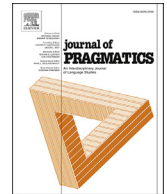


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A contrastive corpus study of a semantically neutral French evidential marker: *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]] and its relationship with agreement and disagreement

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ABSTRACT

Using a 20-hour contrastive corpus documenting political debates (public debates as well as debates on TV) and work meetings, the paper examines the functions and distributions of a specific French evidential: *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]] (n = 108). Reported speech markers have been studied extensively across various languages and communicative contexts. However, the situation where speakers report their addressee's speech remains relatively unexplored. Although the verb *dire* [say] is semantically neutral in terms of polarity (i.e. it does not express either agreement or disagreement with the reported content [P]), analysis of the corpus shows that expectations related to discourse genres play a crucial role in terms of pragmatic enrichment: depending on the genre and role of the speaker, *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]] frequently works as a stance-taking marker that is either oriented towards agreement or disagreement regarding [P]. In work meetings, besides the neutral tokens used for intersubjective objectives (e.g. repair sequences), tokens are massively oriented towards agreement. In political debates, and especially TV debates, the marker is either used by the moderator to frame the disagreement, or by debaters to disagree with each other.

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1. Introduction

While reported speech has been studied extensively across various languages and communicative contexts, the situation where the speaker reports their addressee's speech remains relatively unexplored. For the French language, this is particularly visible when looking at two recent collective books ([Anscombe and Rouanne, 2020](#); [Rouanne and Anscombe, 2016](#)) focusing on the verb *dire* [say]; no chapter examines the case where *dire* is combined with the second grammatical person, whether being the proximal *tu* (e.g. *tu dis*, *tu as dit*) or the polite or plural *vous* (e.g. *vous dites*, *vous avez dit*). The present paper addresses the following questions: in what context and for which objective does a speaker report their addressee's speech? What kind of stance does the speaker take in relation to the reported content? To put it differently, to what extent is orientation towards agreement or disagreement with the reported content context sensitive, in terms of discourse genres?

The paper seeks to answer these questions through a corpus-based analysis of reports of the interlocutor's speech marked by the verb *dire*. It raises relevant issues for the semantics/pragmatics interface: semantically, out of context, *dire* [say] consists of a neutral way to report speech, in comparison with verbs that work as stance-taking markers such as *révéler*

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([reveal], positively oriented towards the truth of the reported content) or *prétendre* ([pretend], negatively oriented towards the truth of the reported content). However, we know that pragmatically, in context, taking a discourse into account in a neutral way is unstable, and the speaker is expected to adopt a stance (e.g. see the discussion in [Coltier et al., 2009](#)).

The issues raised above are examined in a 20h (270,000-word) video-recorded corpus documenting two different “institutional” settings ([Arminen, 2005](#); [Drew and Heritage, 1992](#)): (i) Swiss-French public or TV debates addressing various political topics; (ii) Swiss-French work meetings in three small- to medium-sized companies (see Section 3.2 for more details).¹ As discussed below, this contrastive corpus allows us to shed light on the role that the communicative context plays in the respective orientation towards agreement or disagreement of the semantically neutral expressions *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]].

Section 2 introduces a brief theoretical background to the way reported speech markers can work both as evidential and stance-taking markers in argumentative contexts. Section 3 focuses on the specific linguistic expression examined in the present study (i.e. French equivalents of [you say]) and introduces the data and methods. Section 4 consists of the core of the paper, providing a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the chosen marker. Section 5 discusses the results.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Reported speech as an evidential device

As stated by [Willett \(1988\)](#), reported speech markers can be considered indirect evidentials since the information given by the speaker (e.g. [P] in “Aristotle says [P]”) is framed as coming from another, secondary source (e.g. Aristotle in “Aristotle says [P]”).² Such mediated access to information contrasts with direct evidentials (e.g. “I saw Paul walking with his new girlfriend”), which introduce content [P] as being/having been directly, primarily perceived and, in that way, attested by the speaker ([Willett, 1988](#), p. 57).

Evidentiality has become a hot topic in linguistics over the last decade, with numerous studies having been carried out in various languages (e.g. [Aikhenvald, 2004, 2018](#); [Boye, 2018](#); [Cornillie, 2008](#); [Dendale and Tasmowski, 2001](#); [Guentchéva, 2018](#); [Mushin, 2001](#); [Nuckolls and Michael, 2014](#); [Squartini, 2007](#)). However, the existing, comparatively scarce studies on French evidentials use generally invented or decontextualized examples ([Barbet and de Saussure, 2012](#); [Dendale, 1991](#); [Dendale and Bogaert, 2007, 2012](#); [Dendale and Tasmowski, 1994](#)), limiting the integration of pragmatic factors such as sequentiality (cotextual features), genericity (contextual features) and multimodality (polysemiotic features). These features have been explored more extensively in English (e.g. [Berlin and Prieto-Mendoza, 2014](#); [Chafe, 1986](#); [Hart, 2011](#); [Söderqvist, 2017](#)), Spanish (e.g. [Cornillie and Gras, 2015](#); [Cuenca, 2015](#); [Figueras Bates and Cabedo Nebot, 2018](#)), Italian (e.g. [Musi and Rocci, 2017](#); [Squartini, 2012](#)), and other languages (see also [Mushin, 2001](#); [Nuckolls and Michael, 2014](#)).

A notable exception in the case of French is the project MODAL, which is not based on single examples, but applies “a general theory of epistemicity” to a corpus of “spoken dialogues” through “a corpus-driven methodology” ([Pietrandrea, 2018](#)). MODAL onomasiologically explores a relatively small sample of oral data, approx. 20,000 words per language (including French), as compared with the 270,000-word corpus explored hereafter. In the present paper, a semasiological perspective has been adopted, which focuses on a set of second person indicative forms of the particularly frequent speech verb *dire* (108 tokens in the corpus at hand).

While “reported speech in interaction” ([Holt and Clift, 2007](#)) has been studied extensively in many languages and using different kinds of data and methods, corpus studies of reported speech markers in oral “French-in-interaction” ([Mondada and Traverso, 2016](#)) remain scarce. Existing studies either scrutinize how different kinds of reported speech techniques are enacted in dialogic contexts, including the use of prosodic and multimodal means ([Caillat, 2012a, 2012b](#); [Constantin de Chanay, 2006](#); [Constantin de Chanay, 2005](#); [Demers, 1998](#)), or study the general role of reported speech for discursive objectives, for example in argumentation ([Doury, 2004](#); [Magaud, 2004](#)). Expanding on this work, the present study examines a specific marker in a systematic way, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and on a contrastive corpus.

As mentioned in the introduction, what is particularly interesting with the evidential marker *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]] is that it can be considered superficially as “neutrally” polarized. Semantically speaking, out of context, *dire* [P] [say [P]] does not express any commitment to the truth of [P], in contrast to, for example, *prétendre* [P] [pretend [P]] (negatively polarized, with some exceptions when combined with the first person; see [Ducrot, 1972](#), p. 266–277; [Berrendonner, 1981](#), p.

¹ This case study is part of a larger 4-year research project which aims to analyze epistemic (including evidential) markers in “French-in-interaction” ([Mondada and Traverso, 2016](#)), from a discursive, interactional and multimodal perspective, stemming from French Enunciative Linguistics (e.g. [Ducrot, 1984](#); [Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980](#); [Nølke, 2001](#)), Interactional Linguistics (e.g. [Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 2018](#)) and (multimodal) Conversation Analysis (e.g. [Deppermann, 2013](#); [Sidnell and Stivers, 2013](#)) applied to epistemic modality (e.g. [Lindström et al., 2016](#)).

² In the field of research dedicated to evidentiality, some specialists limit the notion to the “grammatical encoding of information source” ([Aikhenvald, 2018](#), p. IX, I underline; see also [Anderson, 1986](#); [Lazard, 2001](#)). For example, in Southern Conchucos Quechua (e.g. [Hintz and Hintz, 2017](#)), the grammatical suffix [-*shi*] expresses a “reported information”, as opposed to [-*mi*], which indicates “direct observation”. In other languages, such as French or English, the information source is not grammaticalized but can still be expressed by lexical units, e.g. the verb *dire* [say], as in *Pierre m'a dit qu'il venait demain* [Pierre told me that he would come tomorrow]. For this reason, [Boye and Harder \(2009, p. 39\)](#) argue that “evidentiality should be understood as a functional-conceptual substance domain, i.e. a notion pertaining to meaning”, rather than a category based on a distinction between grammatical and lexical encoding. For the present paper, the goal of which is to analyze the pragmatic use of a lexical way to express information sources in French, I adopt this approach (on the study of evidentiality applied to French, see the discussion in [Dendale and Bogaert, 2012](#)).

35–73) or *révéler* [P] [reveal [P]] (positively polarized). However, even what seems the most neutral way to report speech is tied to its discursive and interactional contexts and can convey an epistemic stance signalling the “speaker’s commitment” to what they are saying (Palmer, 2001, pp. 198 and ss). This relationship of evidential markers with stance-taking and argumentation will now be examined further.

2.2. Reported speech in argumentative talk-in-interaction and contexts of disagreement

Reported speech and, more generally, evidential markers are closely linked to argumentation and stance-taking. “Reported evidence” is typically glossed in the literature as “reportive justification” (Boye, 2012, p. 36); when reporting speech, the speaker can position and justify their standpoint in the discussion by adopting a stance regarding the reported propositional content (Doury, 2004). This is typically the case when the speaker uses an argument from authority by reporting an expert’s speech (e.g. “Aristotle says [P]”): the expert represents a warrant for the stance defended by the speaker in front of their addressee(s). As Hart (2011, p. 759) phrases it, this evidential device can be adopted by the speaker to “objectify” their standpoint by showing that “the speaker’s assertion can be verified or that it is corroborated by others” (see also Clift, 2006; and Cuenca, submitted, this issue).

This stance-taking dynamic is different when the speaker reports their addressee’s speech because of the mereological relationship that connects the addressee with the speech he or she has uttered. Using *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]], the speaker adopts a stance towards their addressee by means of what he or she has previously said. Reported content [P] is then the object of a stance-taking dynamic (see also the notion of “stance triangle” by Du Bois, 2007), since the reporting speaker can display agreement, disagreement, or neutrality towards [P].³

Previous studies in Conversation Analysis and, more generally, pragmatic analyses of different speech-exchange systems showed that the interactional preference for, or expectation of, agreement or disagreement is context sensitive (e.g. Angouri and Locher, 2012; Kothhoff, 1993; see also Bilmes, 1988 for a discussion). In her seminal work about the preference for agreement and disagreement in interaction, Pomerantz (1984) shows that agreement is generally preferred in ordinary conversation (with some exceptions regarding specific actions, e.g. after compliments). This preference has also been shown to be active in the workplace, especially in work meetings (e.g. Jacquin, 2015; Marra, 2012; Stadler, 2006). However, in political debates, whether that be parliamentary debates (e.g. Bayley, 2004; Cuenca, submitted, 2015; Ilie, 2004), debates on TV or Radio (e.g. Burger, 2008; Doury and Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2011; Hutchby, 1996), or public debates (e.g. Jacquin, 2014, 2017), turn organization is mediated by a moderator whose goal is to make opposing views or opinions regarding the same controversial question visible and understandable. Disagreements are, therefore, largely expected as relevant contributions to the discussion (political debates are “institutionally ritualised confrontational interaction” according to Ilie, 2004, p. 81), and *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]] can, in those contexts, become strategies to make disagreement intelligible when the content targeted by the disagreeing move is not directly adjacent to the evidential marker (i.e. “long-distance disagreement” in Cuenca, submitted).

One of the present paper’s objectives consists of exploring how the pragmatic plasticity of the semantically neutral evidential marker *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]] is intertwined with differences in terms of genre expectations regarding orientation towards agreement or disagreement.

3. The present study

3.1. Clarification about the cases under scrutiny

While there is no strong theoretical or analytical consensus on the limits of what counts as reported speech, it has to be noted that the present study adopts the framework introduced by the French linguist Authier-Revuz (1995, 2019). From that perspective, “reported speech” consists of a relatively broad category that includes not only cases of typical direct and indirect speech devices (what Authier-Revuz calls “*prédication du discours autre*” [predication of the other discourse]), but also the various ways of referring to the other discourse (what Authier-Revuz calls “*modalisation du discours autre*” [modalisation of the other discourse]). That implies that, in the present paper, “You said: (P)”, “You said that (P)”, “(P), you said it/so”, “(P), as you said”, “(P), that’s what you said” are included as cases under scrutiny. This relatively broad perspective on reported speech is consistent with other existing corpus-linguistics approaches to the phenomenon, notably the work by Rühlemann and O’Donnell (2012), who include “reference to discourse presentation” (by anaphora) in the category of reported speech,

³ From a discourse-analytical perspective, Roulet et al. (1985) propose the term *diaphonie* [diaphony] to refer to the report of the addressee’s speech when this report consists of a “strategic reinterpretation” or “semantic-argumentative reorientation” of the reported content in line with what is to come next (Constantin de Chanay, 2006, my translation). While some cases analyzed in this paper can be considered diaphonic, the present paper does not focus on such “strategic” uses and, therefore, prefers the more neutral and encompassing term *représentation interlocutive* [interlocutive representation] chosen by Caillat (2012a, my translation). Roulet et al. (1985) also distinguish between explicit and implicit diaphony (i.e. is the reported speech explicitly attributed by the speaker through a dialogic marker such as “you say”, or is it activated by a polyphonic device such as an argumentative connector?), as well as between effective and potential diaphony (i.e. is the reported speech introduced as having been actually uttered by the addressee, or as being only potentially utterable?). Since this paper considers a specific marker as explicitly referring to actual talk reported by the speaker, implicit use is impossible by definition and cases of potential (whether hypothetical or anticipated) diaphony/interlocutive representation will not be considered in the collection.

admittedly considering it as a “borderline phenomenon” since “the discourse is not actually presented but only pointed to by referential means” (2012, p. 330), whether being directly what has been said by the reported speaker, or a subsequent reformulation of it by the referring speaker. This inclusive option is also adopted by specialists in evidentiality in the French language, since they include anaphoric operators as a way to build “phrases évidentielles” [evidential sentences] in French (e.g. [Dendale and Van Bogaert, 2012](#), p. 21–22).⁴

This being said, and since the present paper focuses on a specific marker explicitly referring to actual talk by another speaker (*explicit, effective interlocutive representation* in Roulet's and Caillat's terms cfr. footnote 3), cases of potential interlocutive representation (whether hypothetical or anticipated) are not considered in this paper. Example 1 illustrates such a situation, where *tu dis* [you say] is used by the speaker to refer to a potentially utterable stretch of speech. In what appears to be a coaching session, the associate architect, MIC, explains to his employee, LOU, that he should record and then evaluate himself (*tu dis* [you'll say], line 2) before presenting a new project to potential clients.

```
(1) REU_BM1 / 01:27:44.432 - 01:27:52.497
1 MIC      et t'essaies de faire même ton discours tu t'enr'gistres même (.)
           and try to do the same your speech you can even record yourself
2 >        et puis après tu tu dis °voilà bon dieu (.) voilà [y a y a°] ça&
           and then you'll say well god (.) well [there is there is] it's
3 LOU                                     [°ouais°]
                                           [yeah]
4 &va pas DONC plus t'es simple/ plus t'es percutant/ .h
           not good so the more direct you are/ the more impacting you are/
```

For similar reasons, neither uses of generic *tu/vous* [you] will be considered, nor cases of aborted reported speech (i.e. where there is no intelligible propositional target, whether that be a subordinate utterance or an utterance referred to by anaphora) or self-repaired reported speech (e.g. “you say” in “you say well you assume that X”). Regarding the tenses, all French past tenses have been taken into account, including forms of proximal past (*tu viens de dire, vous venez de dire*) as well as extended uses of the present tense to refer to past events. From now on, and for ease of reference, the expression “*tu dis* [you say]” will be used when discussing general matters regarding the full range of expressions under scrutiny in this paper.

3.2. Data and methods

The corpus used in the present study consists of 20 h of video-recorded verbal interactions (also see Section 1 and footnote 1). To favor comparative observations related to differences in terms of generic constraints, the corpus documents political debates (n = 10; h = 10) and work meetings (n = 10; h = 10). Among the political debates, 8 events (h = 8) are public debates, which are local forms of political confrontation where all the participants are spatially co-present and the interaction between the debaters and the members of the audience is mediated by a host (see [Jacquin, 2013, 2014](#) for more details). The recorded events were organized in the French-speaking part of Switzerland between 2007 and 2009 by student associations covering various political topics (e.g. ecological issues, a minimum wage, the relationship between the media and the political sphere). In addition to the public debates, 2 TV debates (h = 2) broadcasted by Swiss Radio Television for a remote audience have been added to the subcorpus; both were broadcast in 2007 and addressed topics similar to those in the recorded public debates (ecological issues). In TV debates, the host is not only in charge of the turn-taking dynamic (i.e. order of the speakers, speaking-time) but their role is also to act as a representative of the public, by asking controversial questions, which help invited debaters to position themselves in an accountable – and antagonistic – way for the remote audience. The 10 work meetings were recorded between late 2017 and early 2018 in three small- or medium-sized companies from the same city in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and which are active in various fields (e.g. communication, architecture) (see [Jacquin and Roh, 2019](#) for more detail).⁵

The data have been fully transcribed in ELAN⁶ using ICOR transcript conventions.⁷

Using regular expressions in ELAN, 176 tokens of *tu/vous* [you] associated with the lemma *dire* [say] have been identified and extracted. As stated above (Section 3.1), I removed (i) generic uses of *tu/vous*, (ii) cases where the expression was used to refer to events in the future (e.g. use of *tu dis* [you'll say] in coaching sessions, or use in questions such as “what do you say to X?” meaning “what do you reply to X”), and (iii) cases of self-repair (see also the discussion in [Kallen and Kirk, 2012](#), p. 51–54). That resulted in a collection of 108 tokens, far ahead of other introductory verbs such as *évoquer* [evoke, mention] (n = 3), *souligner* [highlight, underline] (n = 0), *proposer* [propose] (n = 1), *annoncer* [announce] (n = 2), *révéler* [reveal, disclose] (n = 0), *affirmer* [affirm, assert] (n = 0), or *prétendre* [pretend] (n = 1).

⁴ On the basis of other criteria – notably the necessity of a “reproduction” [riproduzione] of the referred discourse by the referring discourse ([Calaresu, 2004](#), p. 118) – other specialists would therefore argue that some of the cases considered in the present paper do not belong to the “reported speech” category (e.g. [Mortara Garavelli \(1985, p. 41–46\)](#), discussed and completed by [Calaresu \(2004, p. 103–123\)](#)).

⁵ All the participants in the recorded work meetings were informed about the procedure and goals of the recording and gave their consent to participate. All information that could lead to the identification of speakers, companies and institutions was pseudonymized.

⁶ ELAN is developed at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics ([ELAN \(Version 6.0\) \[Computer Software\]](#), 2020).

⁷ http://icar.cnrs.fr/projets/corinte/bandeau_droit/convention_icor.htm, last accessed on 16 March 2021. The transcription conventions are reported in Section 6 of the present paper.

The 108 identified tokens of *tu dis* [you say] were then annotated, describing the following features:

- a. Type of reported speech: direct reported speech (e.g. “*you say* I’ll do it tomorrow, but...”) was distinguished from indirect reported speech (e.g. “*you say* that you will do it tomorrow, but...”) as well as from cases of reported speech using anaphoric reference (e.g. “that’s *what you say*”).
- b. Discourse features: the genre of the event (i.e. public debate, TV debate, or work meeting) as well as the communicative role of the speaker (e.g. moderator, meeting participant) have been annotated.
- c. Cotextual features: agreement (e.g. “it’s true”) and disagreement (e.g. “but”) markers emerging before and/or after the expression have been identified.
- d. On the basis of (c), different stance-taking trajectories have been delineated:
 - Orientation towards agreement: agreement > *dire* (i.e. a marker of agreement precedes the lemma *dire*); neutral > *dire* > agreement (i.e. a marker of agreement follows a neutrally introduced *dire*);
 - Orientation towards disagreement: disagreement > *dire* (i.e. a marker of disagreement precedes the lemma *dire*); neutral > *dire* > disagreement (i.e. a marker of disagreement follows a neutrally introduced *dire*); agreement > *dire* > disagreement (concession); neutral > *dire* > agreement > disagreement (concession);
 - Neutral orientation: verification/question; recall/reformulation.
- e. For the disagreement-oriented tokens, the type of disagreeing move has been annotated (see Section 4.4. below for more details): direct disagreement (the reported content [P] is evaluated as false); logical inconsistency (the reported content [P] is evaluated as inconsistent in light of what the reported speaker said in previous talk); straw man (content [P] is more or less explicitly rephrased in order to appear ridiculous or at least to be easily counter-argued); concession (content [P] is accepted, but the speaker subsequently presents a stronger counter-argument).

4. Analysis

The 108 tokens of the collection are not homogeneously distributed across the corpus. 66% of the *tu dis* [you say] constructions occur in the corpus of political debates (i.e. public debates or debates on TV) while only 34% come from the recordings of work meetings. This general asymmetric distribution probably reflects the fact that political debates consist of “confrontation talk” (Hutchby, 1996): participants are expected to position themselves regarding the previous talk, in order to make opposing views on the same controversial question visible and understandable (see also above, Section 2.2.). As we will see by looking at different variables (pronouns, communicative roles, pragmatic attitudes towards the reported content [P], stance-taking trajectory, types of disagreeing moves), the data also display a more fine-grained asymmetric distribution related to the generic constraints within the category of political debate, opposing public debates, on the one hand, and TV debates, on the other.

4.1. Pronouns and communicative roles

Table 1 shows the non-homogenous distribution of the tokens across genres. While the considered *dire* constructions are more frequent in political debates ($n = 71$) than in work meetings ($n = 37$), there is also a clear difference of relative frequency between public debates (5.3 tokens per hour) and TV debates (14.5 tokens per hour).

Table 1
Pronouns *tu/vous*, by settings.

Pronoun	Political debates (10h)		Work meetings (10h)	Total
	Public debates (8h)	TV debates (2h)		
<i>tu</i>	17		32	49
<i>vous</i> 1 (plural)			4	4
<i>vous</i> 2 (polite)	25	29	1	55
Total	42	29	37	108
Total		71	37	108
Total/h	5.3	14.5	3.7	5.4

The discrepancy between the two subgenres of political debates is also reinforced when looking at pronouns and communicative roles.⁸ As is visible in Table 1, the corpus displays a general tendency to use the polite *vous* ($n = 54$) instead of *tu* ($n = 17$) in political debates, while it is clearly the opposite in work meetings, where employees from small- or medium-sized companies tend to have a much stronger preference for *tu* ($n = 32$) instead of the polite *vous* ($n = 1$) when referring to each other.⁹ When distinguishing between public debates and TV debates, the distribution of pronouns also reveals issues

⁸ The distribution of verbal tenses in the corpus is not particularly informative: the French extended present (*tu dis/vous dites*) is used as frequently as the past, being the French past continuous (*tu disais/vous disiez*), or the French simple past (*tu as dit/vous avez dit*).

⁹ The sole polite *vous* in work meetings emerges from a commercial negotiation with two representatives of another, external company. Work meetings are also the only genre where the plural *vous* is used ($n = 4$). In the situations in question, speakers refer to a common position held by more than one participant in the meeting, something that does not happen, at least with the verb *dire* [say], in the corpus of political debates.

related to politeness: while the proximal *tu* is frequent in public debates (n = 17), it does not appear at all in TV debates (n = 0), which seem to imply a higher level of formality even when people already know each other and use the proximal form before and after the debate. This formality probably reflects the awareness of a larger audience in a TV setting (see Bell, 1984 on “audience design”).

As discussed above (Section 2.2.), political debates are characterized by a specific turn-taking machinery where the moderator is expected to mediate access to the floor and organize the event in terms of opposing positions on at least one controversial question. By examining more closely the communicative roles involved in political debates, relevant generic differences between public debates and TV debates can also be spotted: Table 2 shows that a third of *tu dis* [you say] constructions in TV debates are produced by the moderator (n = 9/29 in 2h), while the moderator in public debates uses it only once (n = 1/29 in 8h). In public debates, it is indeed members of the audience who most frequently use the expression, since more than 50% of the tokens come from the public (n = 23/42). A plausible explanation for these findings, to which I will return later, is that the moderator in TV debates acts like a representative of the viewers, by asking questions and mediating disagreement among the participants, whereas members of the audience in public debates can take the floor, thereby representing themselves.

Table 2
Communicative roles, by settings.

Communicative role	Political debates (10h)		Work meetings (10h)	Total
	Public debates (8h)	TV debates (2h)		
Moderator/interviewer	1	9		10
Debater	18	20		38
Public	23			23
Meeting participant			37	37
Total	42	29	37	108

4.2. Pragmatic attitude towards the reported content [P]

As discussed in Section 2.1, the speaker using *tu dis* [P] [you say [P]] does not seem to take a particular stance regarding the propositional content of [P]. In terms of (semantic) polarity, the second person of *dire* appears then as a neutral marker. However, when looking at the *tu dis* [P] [you say [P]] in its (pragmatic) context (Table 3), only 33 tokens out of 108 (31%) can be considered neutral, i.e. are not produced within a move where the speaker adopts a stance about [P], whether being an agreement, a concession, or a disagreement. This orientation towards taking a stance about the reported content [P] is stronger in political debates, where only 17 out of 71 (24%) are neutral, compared with 43% (n = 16/37) of neutral tokens in work meetings.

Table 3
Pragmatic attitude towards [P], by settings.

Pragmatic attitude	Political debates (10h)		Work meetings (10h)	Total
	Public debates (8h)	TV debates (2h)		
Agreement (polarity +)	13	1	16	30
Neutral	8	9	16	33
Concession (agr.>disagr.)	1	2	2	5
Disagreement (polarity -)	20	17	3	40
Total	42	29	37	108

Table 3 shows that, in political debates, 40 out of 71 (56%) of the *tu dis* [you say] are oriented towards disagreement (including concessive moves), while this is only the case for 5 out of 37 (14%) in work meetings. Conversely, 14 out of 71 (20%) of the tokens in political debates and 16 out of 37 (43%) in work meetings are oriented towards agreement.¹⁰

The orientation towards disagreement in political debates – and especially in TV debates where 66% (n = 19/29) of the reported contents [P] are disagreed and only 3% (n = 1/29) are agreed – appears even more clearly when looking at the distribution of the aforementioned pragmatic attitudes towards [P] among the different communicative roles documented in the data.¹¹

¹⁰ The relationship between the genre and the pragmatic attitude towards [P] is statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square: 27.396, df = 6, p < 0.001; Fisher's Exact Test with Monte Carlo: p < 0.0005; Cramer's V: 0.356; p < 0.001). Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS (IBM Corp, 2020).

¹¹ The relationship between the speaker's role and the pragmatic attitude towards [P] is statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square: 50.939, df = 9, p < 0.001; Fisher's Exact Test with Monte Carlo: p < 0.0005; Cramer's V: 0.397; p < 0.001).

Table 4 displays the specific role of the moderator/interviewer in political debates, where they are responsible for 10 out of 71 (14%) of the tokens. Interestingly, 9 of those 10 tokens come from the TV debates and are neutrally oriented towards [P], while the sole token by a moderator/interviewer in the public debates is encompassed in a local and circumstantial move of agreement.

Table 4
Pragmatic attitude by communicative role, by settings.

Pragmatic attitude/communicative role	Political debates (10h)		Work meetings (10h)	Total
	Public debates (8h)	TV debates (2h)		
Agreement (polarity +)				
Moderator/interviewer	1			1
Debater	8	1		9
Public	4			4
Meeting participant			16	16
Neutral				
Moderator/interviewer		9		9
Debater	2			2
Public	6			6
Meeting participant			16	16
Concession (agr.>disagr.)				
Moderator/interviewer				
Debater	1	2		3
Public				
Meeting participant			2	2
Disagreement (polarity -)				
Moderator/interviewer				
Debater	7	17		24
Public	13			13
Meeting participant			3	3
Total	42	29	37	108

Here are two examples of neutrally oriented *tu dis* [you say] produced by the moderator/interviewer (LOR) in a TV debate about a Swiss political initiative which aims to limit the legal power of ecological NGOs, especially their right to appeal against projects such as a property development.

(2) DTV_REC / 000:12:30.857 - 000:12:52.487

1 LOR au grand conseil vaudois en tant qu'avocat vous avez bien sûr été
at the Great Council of Vaud as a lawyer you have of course
2 confronté beaucoup de fois au droit de recours/ .h: et et et
faced many times the right to appeal/ .h and and and
3 > vous m'avez dit (.) pour moi (.) ce droit de recours est un
you told me (.) for me (.) this right to appeal is a
4 privilège/ (.) excessif\ (.) puis-je vous demander/ (0.4) ce qu'
privilege/ (.) excessive\ (.) can I ask you/ (0.4) what
5 signifie pour vous le terme privilège excessif/
it means for you the expression excessive privilege/
6 (0.4)
7 HAL alors je crois que ce droit de recours effectivement .h (0.4) est
so I believe that this right to appeal indeed .h (0.4) is
8 exorbitant\ d'abord parce que: (.) comme cela a été expliqué/
exorbitant\ first because (.) as it has been explained/
9 (0.4) il s'agit d'un ovni juridique\
(0.4) it is a legal UFO\
(0.4)

(3) DTV_REC / 000:22:27.344 - 000:22:36.434

1 NID d'une part l'état s'est (.) professionnalisé énormément y a une
on the one hand the State is now much more professional there
2 (.) quantité de lois qui vous protègent/ .h: l'air l'eau et
are (.) many laws that protect you/ .h the air the water and
3 [à peu près tout]
[almost everything]
4 LOR > [vous dites qu'on protège] assez la nature (.) pas besoin de ce
[you say that we protect] the nature sufficiently (.) no need for
5 droit [de recours]
this right [to appeal]
6 NID [les] lois existent
[the] laws exist

In the first example, LOR is introducing the next speaker HAL referring to the argumentative position the latter put forward in what is presented as a preliminary, one-to-one exchange with LOR (“you told me”). LOR then moves from this recall (i.e. “this legal right is an excessive privilege”) to his question about the meaning of the expression used by HAL (i.e. “excessive privilege”), who takes his turn at line 7 to answer the question. In the second example, NID is arguing that the State and the Constitution are already strong enough to tackle ecological issues. In line 4, LOR self-selects and interrupts NID by using “you say” and by rephrasing the position in light of the specific topic addressed in the TV debate (i.e. should Switzerland limit or not limit the legal rights given to ecological NGOs?). In both cases, by using *tu dis* [you say] to recall or reformulate – in a neutral way – previous talk by invited debaters, the moderator/interviewer of the TV debate frames the arguments put forward by the guests as being intelligible and relevant contributions to one of two oppositional, argumentative positions about the controversial question at stake.

While the audience does not produce any tokens in TV debates, the public is responsible for 23 out of 71 (32%) tokens in public debates. Among them 13 tokens are disagreement-oriented towards the reported content [P], 6 undertake a neutral stance, and 4 are used for expressing agreement. This contrastive distribution between TV and public debates reflects the structuring function of the moderator/interviewer in TV debates, which is much less important in public debates where the audience is regularly invited to participate actively, especially through question-answer adjacency pairs initiated by the moderator.

Below is an example of a neutrally oriented *tu as dit* [you said] uttered by a member of the public (P24) in a public debate – not the corresponding TV debate discussed above – about the same initiative aimed at limiting the legal rights of ecological NGOs. P24 is given the floor by the moderator at line 2 and recalls the guest's position on the initiative by saying “you said that it's the State's duty to appeal if [a project] is illegal”. Then P24 moves to his question at lines 8–10: would the guest's political party then agree to double or triple the financial means of the public services to compensate for what ecological NGOs do for free?

(4) DPU_REC / 000:49:37.106 - 000:49:38.586
 1 MOD rapidement [comme ça on passe (la parole)/]
quickly [and then we give (the floor)/]
 2 P24 > [ouais/ (.)] **t' as dit** que:: c'est à l'état qui de de
[yeah/ (.)] you said that it's the State's duty to
 3 *faire recours si euh effectivement c'est illégal/ ça veut dire*
appeal if indeed it is illegal/ it means that
 4 *qu'il faut donner les moyens à l'état de faire assurer la*
we have to give the means to the State to do the
 5 *surveillance que qu' est faite gratuitement par les associations/*
monitoring that that is done for free by the associations/
 6 *(0.3) et puis ensuite tu lui donnes les moyens euh financiers et*
(0.3) and then you give to the State the financial means and
 7 *de temps des fonctionnaires qui vont faire recours etcétera\ (.)*
worktime of public officials who will appeal and so on\ (.)
 8 *est-ce que les radicaux sont (.) d'accord d'a- d'a d'affecter le*
do the liberals (.) agree to give the public budget
 9 *budget 'fin de doubler ou tripler/ (.) euh: le le l'argent de de*
well to double or triple/ (.) the financial support given to
 10 *des services cantonaux/*
cantonal services/

(5) DPU_UDC / 000:42:40.876 - 000:42:50.656
 1 MOD oui/
yes/
 2 (0.2)
 3 P42 heu moi j' voulais juste souligner un truc c'est comme vous avez
I've just wanted to highlight something as you said
 4 *dit avant c'est qu' les médias ils sont quand même soumis à*
before it's that the media work anyway under
 5 *certaines contrain:tes et puis (0.3) je trouve un peu facile là x*
significant constraints and also (0.3) I think that it is a bit
 6 > **de c' que vous nous dites c'est** que finalement ils devraient gérer
simplistic what you say is that at the end they should manage
 7 *l'agenda politique*
the political agenda

In the second example (Extract 5), taken from a public debate about the role of the media in the victory of a far-right political party at the federal elections in 2007, a member of the public (P42) points out what he sees as a contradiction in the argumentation provided by the guest. P42 moves from an agreement-prefaced *vous avez dit* [you say] at lines 3–5 (“as you said before the media work anyway under significant constraints”) to a disagreement-prefaced one at lines 5–7 by saying “that is a bit simplistic what you say is that at the end they should manage the political agenda”.

The comparison between the two cases shows that the public in public debates can either act like the moderator/interviewer of the TV debates, by asking questions about the reported content [P] recalled from the previous talk by a guest, or can

act like a debater and take an explicit stance, often by the preliminary use of an agreement/disagreement marker regarding the reported content (Jacquin, 2014, 2017).¹²

4.3. Stance-taking trajectories

Stance-taking often emerges as a gradual, incremental process (Du Bois, 2007). For example, a speaker can move from a neutral stance towards the reported content [P] to an agreement or disagreement with this content. By contrast, the speaker can directly frame the reported content as being agreed or disagreed. Table 5 distinguishes different stance-taking trajectories among the categories introduced in Table 3 above.¹³

Table 5
Stance-taking trajectory, by settings.

Stance-taking trajectory	Political debates (10h)		Work meetings (10h)	Total
	Public debates (8h)	TV debates (2h)		
agreement (polarity +)				
agreement > <i>dire</i>	11	1	13	25
neutral > <i>dire</i> > agreement	2		3	5
neutral				
neutral: recall, reformulation	7	7	3	17
neutral: verification/question	1	2	13	16
concession (agr. > disgr.)				
neutral > <i>dire</i> > concession		1	1	2
concession (agr. > <i>dire</i> > disgr.)	1	1	1	3
disagreement (polarity -)				
neutral > <i>dire</i> > disagreement	11	6	1	18
disagreement > <i>dire</i>	9	11	2	22
Total	42	29	37	108

Table 5 shows that two thirds (67%, $n = 47/70$) of the agreement- and disagreement-oriented tokens are preceded by a marker that indicates the kind of stance (agreement/disagreement) the speaker takes regarding the reported content [P]. In other words, speakers tend to avoid a neutral stance by prospectively expressing the kind of stance they take on it, putting aside the cases where the neutral stance consists of the speaker's final and explicitly stated pragmatic attitude towards [P], for recall or verification purposes.

When distinguishing between agreement- and disagreement-oriented stances, Table 5 displays further interesting differences. 83% ($n = 25/30$) of the agreement-oriented tokens are situations where *tu dis* [you say] is preceded by an agreement stance-taking marker that frames the reported content as being agreed upon,¹⁴ with no significant differences between political debates ($n = 12/14$) and work meetings ($n = 13/16$). Comparatively, this is only the case for 55% ($n = 22/40$) of the disagreement-oriented tokens. Although disagreement appears as the preferred action in political debates (see above, Section 2.2.), we may see here traces of the general preference for agreement regarding statements in verbal interaction (Pomerantz, 1984): speakers who disagree with the reported content [P] are more inclined to delay the expression of disagreement, in comparison with agreement-oriented stance-taking trajectories, where the agreement marker generally precedes the reported content.

Interesting differences also emerge when distinguishing between public debates and TV debates. In public debates, it is slightly more frequent ($n = 11/20$, 55%) for the speaker to start with a neutral stance and then produces a disagreement marker, rather than directly introducing the content with which the speaker disagrees. By contrast, in TV debates, two thirds of the disagreement-oriented tokens ($n = 11/17$, 65%) are preceded by a disagreement marker. This could reflect the tendency of the TV debates to be more spectacularly polemic in the sense that disagreement is expected as a means of fuelling the interaction engine, while public debates give more time, and interactional space, to build dialogically convergent or divergent stances. The following extract shows a member of the public (P25) building her disagreement in three steps.

(6) DPU_REC / 000:46:31.307 - 000:46:59.432
 1 AN1 mademoiselle/
 miss/
 2 (0.5)
 3 P25 > j'avais juste une p'tite question \ (.) **tu dis** que (.) les: les
 I just had a quick question \ (.) you said that (.) the the

¹² The fact that the audience in public debates shows no tendency to undertake a specific pragmatic attitude towards the reported content [P] when using *tu dis/vous dites* [P] [you say [P]] is statistically confirmed (Pearson Chi-Square: 7.830, $df = 6$, $p = 0.251$; Fisher's Exact Test with Monte Carlo: $p = 0.147$).

¹³ The relationship between the stance-taking trajectories and the genres is statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square: 46.476, $df = 14$, $p < 0.001$; Fisher's Exact Test with Monte Carlo: $p < 0.0005$; Cramer's V: 0.464; $p < 0.001$).

¹⁴ 37% ($n = 13/35$) of the agreement-oriented or concessive *tu dis* [you say] are preceded by *comme* [as], making it by far the most frequent agreement marker. Syntactically, *comme tu dis* [as you say] works as a parenthetical that speakers can easily increment into their own line of argumentation.

4 entreprises elles perdent parfois vingt ans à négocier/ (.)
the companies waste sometimes twenty years in the negociation/
 5 sous la menace du droit de recours\ (.) mais (ça négocierait pas)
under the threat of the right to appeal\ (.) but (there won't be
 6 s'ils y vont pas direct/
any negociation) if they don't go for it directly/
 7 (0.4)
 8 NA2 parce que si vous y allez directement/ (.) euh vous entrez dans
because if you go for it directly/ (.) you face
 9 une (.) procédure de de malade (.) qui coûte cher\ et pis vous
a (.) crazy procedure (.) which costs a lot\ and you
 10 prenez le risque évidemment de perdre\
take of course the risk to lose\<
 11 (0.5)
 12 P25 donc elles ont conscience quelque part qu'elles servent pas la
so they know in a way that they do not respect the
 13 loi/ si elles acceptent de négocier [xx]
law/ if they accept to negociate [xx]
 14 NA2 [on] sait pas le le problème
[we] don't know the issue
 15 c'est que c'est très difficile de savoir si vous respectez la loi
is that it is very hard to know whether you respect the law
 16 quand vous entrez dans un dans un domaine comme ça\
when you get into in a domain like that\<

First, framing – and possibly downgrading – her turn as a “quick question”, P25 recalls the opponent's speech content in a neutral way (lines 3–5): “you said that the companies waste sometimes twenty years in the negotiation under the threat of the right to appeal”. In a second step, she asks for a clarification about the reported content (lines 5–6): “but (there won't be any negotiation) if they don't go for it directly” (i.e. why do companies lose time in negotiations and don't start the project directly?). In lines 8–10, the selected recipient NA2 answers using *parce que* [because]. Building on the answer, P25 self-selects and develops (third step, lines 12–13) her line of argumentation which consists of disagreeing with the premises of the opponent. This way of building disagreement incrementally, step-by-step, is made possible and even favored by this specific interactional context (i.e. a public debate), where the moderator stays in the background (to be compared with TV debates where the moderator is much more active). Additionally, since all the participants in public debates are interacting face-to-face, rules of politeness which typically operate in ordinary conversation seem to remain active, to prevent a potentially face-threatening atmosphere when discussing controversial political issues (see also Woodhams, 2019, p. 147 and ss.).

This contrasts with the following extract taken from the TV debate on the same topic.

(7) DTV_REC / 000:35:02.107 - 000:35:16.665
 1 HAL par là même ils bloquent les projets puisque si .h le promoteur
in doing so they block projects since if .h the promoter
 2 n'admet pas cette pression .h heu insoutenable eh bien il en a
cannot support this unsustainable pressure well he or she faces
 3 pour quatre ans de procéd[ure et il va renoncer au projet\
for years of proced[ure and he or she will give up\<
 4 HOD [plus avec le nouveau droit d' recours
[not anymore with the updated right
 5 en] non plus avec le nouveau droit de re[cours depuis]&
x] no not anymore with the updated right to ap[peal since]
 6 LOR [alors]
[well]
 7 HOD &[deux mille six]
[two thousand six]
 8 HAL [non (.)] alors ça [c'est] [ça c'est [tout à fait xx]]
[no (.)] well that [that is] [that is [absolutely xx]]
 9 LOR [alors]
[well]
 10 HOD > [ça c'est faux [c' que vous dites]]
[that is wrong [what you say]]
 11 LOR [mons-] monsieur
[mi-] mister
 12 nidegger
nidegger

In lines 1–3 HAL unfolds his argumentation: ecological NGOs can block projects at any time, whereas promoters face economic pressure during long legal procedures. HOD opposes HAL in lines 4–5, arguing that this is no longer the case with the updated right to appeal. HAL and the moderator LOR try to interrupt HOD but he follows up in line 10 with *ça c'est faux ce que vous dites* [that is wrong what you say]. By doing so, he frames his turn as disagreeing with the reported content, i.e. he inserts a disagreement marker (“that is wrong”) before the reported speech marker pointing at what has just been uttered by

the addressee (“what you say”). In comparison with the previous example, the disagreement here is much more direct and immediate; it is not built through an incremental, co-constructed explanation sequence as is the case in the public debate.

4.4. Disagreeing moves

Table 6 shows the different kinds of disagreeing moves annotated in the data. In cases of direct disagreement, the speaker rejects the reported content [P], categorizing it as false, or unjustified. When using a straw man argument, the reported content [P] has been rephrased in order to appear ridiculous or at least easily objectionable.¹⁵ When pointing at a logical inconsistency, the speaker assumes that the reported content [P] is inconsistent with what the reported speaker previously said, be it in the recorded event or in another context.¹⁶ Finally, in concessive moves, the speaker agrees on the reported content [P], but only to disagree in a second step about the interpretation and weight of [P] given the specific context discussed.

Table 6
Type of disagreement, by settings.

Type of disagreement	Political debates (10h)		Work meetings (10h)	Total
	Public debates (8h)	TV debates (2h)		
Concession	1	2	2	5
Logical inconsistency	6	2	1	9
Straw man	1	7		8
Direct disagreement	13	8	2	23
Total	21	19	5	45

Table 6 shows that direct disagreement is the most frequent means of disagreeing with the reported content ($n = 23/45$, 51%), before pointing to a logical inconsistency ($n = 9/45$, 20%), using a straw man argumentation ($n = 8/45$, 18%) or building a concessive move ($n = 5/45$, 11%). In work meetings, concessions are as frequent as direct disagreements and consist of 40% ($n = 2/5$) of the disagreeing-oriented *tu dis* [you say], something that converges with the idea that work meetings are more oriented towards agreement than political debates.

Below is an example of a concessive move taken from a TV debate about a political initiative aimed at prohibiting vehicles that are too dangerous (e.g. SUVs) or pollutant (e.g. sports cars). PTI, who represents an ecological NGO, takes her turn at line 1 by rephrasing the position defended in the initiative about safety.

(8) DTV_VEH / 000:51:49.397 – 000:52:07.397
 1 PTI donc juste pour cette raison ça nous paraît évident que ce type
 so just for this reason it seems obvious to us that this type
 2 de véhicules pas tous (.) mais ceux qui sont dangereux: ou trop
 of vehicles not all (.) but the ones that are dangerous or too
 3 dangereux doivent être retirés de la vente/ .h et .h c'est
 dangerous must be pulled off the market/ .h and .h it's
 4 > surtout: pour ces: ces raisons-là que les familles comme **vous**
 for that that specific reasons that families as you
 5 > **dites** achètent ce type de véhicules/ mais je pense
 say buy this kind of vehicles/ but I think
 6 [que ces familles sont mal informées] sur la sécurité de ces&
 [that these families are ill informed] about the safety of these
 7 PON [pour écraser les piétons:]
 [to run over pedestrians]
 8 PTI &véhicules visiblement\
 vehicles obviously

At lines 3–5, PTI agrees (“as you say”) that “families buy this kind of vehicle” (i.e. SUV), but reframes this statement as being only a concession (“but”, line 5), pointing at the fact that “these families are ill informed about the safety of these vehicles” (lines 6–8).¹⁷ Interestingly, her opponent PON overlaps at line 7 and reacts in a highly ironical and polemical way by rephrasing his conceded position as “[families buy this kind of vehicle] to run over pedestrians”. That example shows how risky it is to introduce a concession in a TV debate, where turn-taking is highly dynamic and favors direct confrontation with

¹⁵ The straw man argument involves a “misrepresentation of someone's commitments in order to refute that person's argument” (Walton, 1996, p. 115).

¹⁶ “In the *logical inconsistency circumstantial ad hominem* argument, a contrast is presented between two propositions to which the opponent is supposedly committed” (Walton et al., 2008, p. 147).

¹⁷ Extract 8 is a typical example of what Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (2000) and Barth (2000) would call a “cardinal concessive schema”. This schema articulates two components, the first being the conceded content and the second the disaffiliated one, which is “projected” by both a “semantic partitioning” (i.e. a contrast) in the first clause (*ces raisons-là* [that specific reasons]) and a “fall-rise tone” on the last word (*véhicules* [vehicles]) (Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson, 2000, p. 398–402). The use of the concessive “*mais*” [but] (e.g. Barth, 2000, p. 418–420; see also Pfänder, 2016, on French) that follows contributes to highlighting the two-steps dynamics (*comme vous dites... mais* [as you say... but]), in a similar way to the German *zwar... aber* [true... but] construction examined by Günthner (2016): “Furthermore, this bi-partite connective is also convenient for the recipient: It makes the concessive pattern more transparent, as *zwar* [here: *comme vous dites* [as you say]] already signifies in the first component that the utterance is dealing with some contrastive effect; without *zwar*, the contrasting content becomes evident only when the ensuing *aber*-component is produced” (Günthner, 2016, p. 154).

antagonistic positions. In other words, since concession encompasses an agreement, the speaker using it risks giving their opponent a stick to beat them with.

Comparing public and TV debates allows us to identify interesting differences regarding the distribution of the two *ad hominem* types of disagreeing moves (i.e. pointing to a logical inconsistency and building a straw man argument).¹⁸ Straw man arguments consist of 37% (n = 7/19) of disagreeing-oriented *tu dis* [you say] in TV debates, whereas they count for only 5% (n = 1/21) in public debates. Extract 9 is an example of a straw man argument taken from the public debate on the initiative aimed at limiting the legal rights of ecological NGOs. One such NGO is represented by SNG who takes her turn at line 1 and maintains that real-estate promoters will try to influence political authorities to get their projects accepted.

(9) DTV_REC / 000:54:10.184 - 000:54:18.953
 1 SNG vous savez bien que un grand promoteur (0.2) va influencer
 you know that a big promoter (0.2) will influence from
 2 par derrière [les autorités] les autorités seront sensibles/=
 the back [the authorities] the authorities will be sensitive/=
 3 NAN [mais bien sûr]
 [yeah of course]
 4 NAN =alors [toutes les autorités] sont pourries&
 =so [all the authorities] are rotten&
 5 SNG [les promoteurs/]
 [the promoters/]
 6 NAN > &c'est ça c' que [vous dites/]
 &that's what [you are saying/]
 7 SNG [je dis pas ça:]
 [I am not saying that]

NAN first reacts with an ironic “yeah of course” at line 3, before moving to a disagreement-oriented reformulation argument: “so all the authorities are rotten, that’s what you are saying” (lines 4–6). By using this straw man argument, he makes his opponent’s argumentation more vulnerable to being counter-argued. Again, we see here a trace of the fact that TV debates are more polemical contexts, where *ad hominem* arguments contribute to building a confrontation, not only between antagonistic positions but also between the people who endorse them (e.g. Burger et al., 2011; Hutchby, 1996).

Finally, regarding arguments pointing to a logical inconsistency, Table 6 shows that they are proportionally more frequent in public debates (n = 6/21, 29%) than in TV debates (n = 2/19, 11%). One reason for this asymmetric distribution in favor of public debates could be that logical inconsistencies take longer to build than other disagreeing moves (e.g. direct disagreements and straw man arguments as exemplified earlier) and, therefore, do not fit into contexts where access to the floor is relatively more competitive and involves less time to speak, such as TV debates (see Extract 6 for an example).

5. Conclusion

The present paper’s starting point has been a rather simple question: in which speech context and for what pragmatic purpose do speakers report their addressee’s speech? A review of the existing literature has shown that this phenomenon, at least in the case of the French language, remains largely unexplored. This is all the more surprising in that the various resources for reporting speech in French have been studied quite extensively (e.g. Authier-Revuz, 1995, 2019; Bres et al., 2005; Munoz et al., 2004; Rosier, 2008). From there, the present paper has focused on the prototypical verb *dire* [say] (Anscombe and Rouanne, 2020; Rouanne and Anscombe, 2016). As discussed on several occasions in the current study, this verb is of theoretical interest from a pragmatic perspective as it is semantically neutral in terms of the stance taken on the reported content. In other words, whether the reported content [P] is agreed or disagreed by the reporting speaker depends on the context in which *tu dis* [P] [you say [P]] is used, something that has been confirmed by a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the 108 tokens of *tu dis* [you say] identified in a 20h corpus of recorded natural interactions documenting political (public and TV) debates and work meetings.

Analysis shows that cases where the reporting speaker adopts a neutral stance towards the reported content are rare and emerge for specific purposes: (i) to recall the reported speaker’s position in order to increase the visibility and intelligibility of opposing positions (e.g. tokens by the moderator in TV debates), or (ii) to check and verify the reported speech before actually adopting a stance (i.e. agreement or disagreement) towards the reported content. In both cases, the general idea is that when reporting their addressee’s speech, the speaker admits that the reported content is located in the “epistemic territory” (Bristol and Rossano, 2020; Heritage, 2012a, 2012b) of the addressee.

By contrast, the analysis also shows that, in most cases, the reporting speaker using *tu dis* [P] [you say [P]] does take a stance towards [P], and that the stance is highly context-sensitive, largely dependant on the genre of discourse. In work meetings, and besides cases of neutral tokens oriented to a verification/question about the reported content [P] (i.e. collaborative work aiming to establish intersubjectivity among participants), the marker is often used for agreement, which is strongly preferred in this context. On the other side of the spectrum, putting aside the neutral tokens by the moderator to

¹⁸ *Ad hominem* arguments consist of attacks on the opponent’s credibility by means of what he or she has previously said during the argumentative discussion (Angenot, 2008; Walton, 1998); *ad hominem* moves should be distinguished from *ad personam* arguments, which are direct attacks on the opponent’s face (e.g. criticisms, insults, denigrations).

frame and organize the confrontation, *tu dis* [you say] constructions in TV debates are strongly oriented towards disagreement when used by debaters, who are expected to frame their turns as opposing previous talk. In comparison with the two other genres, public debates constitute the most unpredictable context because of the flexibility that characterizes the participation and stance-taking activity of the audience, who can either ask debaters for clarification and additional information, or engage in argumentative affiliation or opposition. Turn-taking organization in public debates is also a context that favors the emergence of relatively longer turns and, therefore, argumentative moves, including disagreement, that are more discursively complex, such as pointing at a logical inconsistency.

In summary, we can see here a case of a pragmatic/situated enrichment of a semantically/conceptually neutral expression, which highlights the importance of genre expectations and the indexical and flexible nature of evidential markers. That conclusion raises more general questions and opens up research perspectives at different levels.

First, at the theoretical and methodological levels, the present paper modestly contributes to the self-defining stage of pragmatics, semantics, and the interface between the two (see, for example, the still relevant discussion in [Levinson, 1983](#); see also [Carston 2017](#)). The definition of pragmatics, and its interface with semantics, indeed remains a challenge and the present study indirectly problematizes two issues related to that discussion:

1. *The definition of what can be considered the relevant context(s) that contribute(s) to the meaning of linguistic resources.* As phrased by [Rühlemann and Aijmer \(2014, p. 3\)](#), “the intricate contextual embeddedness of communication poses immense challenges for pragmatic analysis (see [Cook, 1990](#)). What are the relevant contextual features, i.e., the features which are activated in the communication situation? How do the contextual parameters differ depending on the communication situation?”. The present paper confirms previous studies that demonstrated the relevance of the genre as a relevant contextual parameter, together with the linguistic and sequential/interactional environments. By examining different levels of “granularity” ([Schegloff, 2000](#)) in a more systematic way, it would be possible, ultimately, to study the orientation – at the micro-interactional level – of *tu dis* [P] [you say [P]] towards agreement/disagreement by differentiating, on the one hand, (i) macro-interactional expectations related to the genre (e.g. political debates, work meetings) from meso-interactional projections related to sequence organization (e.g. negotiation, brainstorming, telling) (e.g. see [Jacquin and Gradoux, 2015](#)), and, on the other hand, between (ii) preference organization at the micro-sequential level and more macro-sociological and psychological issues related to politeness.
2. *The current and emerging methods used to ground and operationalize this complexity in empirical data.* The present paper shows that corpus linguistics methods can fruitfully be applied to the study of pragmatic phenomena such as epistemic and evidential markers (see also [Miecznikowski et al., 2021](#), [Jacquin et al., 2022](#)) and more generally to issues related to the semantics-pragmatics interface (e.g. [Romero-Trillo, 2008](#); [Rühlemann and Clancy, 2018](#); [Weisser, 2018](#)). Boosted by data sharing and massification, corpus pragmatics ([Rühlemann and Aijmer, 2014](#)) strengthens fine-grained, qualitative analysis by quantitative measures and overviews that are statistically robust. Ultimately, mixed methods in pragmatics could also be extended and lead to the association of corpus linguistics and experimental paradigms (e.g. [Gilquin and Gries, 2009](#)) towards a more holistic analysis of evidential and epistemic markers (e.g. the *tu dis* [P] [you say [P]] examined in the present paper), notably by assessing acceptability judgments in a more controlled environment (e.g. contextual variables).

Finally, at a more analytical and descriptive level, the paper opens up three directions for further study. First, the corpus could be extended by varying the genres under scrutiny in order to compare the present results on political debates and work meetings with observations on other generic and sequential contexts (e.g. ordinary conversation, medical consultation, court interaction, classroom interaction). Furthermore, an important extension of the present paper would be to include this case analysis about the verb *dire* [say] in an extended examination of the various resources available in French to report the addressee's speech, whether by looking at other introductory verbs (e.g. *prétendre* [pretend], *révéler* [reveal], *affirmer* [claim] and so on) or other discursive devices (e.g. repetitions, reformulations, allusions and so on). Finally, the present study calls for cross-linguistics' explorations to assess the extent to which the results relating to *tu dis* [P] [you say [P]] are generalizable or language-specific (e.g. English *say*, German *sagen*, Italian *dire*, Spanish *diga*, and so on).

6. Transcript conventions

/ \	Rising and falling intonations
:	Prolongation of a sound
-	Abrupt interruption in utterance
(.) (n)	Micro-pauses; pauses in seconds
.h .hh	In-breath
MAIS	Emphasis
[YY YYYY]	Overlapping speech
&	Extension of the turn after an overlap
=	Latching
(it; eat)	Speech which is in doubt in the transcript
XX XXX	Speech which is unclear in the transcript
((laughs))	Annotation of non-verbal activity

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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