The socio-communicative function of two discourse markers in Spanish

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Abstract

In this article I present an analysis of the discourse markers *la verdad* -'the truth'- and *pues* -'well'- in everyday Spanish conversation from a corpus of 32 native speakers selected by random sample from the metropolitan area of Madrid (Spain). Results show that these markers convey coordinative properties during conversation as well as social and expressive meaning. My research indicates that sex is the most salient group factor which may be related to assertiveness and to the expression of causality-opposition in coherence and negotiating options. It is also worth of being remarked that gender is correlated with sociocultural levels (the lower to *la verdad* and the higher to *pues*) suggesting that men and women differ in their socio-communicative behaviour and that this would be due to both the social structure of the speech community and the parameters of linguistic interaction.
Key words: sociolinguistics, discourse markers, discourse analysis, Spanish.

Resumo

Neste artigo analízanse os marcadores discursivos *la verdad* e *pues* do español, en conversas espontáneas inscritas nun corpus de 32 falantes nativos seleccionados ó chou nunha área metropolitana de Madrid (España). Os resultados mostran que estes marcadores cumpren diferentes propiedades durante as conversas, ó mesmo tempo que adoptan diferentes significados sociais e expresivos. A miña investigación indica que o sexo é o trazo grupal máis salientable, e que pode estar relacionado coa seguridade dos falantes neles mesmos, e coa expresión causalidade-oposición na coherencia e nas negociacións conversacionais. Tamén se debe destacar que o xénero vai en correlación con niveis socioculturais (o máis baixo con *la verdad*, e o máis alto con *pues*), suxerindo isto que homes e mulleres adoptan diferentes comportamentos socio-comunicativos, e que isto podería deberse á estrutura social da comunidade de fala e ós parámetros de interacción lingüística.
Palabras clave: sociolingüística, marcadores discursivos, análise do discurso, castelán.

1. Introduction[1]

Interactional sociolinguistics and discourse analysis are concerned with the study of linguistic strategies as they are used in the process of communicative interaction (Myhill, 1992; Stubbs, 1987; Levinson, 1989; Coulthard, 1992; Serrano, 1996b). As devoted to language in use, a recurring object of study is frequently occurring discourse markers, which are usually devoid of lexical meaning and do not add information but rather carry out framing and differentiating function in speech acts. Since as Lyons (1983: 200) claims, conversational structure demonstrates the properties of cohesion and coherence, these elements contribute to discursive meaning in conversation. Units such as *ah*, *eh*, *bueno*, *pues*, *no*, *sabes*, etc. belong to this conversational category. Each maintains on a distinctive cohesive function, relying upon the context in which it occurs and performing the use according to the speakers'cultural and social backgrounds.

Harris (1952: 1) was one of the first scholar in correlating linguistic utterances with discourse type to appoint the analysis of discourse with cultural factors and the functions that items perform within (1952: 30). Later van Dijk (1980a: 10) added that discursive components should be studied as a part of pragmatic coherence.

The analysis of discourse markers should be carried out in accordance with two fundamental properties:

a) The way in which speakers arrange forms, meanings, and actions during conversation, while reflecting on the coherence of discourse.

b) The way in which such coherence provides cohesion to the communicative act and promotes understanding and interaction with the hearer.

Discourse structure is organized according to the use of these elements providing specific and regular functions to contexts (Schiffrin, 1987: 30) undergoing cohesive meaning in agreement with speech acts (Tannen, 1993: 22). Discourse markers are defined as "sequentially different units which distribute and separate *speech units* (sentences, sequences, propositions, tonic units, texts or subtexts)" (Schiffrin, 1987: 31), and also as

> particles that do not add information to the utterance and that frequently arise in the form of a question, completing the discourse on a cognitive level that originates from its fundamental meaning, after having lost its grammatical function.
>
> (Vincent & Sankoff, 1992: 205)

The study of discourse markers contributes to discourse analysis by strengthening the areas of behavioral patterns and communicative organization while keeping within the specific parameters of speech acts. As Schiffrin points out (1987: 47-48), choosing the features of discourse markers is not a simple way due to the broad methodology of discourse analysis and the large number of linguistic and non-linguistic contexts in where markers may occur.

Research on discourse markers, even within the same language, necessitates a strong communicative background (speech community, discourse type, speaker and hearer characteristics, environment, etc.) while allowing for the comparison and contrast of their performance in other contexts. Discourse markers are also related to the underlying processes by which linguistic items acquire further grammatical status (or *grammaticalization*) allowing lexical items develop into new grammatical functions (Schiffrin, 1987; Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer, 1991; Traugott, 1993; Traugott & Heine, 1991; Hopper & Traugott, 1993; Dahl, 1995).

2. Methodology and Corpus

In this paper I present an interpretation of the use of the discourse markers *la verdad* and *pues* in modern Spanish. Data consist of spontaneous conversations of 32 native speakers from the metropolitan area of Madrid (Spain). Since it is well known that the way in which data is collected can influence the linguistic elements to study, to minimize the effect of the *observer's paradox* (Labov, 1972) interview techniques and strategies of conversational interaction were introduced. The interviewer was someone close to the speaker (family member, friend, person of the same age, social milieu, or gender) and the interviews were conducted in locals which were comfortable, well-known, and/or familiar to the speakers. Conversations began with an open topic, chosen by the speaker, to which he/she steadily made acknowledgements or added questions in order to reduce the possible initial tension. Following this, speakers were asked some previously prepared questions about current events. The goal of these questions was to produce an effect of conversational dialogue, which would certainly bring about a greater use of discourse markers.

Interviews were carried out with 16 men and 16 women selected by random sampling, representing each sociocultural level (the union of income level and profession), and from several age groups: first (20-34 years old), second (35-55), and third (55 and up). To compare the use of discourse markers between different social groups, we divided them up equally, resulting in 8 speakers from each sociocultural level (lower, lower-middle, upper-middle, and upper), and 11 from the first age group, 11 for the second age group and 10 from the third one.

Social factors that may be correlated with discourse markers should be associated with coordinating effects during interaction[2]. The statistical analysis was carried out with the VARBRUL 2S program.

3. *La verdad* as discourse marker

Conversational structure is provided by particular connective and cohesive elements that are strongly conditioned by and condition the situational meaning of the locutionary act. This presupposes their actualization in each communicative utterance[3]. The case of *la verdad* ('*the truth*') represents the assertive content of the sentence encoding its sense in a meaningful direction. As a discourse marker, *la verdad* occurs in two kinds of contexts, *introducing a response* and *supporting an argument*.

3.1. Introducing a response

(1)
A: ¿Tú crees que el fracaso de algunos grupos musicales se debe a las drogas?
   (Do you think that musical group's failure is due to drugs?)
B: Pues *la verdad* es que sí, *la verdad* es que sí, porque yo he visto antes de un concierto preparándose en el camerino y verles encima de la mesa preparando su... su... sus drogas y tal.
   (Well, *the truth* is... *the truth* is it, because I have seen them before a concert geting drugs ready in the dressing room)

(2)
A: ¿Crees que este Gobierno ya no tiene credibilidad?
   (Do you think Government has lost its credibility?)
B: Pues, en mi opinión, *la verdad*, el gobierno ha perdido bastante credibilidad debido a los últimos escándalos.
   (Well, in my opinion, *the truth*, Government has lost its credibility due to the last scandals)

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[2] I would like to state that perspective used here fill in a functional analysis of language, which portrays mechanisms by which linguistic forms function for and in a certain context (Serrano, 1998).

[3] Meaning actualization imply that meaning differences in syntactic variation should be bounded to pragmatic and discursive traits that linguistic forms may include (Serrano, 1994a: 66).

3.2. Supporting an argument

(3)
Esto es una cuestión que la he comentado con amigas con las que fui de... fui a ese viaje, y la verdad es que difiere bastante de nuestro sistema, ya que al ser un país del Este tiene otra cultura, otra forma de pensar.
(I have talked about it with friends with traveled with me and *the truth* is that [that country] has an organization very different from ours since it is an East Country and has another culture as well as another way of thinking)

(4)
Este país va directamente al caos, aunque, *la verdad*, me gustaría tener esperanza.
(This country goes straightly to chaos but, *the truth*, I would like to be hopeful)

In both cases *la verdad* provides a kind of assertive cohesion and coherence showing up the informative intention of the speaker as well as the wish to introduce his/her affirmative implication either in the response or during the entire sequence. It is important to state that all the sequences of utterances were given off by direct speech act, since this should condition the interpretation of this marker. Being direct speech act, the questions and the responses are not implying anything else and no any other meaningful consequences should be inferred from the use of *la verdad.*

The marker *la verdad* introduces an assertive response which is not expected by and possibly contrary to the position of the interlocutor, acting as an reaffirmative purpose resulting from the grammaticalization of its lexical meaning. It can be inferred that meaning of *verdad* proceeds from the assertive constraint which we are talking about, nevertheless it should not be overlooked that it is the change of meaning that permits it to have purely discursive meaning (Traugott, 1993: 53). It retains no syntactic function nor does it possess any meaning but the pragmatic and discursive one. Moreover, it has been stated that the discursive function of markers also comes from a prior interrogative form (in the case of ¿*verdad*?) (Oliveira & Tavares, 1992: 236). However, this may not be its most interesting feature because it reveals neither the grammaticalization process of these elements nor the movement from a syntactic and lexical function to a discursive one. In any case, as these authors point out (1992: 248), the study of discourse markers uncovers important relationships between lexical entries and grammar as well as displaying how lexical and grammatical features interact in order to make up constant discursive fulfillments[4].

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[4] Grammaticalization processes show that meanings are variable and they can lead morpho-syntactic change and variation. That has been stated in the change case of preterite in Spanish (Schwenter, 1994; Serrano, 1994b, 1995, 1999a).

The marker *la verdad* is a coherence option and its meaning is clearly expressive. It is also of interest to determine under what contextual conditions this expressive device is coming up. The original meaning of *verdad* and the discursive and conversational action resolve the meaningful use of this marker, helping to shape a unique and precise function[5]. This function is set up within a stylistic frame where the speaker attempts to express his position with respect to the question that is posed (*introducing a response*) or in relation to that which is uttered (*supporting an argument*).

The introducing a response function of *la verdad* introduces a kind of veracity to the position taken (inasmuch as all responses imply choosing and taking a position regarding the question being asked). Nevertheless the very nature of the question and the answer should condition the occurrence of this assertive marker. We can therefore record a greater use of *la verdad* when speaker does not seem to identify his/her position with hearer's or when the response is opposite of that expected. Thus by means of *la verdad*, the discursive coherence and cohesion necessary to continue the level of communicative negotiation is introduced. An issue that is adressed here is that a need for negotiation is established when there is a lack of ideological, cultural, social, and even contextual closeness (e.g. when two sepakers do not share the same opinion about something) between speakers (Dubois & Horvath, 1992: 34).

In (5) the question is posed in a doubtful way, to which the speaker answers contrarily, reaffirming his/her position:

(5)
A: ¿Dudas sobre la realidad de un concierto en directo?
   (Do you disbelieve of a live concert?)
B: Pues... *la verdad* es que... a veces me lo he planteado... lo que es dudar, dudar, dudar en sí... pues exactamente no lo sé... pero sí que me lo he planteado.
   (Well... *the truth* is... sometimes I have wondered if... not just disbelieve but... I don't know... but really I have wondered something about the reality of live concerts)

In (6) the question precipitates a response which should be considered as opposite from what is expected:

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[5] It has been noted that trying to replace referential equivalece as a requirement for linguistic variation it is a problem to draw up variation patterns to discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987: 63). However, pragmatic and discursive constrainers evidence that its frequencies and social distribution can already be accomplished (Oliveira & Tavares, 1992; Vincent & Sankoff, 1992; Serrano 1999b).

(6)
A: ¿Y sobre la música clásica?
   (What about classic music?)
B: *La verdad*, sobre la música clásica no puedo decir mucho porque no es mi fuerte.
   (*The truth*, about classic music I can't tell you enough because it's not an interest of mine)

In (5) and (6) *la verdad* introduces assertive coherence to a response that shapes speaker's assertive position.

The second function (*supporting an argument*) can be described in relation to the necessity of retaining an assertive coherence in conversation, most frequently at the time when a personal position is taken:

(7)
La música que está de moda ahora es una música... como muy repetitiva, una música con sonido a cacharro... a mí *la verdad* no me gusta.
(The music currently in fashion is music... so repetitive, a piece of junk like sound... *the truth* I don't like it)

(8)
La mayoría de los profesores eran inexpertos, eran gente que acababa de salir de la Universidad... y se ponían a darnos clase sobre cómo enseñar, entonces..., *la verdad*, yo considero que en estos casos hay mucho que decir.
(Most of the teachers were unskilled, they were freshmans... and they wanted to train us how to teach so... *the truth*, I think that there is so much to say in that matter)

Examples (7) and (8) are also utterances in which *la verdad* provides assertive coherence to the argumentation presented. The function of *la verdad* as supporting an argument has several features in common with the Swedish rethorical device *I och för sig* whose literal meaning in English is 'in and for itself' (Dahl, 1995: 109). It is used as a signal that the content of the proposition is true but that not all the conclusions that might be possible be drawn from it follow it (1995: 110). Speakers uses it to indicate that the proposition is true and could be taken to contradict a previous statement, that is, to support an argument: "Detta förslag är *i och för sig* endast en partiell lösnig" ('This proposal is *in and for itself* only a partial solution').

The discursive conditions in which *la verdad* occurs are related to the desire to reaffirm assertive utterance (through grammaticalization of its original lexical content) (Traugott, 1993; Traugott & Heine, 1991; Hopper & Traugott, 1993; Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer, 1991), whether as a form of informative negotiability in responses, being a way of determining the position taken by speaker through discourse. Each case reflects how the speaker shape his/her utterances according to his/her communicative needs conditioned by the hearer or by other cultural or social

features. It is clear that this marker is most easily inserted into a spontaneous, commonplace, non-narrative, interactional, and conversational discourse frame by which speaker and hearer are able to interact according to certain shared social patterns and to the contextual frame which Tannen refers to as "expectation structures" (1993: 16). Speaker and hearer should share a cultural code that allows to understand and accept one another's norms. Von Savigny holds that linguistic conduct is suitable when it fits in with the agreed upon interpretations of the community (1988: 12). Van Dijk makes a similar claim (1980a: 145, 1980b: 241) stating that linguistic systems are conventional ones controlled by the structure of social interaction. This functional view highlights the predominant social role of language. Consequently the use of this discourse marker is not only significant within the study of discourse but also within sociolinguistics. Therefore I am now ready to discuss its social correlations.

In order to carry out a satisfactory analysis of the elements of social kind that could be correlated with the use of this discourse marker, it is necessary to begin from the proper linguistic context. I have ensured that discourse type (interviews) provides the appropriate context so that speaker's conditions might be analyzed according to regular patterns. The assessment that follows is therefore based on the discourse frame that I have described earlier. There are 224 utterances of *la verdad*: 134 of them performs the *introducing a response* function and 90 of them performs the *supporting an argument* function. These data should be understandable when considering that interviews favors the coming up of the former type (*introducing a response*). Regarding this point, one can observe that the distribution among social categories is rather uniform, notwithstanding results of gender and the lowest sociocultural levels (Table 1):

Table 1. *Percents and probabilities of* la verdad *as* introducing a response

	N	%	Probability
Gender			
Men	29/95	31	23
Women	105/129	81	77
Age			
20-34	27/52	52	48
35-55	67/104	64	49
>55	40/68	59	52
Sociocultural level			
Lower	33/42	79	66
Middle-low	28/46	61	58
Middle-high	48/93	52	35
Higher	25/43	58	40

Just as the data suggests, women use *la verdad* in its introducing a response function much more than men do with a probability of .77. The lower and middle sociocultural levels also use *la verdad* more than the higher and middle high sociocultural groups. These groups favor *la verdad* as a discourse marker, as a communicative device giving an assertive response which is not expected by and possibly contrary to the hearer's position. Hence, these groups do not tend to express their responses in a direct way, but rather they make use of this linguistic resource in order to present information in a indirect way.

Although this data is revealing as such forms of expression of groups which have been most sociolinguistically representative, it would also be of interest to perform a cross-data analysis in order to verify these claims. Thus, at the intersection of gender and sociocultural level I obtained the following frequencies (Table 2):

Table 2. *Crosstabulations of gender and sociocultural level*

	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Lower	4/13	31	29/29	100
Middle low	8/26	31	20/20	100
Middle high	9/40	23	39/53	74
Higher	8/16	50	17/27	63

One can conclusively observe that women in the lowest sociocultural levels use this marker most, choosing to introduce their responses by means of a marker which holds over the utterance content and introduces it in a less direct way. These results supports the assertions made by scholars about female language; Watts (1992: 467) holds that men and women are socialized through distinct forms of socio-communicative behavior, claiming that men use more comprehensive and less explicit devices than women. In her study on gender differences in the use of pragmatic expressions, Erman (1992: 217) concluded that men and women internalize different social interaction norms because of the lack of status among women.

It remains to be analyzed how the use of *la verdad* as *supporting an argument*, differs in its social distribution. The desire of reaffirming and adding veracity to the utterance meaning and thereby maintaining assertive coherence leads speakers to such an usage. Nevertheless it is not used evenly by members of this speech community (Table 3):

Table 3. *Percents and probabilities of* la verdad *as supporting an argument*

	N	%	Probability
Gender			
Men	66/95	69	77
Women	24/129	19	23
Age			
20-34	25/52	48	52
35-55	37/104	36	51
>55	28/68	41	48
Sociocultural level			
Lower	9/42	21	34
Middle-low	18/46	39	42
Middle-high	45/93	48	65
Higher	18/43	42	60

Contrary to the results of the use of *la verdad* as a *response marker*, men and the higher sociocultural levels favor the use of *la verdad* as *supporting an argument* marker. These results should be interpreted as representing a masculine way of being more believable and more supportive, giving information to be presented as trustworthy. These results can be correlated in opposite fashion to those obtained for the function of *la verdad* as a *response marker* because introducing *la verdad* in responses by women implied a linguistic behavior clearly different from that of men.

The crosstabulation of gender and sociocultural level validates the conclusion that upper-middle sociocultural level men most frequently use this assertive marker although the frequencies in the lower and lower-middle levels are well represented (Table 4):

Table 4. *Crosstabulations of gender and sociocultural level*

	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Lower	9/13	69	0/29	0
Middle low	18/26	69	0/20	0
Middle high	31/40	78	14/53	26
Higher	8/16	50	10/27	37

Therefore, the correlation between the *supporting an argument function* of *la verdad* and upper middle class men show that they have a more secure and reiterative discourse. Moreover the fact that they belong to this sociocultural level does not support the widely held notion that this group is the most linguistically insecure and

tend to accept the prestige patterns of the speech community (Serrano, 1996a). I can accurately observe the fact of formulating a response by using marker *la verdad* as a means of supporting assertive argumentation which accounts for some sociolinguistic features that entail security, conviction, and some kind of veracity.

4. *Pues* as discourse marker

Discourse marker*, pues* (w*ell*) may be labelled as a *response* and *supporting an argument* marker. This descriptive generalization presents a challenge to a theory that holds that *pues* functions as a fundamental conection between reference and the processes of text cohesion. A basic idea I develop here is that there is a dimension of discursive representation which is organized into a set of relation involved in the semantic properties of *pues* and the contexts in which it occurs. I will argue that marker *pues* is used at any time that speakers try to state ideas and positions, both regarding something that has been previously asked and to something that ought to be presented as relevant or personal. *Pues* does not come from gramaticalization of a previous unity, it is a non-lexical unit whose function is related to grammatical features. Conclusive, consecutive and causal meaning are the factors that account for the use of *pues*, but the context of the conversation play a relevant function and should it determine when and where it function as a real marker. In general, this should reflect a uncertainty about the grammaticalization process which develop linguistic units into markers, but the interface between grammar and discourse contribute to the production of the utterance with *pues* and its proper interpretation.

It is also important to uncover the process by which *pues* has suffered grammatical erosion and desemanticization to become a marker. Such a process involves the relationship between the original grammatical meaning of *pues* and the features which have developed to convey discursive meaning. *Pues* is a Spanish conjunction which introduces a subordinate clause known traditionally as a *causal adverbial subordinate* (Alarcos, 1994: 368), as shown below:

> "No se les permitía comer ni beber nada durante su estancia, *pues* no había duda de que la enfermedad sólo se transmitía por la boca" (They were not allowed to eat neither to drink anything during their stay, *because* there was not doubt that the illness was only transmitted by mouth)

> "No tenía gran cosa que preparar*, pues* el almuerzo se componía invariablemente de un huevo frito" (He/she didn't have great thing to prepare, *because* the lunch was invariably composed of a fried egg)   (Examples from Alarcos, 1994: 368)

This original causal meaning has developed into a function which features a

syntagmatic coherence which is tight and correspond to a desemanticization process as well as to the lost of its subordinating role in sentence. *Pues* does not come from a grammaticalization process like *la verdad* because of lack of lexical nature; however, it undergoes erosion of causal meaning which allows to be used as a cohesive device. Used recurrently at the beginning of statements that are a pragmatic consequence of the previous statement should be the first step to desemanticization process, like in:

> ¿Dónde te gustaría ir de vacaciones este verano?
> *Pues*, donde haga buen tiempo.
> (Where would you like to go on holidays this summer?
> *Well*, where it is good weather.)

In this case, the *cause* of choosing a place for holidays is on the weather (cause-effect relationship). Moreover, extending usage trough the sentence has contributed to the cohesive feature and increasing of the loss of its original syntactic function.

Pues is a discourse marker very common in conversational Spanish. In fact, it can easily be observed that a cross linguistic comparison between *pues* and English *well* could be done, as a result of desemanticization process which indicates that non-literal as well as literal meanings have been borrowed. The analysis of *pues* should have important implications for the study of the construction of meaning in spontaneous conversation.

Pues occurs in two syntactic positions. In the initial position of the utterance it is a *response marker*.

4.1. Response marker

(9)
A: ¿Qué te gustaría concluir acerca de lo que hemos hablado (el paro)?
   (What would you like to conclude about what we have been talking about?)
   (about unemployement)
B*: Pues*... que hay demasiadas personas en mi situación, en puestos de inferior calidad en relación con los estudios que han realizado.
   (*Well*... there is so much people in my situation, working in less-qualified positions according to the career they have already accomplished)

(10)
A: ¿Y qué opinas del sistema cooperativista de tu profesión?
   (And what do you think about cooperativism in your profession?)
B: *Pues*... si realmente, si eso fuera real, me parece una iniciativa interesante.
   (*Well*... if it was real, I think it would be an interesting purpose)

As a response marker, *pues* is used to frame responses to questions. Conclusive and consecutive meaning is retained when used as a marker and it might be argued that response markers are a function of a general tendency in the kinds of casual conversation. However, this does not suggest that the absence of *pues* at initial position is not usual but its increasing occurrence use fits neatly into the development of a general theory of discourse analysis. Exploring the effect of linguistic context in the interpretation of *pues* as a discourse marker, it is worth nothing that it is a cohesive element which complete oral discourse in a cognitive level being frequently derived from interrogative forms. Scholars (Lakoff, 1973; Pomerantz, 1984; Owen, 1983) report that *well* prefaces a response that is an insufficient answer to a question, disagreements, answers in which presuppositions or a prior question is cancelled, non-compliance with a request, rejection of an offer, or when neither option offered by the question provides a sufficient basis from which to choose an answer:

(11)
A: Are you from Philadelphia?
B: *Well*, I grew up out in the suburbs. And then I lived for about seven years up in upstate New York. And then I came back here t'go to College.

(Example from Schiffrin, 1987: 106)

Such a funtion may be performed by *pues*:

(12)
A: ¿Eres de Filadelfia?
B: *Pues*… crecí en los suburbios. Viví alrededor de siete años en el estado de Nueva York y luego volví para ir al instituto.

Nevertheless *pues* has a function not shared with *well*: it adds a coherence option by which speaker may expose consequences and causes from the topic inferred from the prior question, setting up a cohesive response and therefore mantaining the cooperative status of conversation. Although there are some differences between English marker *well* and Spanish marker *pues*, both are coherence options (Schiffrin, 1987: 103). Used recurrently at the beginning of the utterances both forms are desemanticized discourse markers, do not enter into a syntactic construction and should be socially constrained.

As a discourse marker, *pues* is also found in positions other than sentence-initial position, being a desemanticized logical connector which perform the individual support of what is stated in the utterance. Many analyses of conversation have focused on the routine sequencing of language in speech events, for example, the focus on the use of syntactic connectors as markers. In order to observe the extent to

which utterances conform to request-compliance and orientation-suggestion sequences, I examined the utterances as sequences in which the speakers'turn taking mantain harmony in the interaction. The structure of questions evidently influences the phrasing of answers, and the classification of types of questions and their respective types of answers can be foreseen to be applied to the systematic correlation found between connectors such conjunctions, adverbs and discourse functions. In supporting an argument during conversation, speakers use *pues* in an attempt to construct a new conversational norm. The choices of one form over another depend on the speaker's trying to take account of their values, beliefs and goals rational assessment of alternatives. A rational choice reflects a goal to optimize utterance interpretation. Examples of *pues* as *supporting an argument* function follow.

4.2. Supporting an argument during conversation

(13a)
En aquella época la gente podía salir a la calle tranquilamente, *pues...* es que antes había más seguridad.
(Years ago people could go out without problems (*pues*) (*well*) it was safer)

(14)
 Si aquí ya hay un paro tremendo *pues...* si traemos gente de fuera, *pues* mira... esto sería un imposible.
(Here there are so many people unnemployed... if we bring over people from abroad to work (*pues*) (*well*)... that would be impossible)

(15)
Yo creo que (el aborto) se debe permitir en algún caso, porque hay personas que tienen tres, cuatro o cinco hijos... no pueden evitarlos porque no tienen medios, *pues...* sí se puede permitir.
(I think abortion should be allowed in some cases, because there are people with three, four or five kids and they can not avoid having them because they do not know how... (*pues*) (*well*)... in that cases it should be allowed)

There are differences between *supporting an argument* and *introducing a response* functions; *pues* as a response marker has a marcative and cohesive nature; it is not preceded by a previous sentence and its use in utterance initial positions shows that it is a discourse marker that shifts discussion toward already shared topics. The s*upporting argument* function has not such a cohesive and discursive nature rather it can be analyzed as a subordinating particle which has not lost its syntactic function. In surveying the global distribution of *pues* among our examples, I noted a great discrepancy between the frequency of *pues* in its *supporting an argument* function, and in its grammatical causal function, as in:

(13b)
En aquella época la gente podía salir a la calle, *pues* antes había más seguridad.
(In that time people could go out without problems *pues* (*because*) it was safer)

The initial analysis showed a great number of grammatical cases of *pues* which were not considered in the analysis because of the absence of discursive properties. The very nature of the linguistic system should provide useful insights in determine when *pues* is a discourse marker and when it is not. I explore not only the linguistic context in which *pues* occurred but also the anchoring conditions which support the coherence option it performs. So utterances in which *pues* is embedded exhibit a markedly different discursive kind:

(16)
A. ¿Sabías que Ann iba a casarse en dos meses y ha suspendido la boda?
B1: Sí, se enfadó con el novio, *pues*... ¡qué va a hacer ahora!
B2: Sí, se enfadó con el novio,... ¡qué va a hacer ahora!
(A: Did you know that Ann will marry in two months and she has cancelled the wedding?
B1: Yes, I do, she got angry with her boyfriend... *well*... What she's going to do now!
B2: Yes, I do, she got angry with her boyfriend... What she's going to do now!)

Answers like B2 do not yield to coherence and cohesive rules. Conversational interaction should be stated by means of pragmatic procedures or even just by the sentence meaning. Supporting an argument is therefore performed in a more assertive, direct and singled out way.

The data consists of 362 answer sentences, 213 of which contain *pues* and 149 of which do not. If a speaker does not use such a discursive device it may be inferred that this is a sociolinguistic conditioned choice. Since all these discursive patterns should be interpreted in correlation with speaker variables such age, sex and class, my aim here is to explore the social mechanism that influence the use of *pues* in its two functions described earlier. Table 5 (see below) shows a general distribution of *pues*.

Women and the extreme sociocultural levels (lower and higher) are the factors that favor the use of *pues* as a cohesive option. Although not so significant, younger and older speakers use it more. Women show a higher probability of use of this discourse marker than men, showing up a more cohesive and coherent pattern in their answers. A crosstabulation might reveal why higher and lower sociocultural levels were significant between gender and sociocultural level (Table 6, see below).

Table 5. *Social distribution of* pues

	N	%	Probability
Gender			
Men	37/132	28	22
Women	176/230	77	78
Age			
20-34	62/108	57	52
35-55	78/141	55	47
>55	73/113	65	51
Sociocultural level			
Lower	91/118	77	65
Middle-low	58/100	58	55
Middle-high	18/68	26	16
Higher	46/76	61	70

Table 6. *Crosstabulations of gender and sociocultural level*

	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Lower	12/20	60	79/98	81
Middle low	0/25	0	18/43	42
Middle high	11/43	26	47/57	82
Higher	14/44	32	32/32	100

As shown in table 6, the highest percentage of usage of *pues* is found among women of higher sociocultural levels (82% and 100%) though results are similar to those of the lower (81%). As the results are quite regular, it clearly indicates that it is a use not strongly marked by sociocultural level but by gender. It therefore also lends further support to the idea that this cohesive and coherent option is correlated most specially to gender. However, the results does not support the claim that women often override the use of the forms more negotiating, assertive and prestigious variants due to their linguistic insecurity (Labov, 1972; Serrano, 1996a). In this study, I note that women in a higher sociocultural level display a cohesive device which strengthens their support of an argument during conversation, exhibiting an opposite discursive pattern from that of men. It should be stated that desire of mantain and hold forth status in speech community would lead women to use this discourse

marker in order to draw a less direct and more negotiating discourse. As for age groups and gender crosstabulation I have found that the use of *pues* stood out somewhat between younger and older speakers (Table 7).

Table 7. *Crosstabulations of gender and age groups*

	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
1° age group (20-34)	22/49	45	40/59	68
2ª age group (35-55)	11/52	21	67/68	75
3ª age group (>55)	4/31	13	69/82	84

Differences among age-groups are gradual and I cannot thus draw up significant conclusions regarding age. Men and women show up again opposite frequencies, being the older women and the youngest men the groups which primarily lead the use of *pues*; so one may conclude that it is again gender the variable more significantly associated with distribution of this discourse marker. Causal and consecutive meaning of *pues* acquire in this response contexts a function which links answer to question in opposed way showing up speaker's position as a consequence or a cause from the question, frequently anchoring in an interaction when an upcoming contribution is not fully consonant with prior coherence options accomplishing conversational coherence. As a communicative device, *pues* is used as a strategy to present answer in a more negotiating and kindly way, displaying a particular cognitive frame and very often different from that expected.

The fact that such strategy is used mainly by women should indicate that they utilize a less direct style of discourse when taking turns of conversation and less assertive when supporting an argument. In short, women seem to be more negotiable in their discourse.

5. Conclusions. *La verdad* and *pues* as markers of conversation

Results demonstrate the coordinative properties of these markers during conversation and their discursive meaning, though it may be said that they themselves do not convey social and or expressive meaning (Schiffrin, 1987: 318); rather should they be described according to their original meaning and discourse constraints. In this way, both *la verdad* and *pues* have a grammatical meaning which develops discursive traits to be in consonance with the means of discourse. Such

acquired meaning is *introductor of assertion* for *la verdad*, and the *causal-consecutive* for *pues*. Each marker is also conditioned by prosodic factors since the beginning of turn of a conversation must be linguistically marked by an element which indicates that a new conversation turn is open. Nicolle (1994: 678) states that the main function of markers is the prosodic one, given that it provides a permanent value of interactional negotiation, being a confirmation of that value (Tyler, 1994: 671).

The coordinative function of these markers it is also related to the communicative purpose. As I have pointed out, conversational interaction conveys some negotiation patterns which facilitate accessibility to communication. This is also firmly grounded in the observation of how participants themselves differentiate interactional units and how they use a catalogue of discourse markers called *accounts* which are embedded in utterances (Firth, 1995; Scott & Lyman, 1968: 46). *Accounts* are statements made to explain casual or untoward behaviour establishing a basis from which organizationally relevant action may be identified, challenged and discussed. They configure therefore the communicative interaction frame.

Another interesting aspect of discourse markers that deserves mention is *emotive meaning*. Caffi & Janey (1994) consider that feelings and language are intimately interconnected in speech and writing and pragmatics should focus broadly on emotive communication of linguistic units which turn into stylistically devices. During interaction, speakers tend to perceive others as 'opening up' or 'closing down', being responsive or reticent, making signs of approach or withdrawal. All such perceptions are rooted in and depend on emotive displays. According to these authors, almost any element is able to adopt that sense, but very clearly markers add to utterance an aditional pragmatic type which influence its final nature.

As observed, discourse sequences in which *la verdad* or *pues* are embedded or introduced are of a different discursive kind, since they are coherence options to be used or not. As Tyler notes (1994: 687), recognition of the independent contextualization cues is necessary in order to explain communicative purpose, and this is a feature that must to be taken into account when analyzing markers. Lindenfeld (1994) focuses on 'communication goal' as the main factor to describe discursive interaction defining it as a cognitive feature that provide contextual coordinates for utterances. Markers should also be described according to communication goals, trying to accomodate language to cognitive purposes. Markers perfectly constitute cases of communication goals introducing in the utterance to perform a discursive function, according with the desire of profiling communicative intention in a cognitive way. I can state therefore that *la verdad* is related with assertion purpose and *pues* with oppositive-causality.

Social correlations of markers should be defined according with discourse type and with the features described above so that presence or absence of each marker (*la*

verdad and *pues*) in similar contexts (for example question-answer) shape a sociolinguistic norm in which communicative goals, pragmatic meaning and social factors are involved. If social correlations of discourse markers are defined according to discourse type and the features described above, the nature of the speech act will be defined accurately.

From the distribution of these markers among different social categories we see that sex is the most salient one and it may be related to assertiveness and causality-opposition expression primarily with female gender. It is also worth nothing that gender was significantly associated with sociocultural levels (the lower to *la verdad* and the highers to *pues*) so one understand that men and women differ in socio-communicative behavior probably due to both social structure of speech community and parameters of linguistic interaction.

It should be pointed out that in an urban community like the studied, some social categories must use communicative strategies which enable contacts between members. This is very important in proffesions of middle and higher sociocultural levels (lawyers, doctors, professors, etc.) where a complete integration of women is not yet accomplished. Therefore women use such negotiating discursive devices in order to have and added social value (as *la verdad* and *pues*) that improve their communicative interaction. Contrarily, men do not use it to reinforce their relationship with other community members; rather the fact that they tend to use *la verdad* as *supporting an argument* embedded into sentence reveals a more assertive and less negotiating discursive pattern. This concurs with traditional findings regarding gender which show correlations between assertiveness and male gender, and negotiating devices and female gender.

Use of *la verdad* is explained as a way of introducing a response among women and lower and middle-low sociocultural levels. It is also a negotiating strategy considering that women do not share a set of sociolinguistic assumptions through common ethnic-identity with interlocutor. In such circumstances more negotiation is required (Dubois & Horvath, 1992: 134). In order to support an argument, women introduce their utterance with a marker that makes them more negotiator. Like *pues*, it is a negotiating coherence option which should be considered an assertive unit which states and reinforces a not fully consonant with prior question or simply a personal position. The fact that lower sociocultural level women use these cohesive markers should indicate that they possibly have a kind of insecurity in supporting a position when an interaction with other linguistic community members is accomplished. Such a non similarity between members should also come across members of the same social level, so I state that it is related to an individual social auto-perception (Serrano, 1996a).

I finally consider that the most salient sociolinguistic finding that I could draw up from the analysis of *la verdad* and *pues* as a discourse markers are the different

socialization of performing discursive patterns among men and women, being basically in communicative interaction where such linguistic behaviours acquire interesting sociolinguistic constrainers. Moreover the fact that linguistic forms carry out those coherence patterns evidence that being able to demonstrate that aspects of linguistic forms affect coherence would be an important discovery, as Green & Morgan (1981) states. It also cue that form and function are not always unidirectional.

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