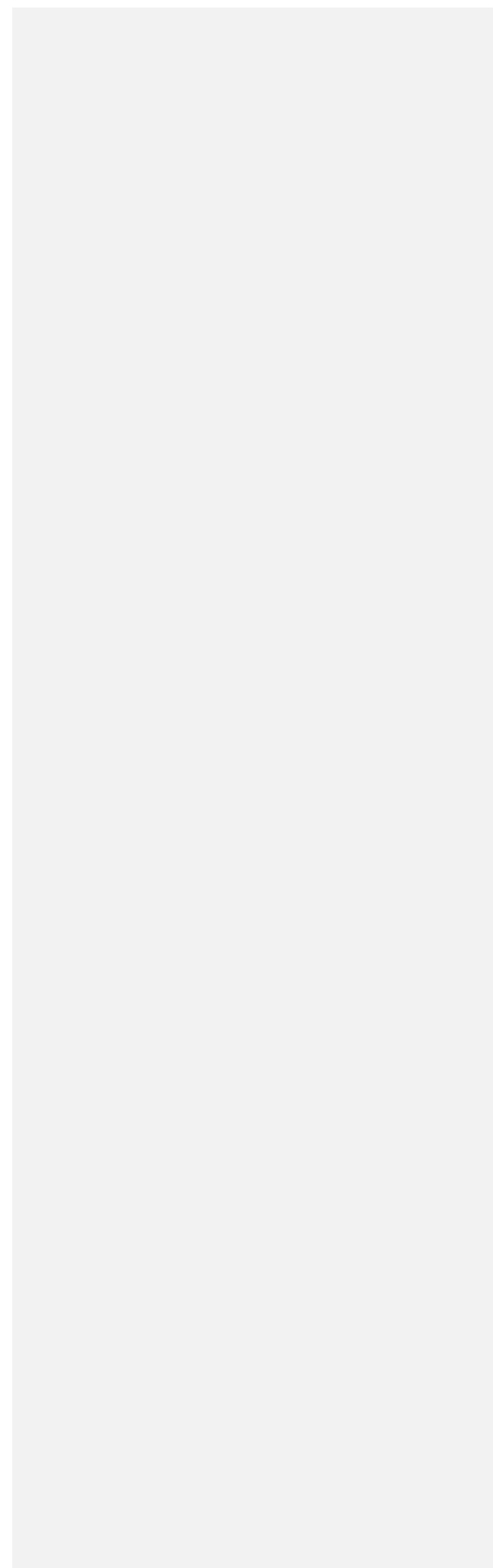


Elisa Corino
Università di Torino
Words : 8958
Characters : 55860



Learners and reformulative discourse markers.

A case study on the use of *cioè* by students of Italian as a foreign language.

Abstract

Starting from the results of a previous study on reformulative discourse markers (Corino 2012) the different functions and semantic features of the Italian discourse marker *cioè* will be identified in order to outline a possibly clear framework of its many functions and usages. The outcomes will serve as a basis to answer to three main research questions: 1) Is there some relevant relationship between the learner's mother tongue and the use of *cioè*? 2) What points need to be taught to learners of Italian as a second language (ISL) in order to improve the use of DMs? 3) What functions of *cioè* are more or less used by learners of ISL in contrast with native speakers? The distribution of the DM in texts written by ISL learners, collected in the learner corpora VALICO and ADIL2, will be analyzed looking for regularities in acquisition and any evidence of language transfer from the learners' mother tongues.

Key words Italian as L2, reformulative discourse markers, *cioè*, explicature, learners

1. Reformulative discourse markers

Reformulation is one of the privileged means of discourse organization, implying a process of reinterpretation and re-elaboration of the contents of an utterance. This is meant to facilitate the understanding or to narrow the scope of an utterance with the result of ensuring cohesion and facilitating discourse by reducing any possible communicative defects of a text.

Methodological and theoretical mainstreams dealing with discourse markers (DM), and with reformulative discourse markers (RM) in particular, are twofold: on the one hand the functional-pragmatic approach which involves elements related to discourse coherence (Schiffrin 1987, Fraser 1990), thus focusing on the relationship between discourse units and the role of DMs within the text, on the other hand the semantic approach (Franckel & Paillard 2008) proposing a definition where DMs are defined through their formal properties and the discursive status they attribute to a sequence.

As for the notion of reformulation, it originated in French studies (Gülich & Kotshi 1983, Roulet 1987) and has been considered from a contrastive perspective in a number of works on Romance languages such as Italian (e.g. Rossari 1994) and Spanish (Fuentes 1987, Pons 2000, Garcés Gómez 2008 among others), whereas no systematic approach seems to have been carried out for English (cf. Murillo 2004 on English - Spanish reformulation), and an even bigger dearth can be noticed in German research (except for Robles I Sabater 2014 or Onea & Volodina 2011).

Notwithstanding the different frameworks of analysis, "the reasons that motivate reformulation in any language seem to sit well with the interactive nature of communication itself" (Del Saz Rubio 2003: 5) and there is a general agreement that RM are always markers of the explicit: as Portolés (1996: 211) states, "connectives join semantically and pragmatically two segments of the discourse in such a way that the

inferences obtained are determined by the two members, while RMs present their host member as the new perspective from which the previous member is to be interpreted". When the addresser feels that the addressee does not have enough accessible conceptual information for the derivation of the intended contextual effects, they may provide these contextual assumptions to facilitate the process of interpretation. In other words, implicated or contextual premises may be made explicit (Blackmore 1997).

Reformulation is thus triggered by the speaker's desire to fulfill their communicative goals in the negotiation of meaning and to overcome any communicative problems that may be encountered in situations where the first formulation may require further explanation. In such a case reformulation prevents, signals or even can solve problems of misunderstanding between speakers, thus having a functional-pragmatic role defined through its metatextual and metacommunicative functions. These functions encompass paraphrasing an expression, recasting the intended meaning, as well as revising the implications of a prior message or some aspect of it in order to render a reformulation that is more in accordance with the speaker's communicative goals or intentions. Plus, RMs are fundamental in syntactic collaborative discourse, i.e. sequences where the syntactic elements that modify the head of the reformulation are co-elaborated by the speakers during their turns, thus involving both the semantic-syntactic and the interactional level, and serve as interactional means of turn taking or as fillers (Schiffrin 1987, Fraser 1990, Bazzanella 1995). The idea expressed by Blackmore (1993, 1996) about the relevance of the point of view stresses exactly how RMs contribute to explicit communication, either to higher level explicatures, in discourse sequence uses, or to explicatures, in nominal apposition uses, assigning a new perspective of interpretation to the prior discourse unit.

RMs are productive expressions across different languages, though there is little interlingual correspondence between them, implying a significant number of synonyms in different languages that encode concepts expressing the speaker's intentions. This variety, along with the proverbial polysemy and polyfunctionality of DMs, proves to be one of the issues for learners transferring forms and functions from one language to another. In the following sections, the functions of the Italian *cioè*¹ - whose function is mainly reformulative, though not the only one - will be analyzed with reference to the Italian NUNC² corpus in order to define an outline for the analysis of its tokens in learners' varieties.

The framework of analysis of *cioè* in its reformulative function aligns to the previously mentioned functional-pragmatic description, with particular reference to the metatextual functions, where semantic value and pragmatic aspect are strictly related and interact with syntactic properties at the sentence level, connecting utterances and attributing truth value to contiguous segments.

In particular, this framework includes its pragmatic functions and semantic values by merging "traditional" grammar (Seriani 1988), Ferrini's (1985) study, and Manzotti's (1999) remarks within a functional taxonomy (Corino 2012).

¹The Italian *cioè* could be translated with a number of English equivalents depending on the context, thus meaning *that is, namely, I mean...*

² Newsgroup UseNet Corpus, a suite of freely available online corpora based on newsgroups created at the University of Turin: www.corpora.unito.it (Cf. Barbera, Corino, Onesti 2007).

2. The reference corpus VALERE

The first part of this study is based on the Newsgroups UseNet Corpora (NUNC, with reference to the Italian subcorpus VALERE³) and is meant to enrich the existing research with new data coming from a relatively new genre of language, i.e. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC).

As Cerruti & Onesti (2013) point out, contemporary Italian is undergoing a restandardization process, which is caused by the mutual interrelation between spoken and written language. Such process is characterized by the acceptance in writing of peculiar traits of speech, and by the progressive acceptance of previously non-standard features into the standard variety. Markers of low varieties (belonging to very informal and poorly elocuted speech or to the so-called ‘folk’ Italian) are significantly emerging also in the variety of educated speakers and in a quite controlled style.

Netspeak is recently playing a role in such processes and affecting the Italian restandardization process. The aim of the VALERE corpus is to explore this influential new hybrid language, which is basically a written one, though showing strong oral traits at a time. In particular, VALERE is composed of two subcorpora: NUNC-A and NUNC-B, differing from each other from the point of view of formality, respectively the former including posts on science, culture, politics, engineering, medicine (74.695.600 tokens), and the latter being an informal control corpus, including messages on a wide variety of topics: chitchat, pub talk, playing around, etc. (6.639.324 tokens).

The choice of this corpus as reference to analyze the features of a particular DM – the Italian *cioè* – was partly due to the interest revolving around CMC (cf. Corino 2012), but most of all to the aforementioned opportunity offered by Newsgroups to study different varieties of language within the same textual context. The diamesic question intersects the diaphasic variable, thus moving the borders of the research area from a preferred oral data set to a blurred space where the written text is an on-going process and the result often depends on the collaboration between participants, inferencing, interpretation and generally speaking discourse strategies.

The VALERE corpus allows us to analyze DMs in both formal and informal contexts, in both written and spoken (though written, or better ‘liquid’ as Fiorentino 2004 calls it) language. The development of discourse in its allocutive aspects, structural organization, interactional relationships such as agreement/disagreement, hedges, or turn taking, takes place in a written virtual environment which makes use of linguistic structures, such as constituent order, anaphors, or punctuation, which are traditionally ascribed to the spoken varieties.

The reference corpus of Italian native speakers will serve as a base to account for the different usages of the same DM in different contexts, mainly ordered on a continuum ranging from more to less formal and from “more written” to “more spoken” varieties, focusing on the domain of use where the Italian DM *cioè* can operate, namely, the content, the speech act and the epistemic domain of use, with the aim of sketching an

³ Progetto VALERE: Formal Varieties in Newsgroups of European Languages: Structural Features, Interlinguistic Comparison and Teaching Applications, founded within “Bando regionale per progetti di ricerca in materia di Scienze umane e sociali” (approvato con Det. Dir. 151 del 7/8/2009), coordinated by Massimo Cerruti.

exhaustive description which might also serve as a base for a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon in teaching and learning contexts.

The intersection of written and oral varieties in newsgroups is comparable to the register variation that can be observed in learners' texts, which in this particular case is due to a lack of competence in register management, but still show features of oral language along with typical written unmarked structures.

In the next paragraphs the analysis will be guided by the following two research questions:

- a. Are there regularities in the acquisition of the reformulative marker *cioè*?
- b. Is there any evidence of language transfer in the use of *cioè* by learners of Italian with different L1s?

But first, prior to the quantitative and qualitative investigation of the learners' corpora, some introductory remarks on the properties and functions of *cioè* in the VALERE corpus will be made.

2.1. *Cioè*: contexts and functions in the Italian VALERE corpus

Manzotti (1999) refers to the adverb-conjunction *cioè* as a case of interlinguistic research doggedness, as it has been studied in its interlingual equivalents in an in-depth way in more than one language (cf. Casado Velarde 1991 for Spanish, Kotschi 1990, Khachatryan 2013, and Vassiliadou 2013 for French, Schiffirin 1987 for English among others). The Italian *cioè* is a particularly interesting case study, as it is a typical multifunctional DM which which seems not to be particularly influenced by mode (written/spoken) or level of formality, as it may perform more than one function irrespective of the context (though its uses are more varied in informal language)

A previous study (Corino 2012) shed light not only on some predictable differences between *cioè* in formal and informal contexts, but pointed out some shades of meaning and functions that had been neglected so far.

The corpus for analysis was the VALERE corpus in its NUNC-A part (with NUN-B as a control corpus for informal language). In the formal part of the reference corpus (NUNC-A) the majority of occurrences is explicative (with propositional antecedents), thus aiming at reformulating concepts and ideas ; in the informal section of the corpus (NUNC-B) numerous rhetorical occurrences with intensifying function were retrieved, i.e. the so-called "dummy" *cioé*, which is not necessarily framed in the theoretical outline (cf. for instance Serianni 1988, Ferrini 1985, Manzotti 1999). Some of the most interesting observations deal with the consecutive and modal value of the RM, with its illocutionary force and its textual functions.

As reference studies document, a major function of *cioè* is explicative and in a Computer Mediated Communication environment, where there is no face to face interaction and direct extralinguistic feedback is not possible, a significant presence of a DM which can be used as pragmatic signal of reception, comprehension, and turn taking is highly predictable.

Unsurprisingly, in the formal section of NUNC the vast majority of the occurrences of *cioè* is explicative: the marker is used at the clause level as qualifier or to specify an appositive element, often in a parenthetical structure, with *cioè* introducing the modifier.

Commentato [AM1]: credo che qui non sia molto chiaro se il registro conta o no. Sopra dici che in fondo non è molto importante, mentre qui sottolinei che ci sono delle differenze.

In relatively formal texts the additive relation often has a defining function, as in (1) where *cioè*⁴ introduces a clarifying comment on the significance of the antecedent.

(1) *All' opposto, è idealistica la federazione degli interessi borghesi , cioè la teoria del superimperialismo che Kautsky formulò a inizio 900 e che fu distrutta da Lenin .*

(‘On the other hand, the federation of bourgeois interests is utopian, cioè the theory of superimperialism formulated by Kautsky at the beginning of the XX cent. and that was destroyed by Lenin.’)

Considering the referential and argumentative functions of the texts, the specification introduced by *cioè* is usually meant to support an argument, by expanding it, connecting passages and contributing to the topic-comment progression.

Cioè is also particularly suitable in specification and qualification relation. While the two items linked by *ciò* are essentially equivalent, the phrase introduced by the DM is richer in details, as in (2).

(2) *Invece ideologicamente , cioè nelle sovrastrutture giuridiche e morali , c'è stata un' evoluzione enorme*
(‘Instead, ideologically, cioè in legal and moral superstructures, there has been a ‘huge evolution’)

From a structural point of view the RM can be positioned in both a medial – as in incidental utterances – and an opening position which seems to be related to its communicative values. As the opening word, *ciò* carries the most varied values: from rhetorical to explicative, from reformulative to corrective, but it is also used as pragmatic hedge and as device to give coherence to latent logical connections. In this position the RM is moderately present in the formal component of corpus (NUNC-A), whereas it is rather abundant in texts bending towards a more dialogical organization, where register is less controlled than in contexts where the marker is found also in other syntactic positions and with other functions.

(3) *>Aspettiamo la formulazione parlamentare, poi vedremo di cosa vanno cianciando . Aspettiamo e vediamo ...*

ciò ti rendi conto che hai scritto un mucchio di cazzate e batti in ritirata ?

(‘> Let's wait for the parliamentary formulation, then we will see what are babbling about. Wait and see

...

ciò, do you realize that you've written a bunch of crap and you're beating a retreat?’)

As opening word in (3), *ciò* seems to act as a rhetorical device, as a filler with no proper semantic value, which could be easily omitted without compromising the text's functionality. However, a closer look at *ciò* in example (3) reveals that it also performs a specific text-structuring function: it works as a demarcative that has a specific function: it is actually a demarcative that structures discourse introducing a new perspective and arguing against the previous move. Therefore, from the pragmatic point of view, *ciò* is a turn taking post of disagreement which stresses a divergence of views.

Such an example highlights the illocutionary force of another use of *ciò*: the ‘argumentative’ or ‘polemical’

⁴ As *ciò* can have different English translations, according to its contextual functions, it will be quoted in Italian also in the gloss and its meaning will be discussed within the body of the article.

discourse markers in another and what is more a common origin does not mean that forms and functions can be learned with no trouble, the typological proximity can be a source of negative transfer instead.

Pernas et al (2011:68) pointed out that the attention devoted to DMs in language teaching is still very limited, and even the most common and valued syllabi for the Italian language do not include them, or at least they do not thoroughly investigate the matter. For instance Benucci (2007) does not mention them in her syllabus, Lo Duca does, but her work is purposely targeted at a rather specific audience, i.e. Erasmus university students, and even the Profilo della Lingua Italiana (Spinelli & Parizzi 2010) fails in giving account of all the values and contexts where *cioè* might be used.

An analysis of the occurrences of two different written learner corpora (VALICO and ADIL2) will examine the distribution of *cioè* through different levels of competence in L2, analyzing the functions of the DM since the early stages of acquisition and comparing them to the shades of meaning and different functions it can assume in the discourse of native speakers.

3.1 *Cioè* in (Gran)VALICO

The first corpus considered is VALICO in its broader version GranVALICO (Corino & Marelo i.p, Marelo et al. 2011) which includes a greater variety of textual genres - argumentative, narrative and expositive – similar to the one presented by ADIL2 (Palermo 2009, cf. 3.3), thus offering a reliable base for possible comparisons between learner corpora, therewith allowing a possibly consistent generalization of the results.

Although the distribution of texts per language is not completely balanced there is a relatively minor variation⁵, as the number of texts is stabilized around the 300 texts for each L1. Except for the Romanian group, which is made of only 72 texts, it is therefore possible to sketch a quantitative comparison of the data extracted from the corpus.

Figure 3 displays the occurrences of *cioè* in texts by learners of different mother tongues: it is used by Polish learners, followed by French, Japanese and English, there is a rather significant amount of informants who did not declare their mother tongue though and it is difficult to trace these texts back to their origins in terms of L1 with certainty.

⁵ The corpus is freely searchable online at www.valico.org. As for the distribution of texts per language within the corpus and a more accurate description of its architecture and contents cf. Corino& Marelo i.p, Marelo et al. 2011, Corino & Marelo 2009. Here some general figures are reported: GranVALICO - Tokens 672,552; Types 38,840; Lemmas 12,764; Texts 3,804. VALICO - Tokens 237,431; Types 15,742; Lemmas 5,867; Texts 1,689.

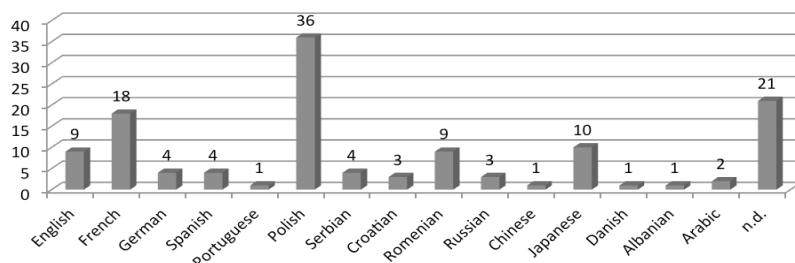


Figure3: Distribution of *cioè* according to the learners' L1

As for the textual genre, the texts written by the large Polish group of advanced students are mostly argumentative, expressing the authors' position about GMOs, euthanasia, and other social issues, such as the condition of prisoners. Third year English mother tongue learners deal with the very same sort of text, discussing the relationship between Church and society or the role of economics. Both the French and the Spanish subcorpora – apart from the level of proficiency - collect descriptions or expositive compositions relating about facilities and leisure activities in a particular area, and almost all students narrated the comic strips expressly designed to elicit the data which were brought together to implement VALICO. There seems to be no relation between the textual genre and the presence of *cioè*: the DM is fairly distributed in narrative, expositive, and argumentative texts, and usually carries out the same explanatory function. Similar results are mirrored in the ADIL2 written texts, where the prescriptive genre is further added to narrative, argumentative, and expositive texts.

This uniformity might be attributed to the medium together with the diaphasic dimension, as both written corpora draw the same outcomes, whereas some of the functions that emerged from the native corpus analysis – with particular reference to the corrective reformulation or the topic shift - are to be found in the oral corpora only, and in a limited amount.

As for the influence of direct contact with Italian, data are surprisingly balanced between occurrences produced by learners who spent a period of time in Italy and learners who never had the chance to have direct contact with Italian native speakers in the Italian context. Only some of the columns represented in Figure 4 show a relevant difference with a significant prevalence of *cioè* produced by those who were in Italy, as happens in particular for the case of English learners, in other cases, i.e. the Polish, the Romanian or the Japanese students distribution is inverted.

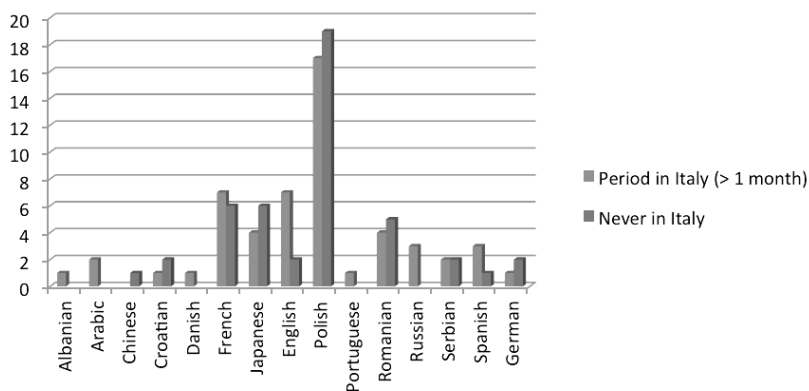


Figure4: Distribution of *ciòè* according to the learners' L1

What is again to be noticed, though, is that the stay in Italy might have influenced the quantity of *ciòè* used in the texts but not its reformulative functions since they are consistently used by both groups, as illustrated by (7) / (7a) and (8) / (8a), which are all examples of the same explicative function.

(7) *dopo tutto , è l' economia che ci fornisce i mezzi per vivere , ciòè i soldi attraverso i nostri lavori .*
L1 English/ 3rd year/ 12,Trieste⁶

(‘after all, it is the economy that gives us the means to live, *ciòè* the money through our works’)

(7a) *Neanche mi sembra male avere un senso migliore del proprio valore , ciòè sentire soddisfatto di aver fatto qualcosa di generoso .*
L1 English/ 3rd year/ 0,0

(‘Even it seems not too bad to have a better sense of self-worth, *ciòè* you feel satisfied to have done something generous’)

(8) *Quest 'uomo grassottino possiede diversi ristoranti nella capitale "des gônes " , ciòè Lione in Francia .*
L1 French/ 3rd year/ 9,Torino

(‘this chubby man owns several restaurants in the capital "des gônes ", *ciòè* Lyon in France’)

(8a) *dice queste parole perché un compare lo ha trovato una botte/guccia dove può fare questo che ha sempre voluto , ciòè li gelati .*
L1 French/ 3rd year/ 0,0

(‘he says these words because a guy found him in a shop where he can do this he has always wanted, *ciòè* ice creams’)

Excluding a large amount of occurrences that cannot be traced back to the yearly course metadata, expectations about progression in terms of quantitative occurrences in the texts are corroborated by the statistics: as Figure 5 points out *ciòè* is mostly used starting from year three of the course, although some data are also present in earlier stages of proficiency.

⁶ The captions of the examples report the L1 of the student, the yearly course in the Italian language, the amount of months (s)he has spent in Italy and the place where (s)he has been.

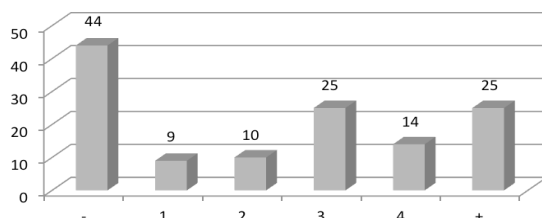


Figure5: Distribution of *cioè* according to year of course

The learners who make use of *cioè* since their first year are from the Polish and Japanese subcorpora and we can observe a progression within their use of the DM, noticing that the occurrences increase together with the development of learners' proficiency. A closer look to their teaching/learning context and materials might explain the early appearance of *cioè* in such particular groups of students, though this is not the purpose of this paper.

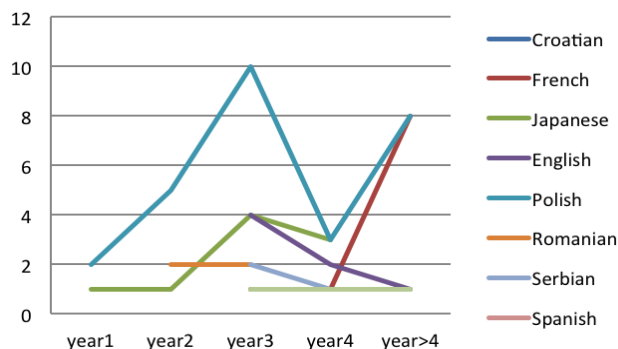


Figure6: Distribution of *cioè* according to yearly course and L1

Figure 6 offers a more detailed graphics of the uses of *cioè* by learners coming from different L1s and combines them with the yearly course proving that the RM generally comes out at the third year also for students coming from L1 which are typologically close to Italian, such as the Spanish or the French, have a rather unambiguous correspondent, such as German and its overused *d.h.(das heisst)*, or have a large variety of popular possibilities that should suggest a transfer to the L2, such as English and its many correspondents (*that is, actually, namely, i.e - id est -...*)

3.1.1 *Cioè* in (Gran)VALICO: a qualitative analysis

The main value of *cioè* used by learners in (Gran)VALICO is the explicative. It assumes a series of semantic and textual functions which are consistently spread throughout the corpus, meaning that it is not possible to attribute particular functions to definite learners' profiles (L1, level, contact with native Italian).

As a textual device the RM contributes to the text cohesion, linking informative units and having anaphoric functions with explicative or additive value.

(9), (10) and (11) are representative of the explicative function selected by learners who need to specify the semantic scope of a term, especially where the learner seems to doubt of the meaning of a certain word or phrase (*primo precedente*, *luogo estivale*, *depenalizzata*) and feels compelled to give an explanation.

(9) *Ha affermato che i criminali criminali dovrebbero essere trattati più rigorosamente , adeguatamente al loro comportamento più primo precedente (cioè quando erano ancora in libertà)*

L1 English, 1st year

(‘He said the criminal criminals should be treated more strictly, adequately to their more previous behavior (cioè, when they were still at large)’)

(10) *la mia città , durante l ' estate , non è un luogo estivale , cioè la gente non resta nella città poichè va in montagna o al mare .*

L1 Romanian, 2nd year

(‘My home town, during the summer, is not a summery place, cioè people do not stay in the city as they go to the mountains or the sea’)

(11) *all ' iniziativa diversi parlamentari . Secondo alcuni l ' eutanasia , se non legalizzata , deve essere depenalizzata , cioè resa non punibile .*

L1 Polish, 3rd year

(‘on the initiative of several MPs. According to some people euthanasia, if not legalized, should be decriminalized, cioè be made not punishable’)

There are evidences where explicatures assume modal values by expressing how an action is performed and thus fulfilling an illustrative function.

(12) *Un pò più in là una ragazza chiama qualcuno cioè alza la mano , accanto a lei sta una donna e un ragazzo con l ' acconciatura particolare .*

L1 Serbian, 4th year

(‘A little further on a girl calls someone cioè she raises her hand, next to her is a woman and a boy with the the unusual hairstyle.’)

Learners' and natives' texts share the same syntactic and semantic functional patterns: both occurrences in (13) – taken from the NUNC – and (14) – extracted from VALICO – resume the antecedent pronoun, thus being a case of denomination.

(13) *La seconda notizia di politica del Tg2 delle 13 , 30 , siamo noi , cioè l ' Unità , che adesso ha tra i suoi finanziatori , indovinate chi ? , Silvio Berlusconi*

NUNC

(‘The second political news of TG2 at 13, 30, it's us, cioè L'Unità, which now has among its lenders, guess who? Silvio Berlusconi’)

(14) *dove Antonia cercava il regno . Lui cadde dall ' albero il che disturbò l ' uccello . Loro , cioè , Antonio e il suo cane continuarono la strada*

L1 English/ 1st year

(‘where Antonia was looking for the kingdom. He fell from tree which disturbed the bird. They, cioè, Antonio and his dog kept on going’)

If the two examples are syntactically alike, they are not completely identical in their functional-semantic function, as a slightly different reading of the reasons that motivate the presence of the RM in the text can be given. The native uses *cioè* in order to identify the pronoun (*noi=I’Unità*) in a context that is commonly shared by the speakers, thus the incidental phrase has an appositive value that specifies something which is already known.

The learner uses the interpolated clause to anchor one of the referents of the text that might be difficult to integrate in the anaphoric chain, so the main purpose of this *cioè* is to guide the reader through a reference pattern which is possibly ambiguous because of the number of personal pronouns and noun phrases that can serve as antecedents. It is definitely a strategy carried out by a learner who is insecure about the textual relationships among the units and therefore uses a specification in order to overcome any communicative problems he thinks could occur.

Even if the use of commas in (14) could suggest a use of the DM leaning towards the mostly oral reformulating function or that of filler, it is rather likely that it is just a matter of punctuation misuse which seems not to be linked to the students’ L1, as it is a common mistake not only among Spanish learners, whose mother tongue’s punctuation norms allow such a use, but also among Serbian, French or English students.

The overextension of commas can be observed in (15), that has an explicative value with *cioè* directly introducing an identity (*servizio = ristoranti, piscine, bagno termale*), thus making the use of the second comma pointless, or in (16) where the comma brakes the nominal parenthetical apposition, shifted at the end of the sentence instead of occurring right after referent (*tipo di aiuto*) it is meant to identify, thus signalling a possible structural transfer from English.

(15) *Chi ha bisogno di riposo troverà spiagge che vengono messe al servizio del turismo , cioè , troverete servizi , ristoranti , piscine e qualche bagno termale.*

L1 Spanish S, year ?

(‘Whoever needs rest will find beaches that are put at the service of tourism, cioè, you will find facilities, restaurants, swimming pools and some thermal bath’)

(16) *Poi era anche arrabbiata perche questo tipo di aiuto non le piaceva , cioè , la violenza .*

L1 Serbian, 3rd year

(‘She was also angry because she did not like this kind of help, cioè, violence’)

Another erroneous use of the pattern, *cioè*, is its presence in contexts where it functions as a substitute of the explicative colon, as in the following examples.

(17) *Purtroppo , ho già avuto due esperienze così sfortunate , cioè , due amiche sono state rubate mentre erano in autobus ; gli hanno rubato i loro portafogli*

(‘Unfortunately, I have already had two unfortunate experiences, cioè, two friends were stolen [sic] while they were on the bus; they stole their wallets’)

(18) *Tutto quello che portavano con loro si è trovato sul marciapiede , cioè le sue spese , la carne , le boteglia si sono rotte ... #* L1 French, year >4
(‘Everything they were carrying with them was fell on the footpath, cioè his purchases, meat, botles broke ...’)

A good and conscious use of *ciòè* between commas is the one occurring in (19) which is the first reformulative occurrence in an argumentative text and is to be found in the production of a third year student who spent a period in Italy⁷. In this case the parenthetical use of the RM is justified by its textual function, explaining a concept with a whole proposition and assigning a new perspective of interpretation to the prior discourse unit.

(19) *Ma nonostante tutte queste polemiche il concetto degli OGM resta ancora poco " tras|parente " , cioè , anche se si svolgono molte ricerche , i loro risultati raramente spiegano in maniera soddisfacente le vere caratteristiche* L1 Polish, 3rd year
(‘But despite all these controversies the concept of GMOs is still little "trans|parent", cioè, even if you carry out a lot of research, their results rarely satisfactorily explain the true characteristics ’)

Eventually, another peculiar example of this string is a reformulation used to explicit an inference that is not necessarily predictable, actually correcting the first utterance: in (20) being a mother does not imply being married, but being married and having a family implies having children.

(20) *Luna è la mamma di sei piccolini rani , cioèè , lei sta sposata e ha una famiglia . Paolo intende che Luna non può lasciare la sua famiglia .* L1 Spanish, 4th year
(‘Luna is the mother of six little frogs, cioèè, she stays married and has a family. Paolo means that Luna cannot leave her family’)

From an informative point of view the reformulation in (20) also combines with an additive function, as the segment introduced by *ciòè* further develops the information referred to *Luna*, the topic of the sentence.

A similar case is (21), where the use of *ciòè* does not seem to be fully consistent neither with its inherent features nor with its use by natives, thus marking a precise use by learners only. It deals with an additive reformulation which goes from the particular to the general and excludes complete semantic identity between the two segments linked by the marker, even though this identity might have been in the learner’s intentions instead: beginners are just a subset of the people interested in the Romanian language, that is to say not all of these people are at initial levels, even if it is more likely that beginners are interested in language courses (cf. (20)). In this occurrence the use of *ciòè* is redundant, it is wrong not only because of the semantic relation implied by the use of the marker, but also as it involves the syntactic structure of the utterance together with its informative organization. The best target option might have inverted the two segments, proceeding from

⁷ A more unambiguous example of reformulation is

(19a) *Questo ha tenuto il cilindro di Signor Grassi , cioèè Signor Grassi aveva dimenticato il suo cilindro a casa e il suo domestico era tanto attento e ha voluto portare*
(‘This has kept Mr. Grassi’s cylinder, cioèè Mr. Grassi had forgotten his cylinder at home and his servant was so thoughtful and wanted to bring’)
which though does not indicate the yearly course of the student

the general (the people interested in the Romanian language) to the more specific (especially for beginners), and definitely avoiding the use of *cioè*.

(21) *corsi e sui seminari di lingua romena . # Li organizzano anche corsi di estate specialmente per i principianti , cioè per gli stranieri che sono interessati a imparare la lingua romena .*

L1 Romanian, 3rd year

(‘courses and seminars in the Romanian language. # They also organize summer courses especially for beginners, cioè foreigners who are interested in learning the Romanian language’)

By dealing with expliciting inferences and using reformulation to add pieces of information to the text, (22) develops a defining function where *cioè* acts as a signal of explanation that establishes a causative implicative relation between the related elements

(22) *Comunque la chiesa crede ancora che la Domenica dovrebbe permettere Domenica come ' il giorno del signore ' cioè differente dagli altri .*

L1 English, 4th year

(‘However, the church still believes that Sunday should allow Sunday as ‘the day of the Lord’ cioè different from others’)

Finally there are some inferences that are related to the cultural realia or fashion trends and that are more difficult to detect and identify as such as they are anchored to a particular context. In (23), even though there certainly is a relation between the current trend – the Fifties-like style – and the statement about its positive impact, *cioè* charges the utterance with a truth value that cannot necessarily be generalized. (23) rather seems to express the author’s personal point of view, or it can even be interpreted as a case of interlingual interference due to the polysemy and multifunctionality the English RM *that is*, having *cioè* among its Italian translations, but being also the literal means used to introduce a relative clause, which seems to be the case here.

(23) *fanno delle magliette con logo di diner o d ' alberghi fittizii , nello stilo degli anni 1950 , cioè considerato carino . Ma questo mi pare un po ' sciocco ; preferirei portare o una maglietta autentica o niente*

L1 English, 3rd year

(‘they make T-shirts with logos of diner or fictitious hotel, in the style of the 1950s, cioè thought cute. But to me this seems a bit silly; I’d rather wear either an authentic shirt or nothing’)

A certain number of uses are to be found in the learners’ texts only, and seem to be deviations rather due to the attribution of a wrong functional or semantic scope, i.e. the DM is used as a consecutive linker that states a cause-effects relationship meaning *so, therefore* (24), as introducer of a concessive clause (25) meaning *although*.

(24) *Avendo paura la donna seduta a questa tavola ha lasciato cadere per terra il guinzaglio del cane cioè il cane si è fuggito .*

L1 Polish, 2nd year

(‘The frightened woman sitting at the table let go of the lead and the dog ran off cioè the dog was escaped’)

(25) *Questi giorni non potevo fare gioco con mie amice , cioè vorrei passare tanto tempo con le amice .*
L1 Japanese, 4th year

(‘These days I could not play with my friends, cioè I would spend so much time with the friends’)

Among the possible causes of mistake made by learners, interference is certainly one of the main issues students have to deal with. Considering the fuzzy framework sketched by the multiple uses and functions of the DM *ciòè* and the actual lack of fixed bijection between Italian and any other L1s of those who produced the corpus, one could assume that interference would play a major role. The data do not confirm the hypothesis as there is little evidence that the learners’ L1 influences the use of the marker. The only clear case of interference is to be analyzed in (26), where an advanced German student collocates *ciòè* with the verb *dire*, which is visibly a sort of hybrid calque on the German *das heisst*.

(26) *Puio si perdona chi va a cercare dentro un gran albero senza cuore cioè dire ha un tronco vuoto .
Mentre Puio cerca cerca di là Muffi ha visto una cosa molto interessante e* L1 German, 4th year
(‘Puio forgives those who go to seek within large heartless tree cioè say it has a hollow trunk. While Puio looks looks for beyond Muffi has seen a very interesting and’)

3.2 ADIL2 as a “control corpus”

As a balanced written learner corpus ADIL2, though smaller than VALICO, can be used as a control corpus to compare results and verify if any generalization can be made.

As can be observed from the graph, unlike VALICO, occurrences of *ciòè* are already to be found in the first years, but, similarly to what was observed for the other corpus, the progression is relatively continuous and the use of DMs by proficient learners is considerable.

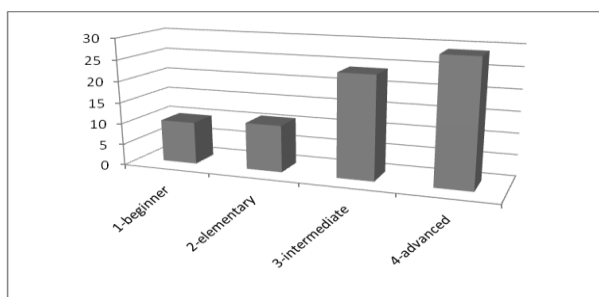


Figure7: Distribution of *ciòè* according to yearly course and proficiency level

As for the distribution and use of *ciòè* among learners with different L1s, it proves to be mostly used by Japanese learners, followed by the English group, thus partially aligning the figures of ADIL2 with the occurrences extracted from (Gran)VALICO (cf. Figure3), which displayed a relatively high use of the DM by Japanese students as well. This particular result should be further analyzed as there seems to be a relation

between the use of *cioè* and the Japanese language; looking at the data in Figure 8 displaying a relevant use of *cioè* also by Korean, Chinese and Thai mother tongue learners it could be assumed that the core question has to deal with the typological distance between the languages, which might make learners insecure, thus stressing their need to make their communication more effective and clear. This explanation though does not account for the high use made by English students and by a group that is absent in (Gran)VALICO, the Greek one. On the contrary, there seems to be an inversion in tendency as for the Polish learners, who proved a high use of *cioè* in their texts, and for the French subcorpus that was the second in terms of occurrences.

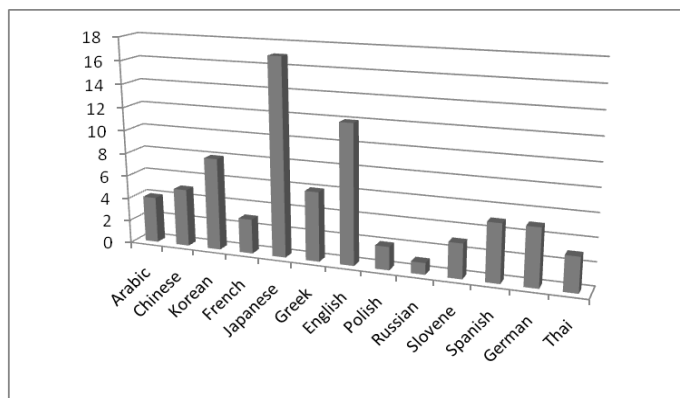


Figure8: Distribution of *cioè* according to the learners' L1

The observation of the quantitative data so far suggest that there is no reliable relationship between the learner's mother tongue and the use of the RM, which appears to be rather influenced by the textual genre, teaching strategies, syllabus choice, and other contextual factors.

As can be inferred from Figure 9 the use of *cioè* only decreases for the Korean group, whereas there is a stable rise in the texts of other learners. If it is true that ADIL2 differs from VALICO as for the level when the DM first appears, the graph suggests that those early occurrences are very limited in number and the majority of learners starts using *cioè* since the elementary level and not as a beginner, and it must be further mentioned the fact that declared levels in different corpora might not always be comparable so level 2 in ADIL2 might correspond to a third year in VALICO and vice-versa.

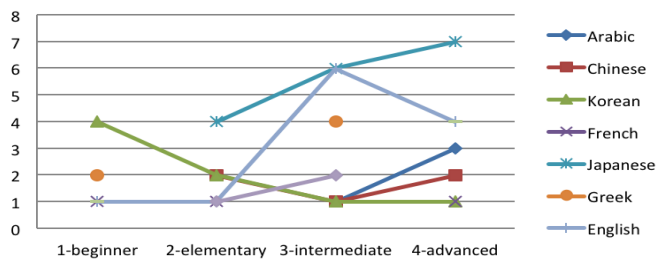


Figure9: Distribution of *cioè* according to yearly course and L1

Getting into the heart of the functional use of *cioè* by learners in ADIL2, the occurrences generally validate the results obtained from VALICO: most of the examples extracted from the corpus prove an explicative use of the RM.

As happens in VALICO, proper use of the marker pertains to higher levels of proficiency, as in (27) and (28) where the explanatory function of the paraphrastic reformulation is clear both to the learner and to the reader.

(27) *Dal 1999 al 2001, la crescita naturale in Italia era negativa - cioè, senza immigrazione, la popolazione italiana è diminuita.*

L1 English,2-elem

(‘From 1999 to 2001, the birth rate in Italy was negative - cioè, without immigration, the Italian population has declined.’)

(28) *Questi dati potrebbero significare il tasso di crescita naturale senza l’influsso delle dell’immigrazione. Cioè si pensa che fra i prossimi sette anni in Italia nasceranno meno bambini e la popolazione italiana si diminuisce.*

L1 German,4-avan

(‘This data could mean the natural growth rate without the influence of immigration. Cioè, it is thought that within the next seven years in Italy fewer children will be born and the Italian population is decreases.’)

The two corpora highlight regularities also in the use of punctuation linked to *cioè*, especially with the pattern *cioè*, (not allowed in Italian) and the ambiguity in the attribution of a textual or a more pragmatic function. The conclusion that can be drawn is that punctuation related to DMs is a real issue for learners, as DMs are elements which require a specific punctuation more that other structures, which is neither predictable nor actually taught.

In (29) the incidental use of *cioè* suggests a reformulative function, although it is just a common explicative.

(29) *Io so che volevi viaggiare quest’estate, e giugno è il tempo e in giugno fa il tempo migliore nella mia zona di California, cioè, fa caldo.*

L1 English,3-inter

(‘I know you wanted to travel this summer, and in June is the best time in my area of California, cioè it’s hot’)

As in (16) the following example illustrates a certain inaccuracy in the constituent order of the sentence and the lack of competence in using appositive defining clauses, notwithstanding that the L1 of the learner is French, that has perfectly corresponding constructions.

(30) *Versa il contenuto della casseruola cioè l'acqua e gli spaghetti dentro e poi rimetti gli spaghetti soli nella casseruola.* L1 French,2-elem
(‘Put the spaghetti on its own in the pan and then put the spaghetti on its own in the pan’)

As for differences, a significant discrepancy between the two compared corpora is the occurrence of reformulative functions in ADIL2 since the elementary level, whereas in VALICO it first appears in the third year (cf. (19)), but it is a minimal difference that might be attributed to the lack of consistency in defining metadata. In (31) a reformulative *cioè* carrying an additive function is properly used, it contributes in explicating an inference and the interpolation might point to a use which is rather close to oral varieties.

(31) *Ho visto che lavora tantissima gente del sud della Italia al nord, cioè, non si visogna tanta gente del'stero per coprire i posti di lavoro.* L1 Spanish,2-elem
(‘I saw lots of people from the south of Italy working in the north, cioè, there is no need of too many people from abroad to cover jobs’)

A final remark about the difficulties learners encounter when facing DMs is suggested by (32), where common learners’ doubts come out and *cioè* is deleted and replaced with the analytic form *vuol dire*.

(32) *Ogni anno nel questo periodo, il tasso ~~per~~ per mille di crescita naturale era \negativo, cioè/ meno zero, e cioè/ ~~negativo~~ vuole dire che sono morte più persone che nate.* L1 English,3-inter
(‘Every year in this period, the rate per thousand of natural growth was \ negative, cioè / minus zero, it means that more people have died than were born.’)

4. Conclusion

Among DMs, *cioè* proves to be particularly difficult for learners because of its polyfunctionality and the many shades of meaning it can assume in different pragmatic contexts.

The corpus-based analysis of the use of the DM in written learner varieties has shed light on the learners’ behavior when confronted with *cioè*, and has proved that the only functions used by students – confronted with native speakers’ occurrences – are the explicative and the reformulative, the latter being used by intermediate-advanced learners only. A short survey of oral learners’ varieties (oral ADIL2 and LIPS) highlighted that this result is applicable to both written and oral texts, although the DM with phatic functions or with the textual function of opening signal to new topics have been found only at C1/C2 levels of oral proficiency. In oral bidirectional interaction *cioè* is largely used by teachers to control reception, to verify comprehension, to elicit explanation, but not by learners. The proportion decreases with the learners’ improvements in language proficiency.

Moreover, the results of this case study demonstrate that L1 has little influence on the use of the marker, in written discourse learners tend to select a limited range of possible functions of *cioè*, namely explicative, and no attention is devoted to some other common uses of the DM in its reformulative values, namely the corrective and argumentative function, which is limited to most advanced learners.

REFERENCES

- Barbera, M. & Corino, E. & Onesti, C. (2007). *Corpora e linguistica in rete*. Perugia: Guerra.
- Bazzanella, C. (1995). I segnali discorsivi. In L. Renzi et al. (eds.), *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione* (225-257). Bologna: il Mulino.
- Benucci, A. (a cura di) (2007). *Sillabo di italiano per stranieri. Una proposta del Centro linguistico dell'Università per Stranieri di Siena*. Perugia: Guerra.
- Blakemore, D. (1993). The relevance of reformulations. *Language and Literature* 2(2), 101-120.
- Blakemore, D. (1996). Are apposition markers discourse markers? *Journal of Linguistics* 32, 325-347.
- Blakemore, D. (1997). Restatement and exemplification: a relevance theoretic reassessment of elaboration. *Pragmatics and Cognition* 5, 1-19.
- Casado Velarde, M. (1991). Los operadores discursivos *es decir, esto es, o sea y a saber* en español actual: valores de lengua y funciones textuales. In *Lingüística Española Actual* 13, 87-116.
- Cerruti, M. & Onesti, C. (2013). Netspeak: a language variety? Some remarks from an Italian sociolinguistic perspective. In E. Miola (ed.), *Languages go Web: Standard and non-standard languages on the Internet* (23-39). Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Corino, E. & Marellò, C. (in print). *I corpora VALICO e VINCA*. Perugia: Guerra.
- Corino, E. & Marellò, C. (2009). *Studi su VALICO e VINCA*. Perugia: Guerra.
- Corino, E. (2012). Signaux discursifs de reformulation, *cioè, volevo dire... [c'est-à-dire, je voulais dire...]* entre formalité et informalité de la langue des newsgroups. *Verbum* XXXIII, 2011, no 1-2, 147-182.
- Del Saz Rubio, M. & Fraser, B. (2003). Reformulation in English. Online at people.bu.edu/bfraser/Reformulation%20Marker%20Papers/deSaz%20&%20Fraser%20-%202003%20-%20RF%20in%20English.doc.
- Ferrini, S. (1985). *"Cioè" nell'italiano contemporaneo*. Perugia: Edizioni dell'Università per Stranieri.
- Fiorentino, G. (2004). Scrittura elettronica: il caso della posta elettronica. In F. Orletti (a cura di), *Scrittura e nuovi media* (69-112). Roma: Carocci.
- Frankel, J.J. & Paillard, D. (2008). Mots du discours: Adéquation et point de vue. L'exemple de 'réellement', 'en réalité', 'en effet', 'effectivement'. *Estudios lingüísticos / Linguistic studies* 2, 255-274.
- Fraser, B. (1990). An approach to discourse markers. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14, 383-395.
- Fuentes, C. (1987). Conclusivos y reformulativos. *Verba* 20, 171-196.
- Garcés Gómez, M. P. (2008). *La organización del discurso: marcadores de ordenación y de reformulación*, Madrid / Frankfurt: Iberoamericana / Vervuert.
- Gülich, E. & Kotschi, T. (1983). Les marqueurs de la reformulation paraphrastique. *Cahiers de Linguistique Française* 5, 305-351.
- Khachaturyan, E. (2013). La sémantique des marqueurs discursifs du dire vue à travers la sémantique verbale. L'analyse des verbes *dire/dire* en français et en italien. In E. Casanova Herrero & C. Calvo Rigual (red.), *Actes del 26e Congrés de Lingüística i Filologia Romaniques. vol.1-8* (207-221). Walter de Gruyter.
- Lo Duca, M. (2006). *Sillabo di italiano L2*. Roma: Carocci.
- Manzotti, E. (1999). Spiegazione, riformulazione, correzione, alternativa: sulla semantica di alcuni tipi e segnali di parafrasi. In L. Lumbelli & B. Mortara Garavelli (a cura di), *Parafrasi. Dalla ricerca linguistica alla ricerca psicopedagogica* (169-206). Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Marellò, C. & Allora, A. & Colombo, C. (2011). I corpora VALICO e VINCA: stranieri e italiani alle prese con le stesse attività scritte. In N. Maraschio & D. De Martino (a cura di), *La Piazza delle lingue L'italiano degli altri*. Firenze, 27-31 maggio 2010 (49-61). Firenze: Accademia della Crusca.
- Murillo, Sylvia (2004): A relevance reassessment of reformulation markers. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36, 2059-2068.

- Onea, E. & Volodina, A. (2011). Between Specification and Explanation: About a German Discourse Particle. In *International Review of Pragmatics*, 3, Issue 1, 3 – 32.
- Palermo, M. (a cura di) (2009). *Percorsi e strategie di apprendimento dell'italiano lingua seconda: sondaggi su ADIL2*. Perugia: Guerra.
- Pernas, P., Gillani, E & Cacchione, A. (2011). Costruire testi, strutturare conversazioni: la didattica dei segnali discorsivi come elementi pivot dell'interazione verbale. In *Italiano LinguaDue*, n. 1. 2011, 65-138.
- Pons, S. (2000). Los connectors. In A. Briz (ed.), *Cómo se comenta un texto coloquial (193-220)*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Portoles, J. (1996). Sobre la organizacion interna de las intervenciones. In A. Briz et al. (eds.), *Pragmatica y gramatica del español hablado (203-214)*. Valencia: Universidad de Valencia.
- Robles I Sabater, F. (2014). Estructura informativa y reformulación: los recapitulativos kurz gesagt y mit einem Wort. In *Revista de Filología Alemana* 2014, vol. 22, 207-226.
- Rossari, C. (1994). *Les opérations de reformulation. Analyse du processus et des marques dans une perspective contrastive français-italien*. Berne: Peter Lang.
- Roulet, E. (1987). Completude interactive et connecteurs reformulatifs. *Cahiers de Linguistique Française* 8, 111-140.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Serianni, L. (1988). *Grammatica italiana: Italiano comune e lingua letteraria, suoni, forme, costrutti*. Torino: UTET.
- Spinelli, B. & Parizzi (2010). *Profilo della lingua italiana*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia.
- Vassiliadou, H. (2013). La formation de c'est-à-dire (que) et de ses correspondants dans les langues romanes: quelques remarques. In E. Casanova Herrero & C. Calvo Rigual (red.), *Actes del 26e Congrés de Linguística i Filologia Romaniques. vol.1-8. (453-464)*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Online Corpora

VALICO <http://www.valico.org>

NUNC <http://www.corpora.unito.it>

Résumé

A partir des résultats d'une étude précédente sur les signaux discursifs de réformulation (Corino 2012) les différentes fonctions et les caractéristiques sémantiques du cioè italien seront identifiées afin de ses nombreux fonctions et usages. Les résultats serviront de base à l'analyse de la répartition du signal discursif dans des textes écrits par des apprenants d'italien comme langue étrangère et recueillis dans les corpus d'apprenants VALICO et ADIL2, à la recherche de régularités dans l'acquisition et des preuve du transfert à partir des langues maternelles des apprenants.