Senyor Mas, vostè té la legitimitat per formar govern, és la primera força, però crec que seria bo que es preguntés, s’interrogués per què ha tingut la davallada de dotze diputats. Quines conclusions n’ha tret? (Herrera, ICV-EUiA, DIMas2: 16)
I start with a first thought. Mr. Mas, you have the legitimacy to form a government, you are the first force, but I think it would be good to ask yourself, to ask yourself why you have had the decline of twelve deputies. What conclusions did you draw from that?

In (10) Artur Mas partially agrees with Herrera (11) and admits that his party has reduced its representation in the Parliament. The evidentials *evident* ‘evident’ and *obvi* ‘obvious’ indicate that the information under their scope is not only true, but derives from an inference (the actual results) and is to be considered as shared knowledge. By using the evidentials *evident* ‘evident’, *obvi* ‘obvious’ and *deu* ‘must’, Mas dilutes the argumentative force of Herrera’s intervention, implying that Mas’ legitimacy as a candidate is low(er) because the results in the election were worse than before. After the qualified agreement (‘it is true and obvious that we have lost deputies’), the antithesis (*accept the result of the election*) implies Mas’s refusal to reflect about the causes of the bad result, as Herrera rhetorically asked, by arguing that reality cannot be denied.

Evidentials can also be found in the antithesis, as in (12), which includes *és clar*.

- (12) També ens diu el senyor Navarro que vostès només hi estaran al costat [...] si la consulta és legal, acordada i vinculant. [...] Acordada, ens haurà de dir amb qui. Acordada en aquest Parlament? Segur. Acordada amb el Govern espanyol? No ho sé. Tant de bo –tant de bo. *Però, és clar*, si ha de ser acordada amb el Govern espanyol, que és del PP i amb majoria absoluta, doncs vostè dóna tota la clau de la decisió al PP de la majoria absoluta, que no sé si hauria de ser la posició del Partit Socialista, donar tota la capacitat de decisió al PP i amb majoria absoluta. (Mas, Candidate, DIMas1, 26)
Mr. Navarro also tells us that you will only be there [...] if the referendum is legal, agreed and binding. [...] Agreed, you will have to tell us with whom. Agreed in this Parliament? For sure. Agreed with the Spanish Government? I do not know. Hopefully - hopefully. But, of course, if it has to be agreed with the Spanish Government, a PP government with an absolute majority, then the whole decision goes to the PP with absolute majority, and I don't know if this should be the Socialist Party position, give all decision-making power to the PP with absolute majority.

The evidential *és clar* ‘(it) is clear’ indicates shared knowledge and inferential evidence.⁹ When combined with a contrastive connective, the cluster *però, és clar* marks the following clause as informative focus (Pons, 2003: 234) and thus reinforces it. In PD the functioning of *és clar* is different from its use in cooperative contexts such as (most) face-to-face conversation, where it tends to occur as “a mitigation device used to soften a potentially face-threatening act by showing agreement and co-orientation in argumentation” (Cuenca and Marín 2012: 2223).

By using an evidential, the speaker “objectifies an assertion and assumes that the invitation to ‘check for themselves’” (Hart 2011: 759), which the evidential presents to hearers, will make them change their minds and align themselves with the conclusion derived from the antithesis. Thus, in PD evidentials do not only legitimize an assertion, as derived from a reliable source, but can also reinforce disagreement.

⁹ On the uses of (*és*) *clar* in Catalan, see Cuenca and Marín (2012) and González (2005, 2014). A parallel functioning is found with Spanish *claro*, analyzed by Fuentes (1993), Maldonado (2010), Pons (2003) and Santamaría (2009), among others. These contributions refer mainly to conversation.

5.4. Certainty and opinion

Some markers in disagreeing moves express a firm opinion, as *estic convençut* 'I am convinced' in (13) or *(jo) crec* 'I think/believe' in (14).

- (13) *Etic convençut que vostès aconseguiran tot això que vostè s'ha proposat, però, de moment, mentrestant, permeti'm –permeti'm– que sigui un punt escèptic.* (Puigdemont, PCandidate, DIPuig, 40)
I am convinced that you will achieve all that you have set out to do, but for the time being, let me – let me – be skeptical.
- (14) *Crec –tant de bo que m'equivoqui!– que el camí que dibuixem és un camí totalment diferent al que vostè ens proposa, cosa perfectament legítima i perfectament comprensible en democràcia. Però, ho repeteixo [...] la majoria que han obtingut els habilita per governar, però no per perseguir la independència exprés i menys encara si volen fer-ho per la via de desconèixer la legalitat.* (Iceta, PSC, DIPuig, 23)
I think—I wish I was wrong!— that the path we are drawing is a completely different path from the one you are proposing, which is perfectly legitimate and perfectly understandable in a democracy. But, I repeat, [...] the majority you have obtained enables you to govern, but not to pursue an express independence and even less if you want to do so ignoring legality.

In (13) the candidate (ironically) expresses certainty about the future to express disagreement about the present ('(in the future) you will achieve what you want to but I am skeptical at this point'). In (14) Iceta marks his point as an opinion ('in my opinion our way is different to yours') and admits that opposing views are licit, as the previous step to deny Puigdemont's right to pursue Catalonia's independence from Spain.

In PD, opinion verbs and predicates usually express firm belief based on an indefinite inference, as opposed to the default interpretation in conversation, where they indicate uncertainty and act as mitigation devices. Soler (2018, 2019: 424) quantifies the differences in frequency of *creo* 'I think' in Spanish PD and in conversation. In PD belief/intensification is more frequent (ca. 70%) than mitigation, whereas in conversation it only amounts to 12% of the cases.¹⁰

These markers are overtly subjective, since they are used in the first person and thus 'subjectify' discourse, in contrast with the markers analyzed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3, which create an 'objectification' effect.

5.5. Disagreement and uncertainty markers

As already indicated, uncertainty markers in political discourse are less frequent than certainty markers and exhibit a peculiar functioning. In disagreeing moves, the corpus analyzed here includes uses of the marker *crec* 'I think' as a parenthetical weak epistemic marker (see example (6) above), probability markers (*probablement* 'probably', *potser* 'maybe', *pot* 'may') and markers indicating guess (*suposo* 'I guess', *entenc que* 'I suppose', *segons sembla* 'it seems', *deuria* 'should') and doubt (*no ho sé* 'I don't know (it)').

- (15) *El president, el senyor president, candidat en aquest moment, em recordava que sóc nou; que sóc nou i no sé distingir gaire bé entre allò que es fa a la Casa dels Canonges i allò que es fa al Palau de la Generalitat. Probablement; probablement, senyor Mas, no sóc capaç en aquest moment de distingir què és el que representen la Casa dels Canonges i el Palau de la Generalitat. Però, si vostè camina una estona més allà al voltant del Palau de la Generalitat, veurà que a Catalunya hi ha misèria, i això sí que ho sé distingir, senyor Mas, això sí que ho sé distingir clarament [...].* (Navarro, PSC, DIMas1, 28)
The president, Mr. President, now candidate, reminded me that I am new; that I am new and am not able to distinguish very well between what is done in Casa dels Canonges and what is done in Generalitat Palace. Probably; probably, Mr. Mas, I am not able at this moment to distinguish what Casa dels Canonges and Generalitat Palace represent. But, if you walk a little further around the Palace, you will see that there is poverty in Catalonia, and I am able to distinguish it, Mr. Mas, I do know how to distinguish it clearly [...]

In (15), Navarro seems to agree with Mas that he is new as a deputy (this is obvious), which implies that he does not know some basic information (thesis), but the agreement is mitigated by the presence of *probablement* 'probably', which does not qualify the speaker's state of knowledge but the opponent's opinion and prepares the antithesis introduced by *però* 'but'.

Example (16) shows the alternation of certainty markers with some uncertainty markers.

- (16) *I vostès vénen aquí a intentar distreure, però, miri, sap què?, jo ara podria entrar a moltes coses que han dit, però, jo crec que és que es contesten vostès mateixos, a venir a fer això. Jo crec que no val la pena, vénen aquí exigint paritat, jo me'ls quedo mirant, dic: «Però, escolti, paritat?», però, no ho sé, potser que comencin per casa seva.* (Turull, Junts pel Sí, DIPuig, 37)
And you come here to try to distract, but, look, you know what?, I could now get into a lot of things that you have said, but, I think that, you answer yourself, to come and do this. I think it's not worth it, you ask for parity, I stare at you and say, "Really? Parity?" But I don't know, maybe you'd better start in your own group.

The two markers of uncertainty (*no ho sé*, *potser* 'I don't know, maybe') are not really interpreted as signals of doubt. They combine with a suggestion as if they were mitigating devices, but a sarcastic interpretation –or at least detachment stance– is triggered and the whole proposition is interpreted as an accusation ('you cannot ask for parity when you don't have it in your own group').

This interpretative inversion also applies to other examples, as (17).

- (17) *La solució d'Espanya i de Catalunya no és canviar de país, és canviar el país. La solució potser no és canviar de passaport ni de nacionalitat, sinó treballar plegats per estar dintre d'Espanya i dintre d'Europa. No enganyin la gent, la solució no és canviar de país; potser és canviar de governants, potser és canviar de forma de Govern, potser és canviar la democràcia, potser és canviar el sistema que tenim, això sí, però no és canviar de país.* (Rivera, C's, DIMas2, 36)

¹⁰ Similar differences are observed in the case of other languages when comparing conversation with political discourse. See Nuyts (2001b) and Simon-Vanderbergen (2000).

The solution for Spain and Catalonia is not to change country, but to change the country. Maybe the solution is not to change your passport or nationality, but to work together to be within Spain and within Europe. Don't fool people, the solution is not to change country; maybe it's a change of rulers, maybe it's a change of form of government, maybe it's a change of democracy, maybe it's a change of the system we have, yes, but it's not a change of country.

The repeated use of *potser* in (17) illustrates an intersubjective use, by which the doubt is not linked to the speaker but to hearer and it qualifies the opponent's position ('Catalonia must be independent from Spain') as doubtful. Then the antithesis (*The solution is to change the country*) is elaborated throughout the excerpt by means of qualified assertions (changing the country means changing rulers, form of government, democracy, the system).

The previous examples highlight that the use of uncertainty markers combined with contrastive markers in disagreeing moves is not truly epistemic, as already pointed out in Fuentes (2010). These markers do not express lack of knowledge, but are used rhetorically to reinforce the MP's conclusion.

6. Conclusions

A disagreeing move is a preferred reaction move in PD, as opposed to cooperative genres, such as conversation, where agreement is generally preferred. Because of its superstructure as a juxtaposition of competing monologues, conflicting opinions in PD are expressed as long-distance disagreement constructions, where the reference point or antecedent of the disagreement is far away in discourse and must be retrieved.

Long-distance disagreement implies polyphony, which is also a distinctive feature of contrast. When disagreement is expressed in a contrastive construction, the thesis usually elaborates the opponent's argument and the antithesis represents the speaker's position. The use of epistemic markers can qualify the thesis (mitigated or presented as shared knowledge) or intensify the antithesis. In either case, the explicitation of the speaker's epistemic stance creates a rhetorical effect that intensifies the conclusion of the argumentation. The resulting effect is that "arguments turn into axioms" (Fuentes, 2010: 116). Thus, the use of epistemic markers becomes a strategy to reinforce the epistemic authority of the speaker and block the opponent's opinion.

Certainty markers can be related to the frame of truth and 'reality', to evidentiality or to opinion. When occurring in the thesis, they qualify the opponent's position and can be linked to the 'agree-to-disagree' strategy: The speaker seems to agree with the opponent but then introduces a counter-argument so that agreement is an indirect way to justify disagreement. When occurring in the antithesis, certainty markers reinforce the assertion and show the stance object as based on knowledge that "goes beyond the speaker's sphere" (Cuenca 2015: 372).

Uncertainty markers are less frequent and their use is often rhetorical. In PD, they do not usually express lack of certainty on the part of the speaker. They do not tend to mitigate an assertion, as in the case of conversation, but express doubt related to the opponent or are simply used to weaken the thesis that is counter-argued.

Let's go back to Hart's (2011: 759) proposal, according to which evidentiality is an objectification strategy, whereas epistemicity is a subjectification strategy. The analysis conducted here points to the idea that, at least in PD, objectification does not only account for evidential marking but also for epistemic markers of truth and 'reality', which show the stance object as certain on its own, with the stancetaker implicit or opaque (see Marín-Arrese 2011a).

In conclusion, contrast and epistemic stance markers combine to intensify an opposing argument in disagreeing moves not only when expressing certainty but also uncertainty, which is rhetorically applied to weaken the opponent's position. This is especially the case in parliamentary debate, a genre in which argumentation and disagreement are default options and the participants aim at reinforcing their own view and image while blocking the opponent's.

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There are not conflicts of interest.

Data availability

The data are public. Access to the corpus is indicated in the paper.

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