

IN FACT AND INFATTI: THE SAME, SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT

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0. Introduction

There is an area of non-equivalence between *in fact* and *infatti* in terms of their functions in English and Italian discourse and I would like to investigate to what extent this area develops. The literature concerning expressions like *in fact/infatti* points out that they represent a serious difficulty for non-native speakers (Browne 1987), because correspondence across languages may be defective. A connective may be lacking in one language, or, when it exists, it often shares a different value. Since connectives mainly serve an interactive function which varies according to the language and mirrors the behavioural rules of a community, non-native speakers and students should be made aware of their contrastive functions, in order to avoid pragmatic mistakes and awkwardness.

In the present research I will analyze spoken data in both English and Italian conversations, although some references to monologic argumentative discourse might be useful to better characterize the nature of these connectives.

1. Connectives: the state-of-the-art

Expressions like *in fact/infatti* have been variously referred to as "attitudinal disjuncts" (Quirk and Greenbaum 1976), "discourse markers" (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1990; Redeker 1990), "pragmatic/metatextual/discursive connectives" (van Dijk 1979; Bazzanella 1985, 1986, 1990; Caron 1987), and in Italian *particelle conversazionali* 'conversational particles', *connettivi testuali* 'textual connectors' (Berretta 1984) or, more often, *segnali discorsivi* 'discourse markers' (Orletti 1994; Bazzanella 1995).

Quirk et al. (1976) identify "attitudinal disjuncts" as those unnecessary constituents of a clause which may express a reservation about a preceding portion of text or about what is to follow.

Schiffrin (1987), who has offered the most thorough review of markers so far, describes markers in a large corpus of conversational data and attempts to give them a functional meaning. She also develops a theoretical model to evaluate how/to what extent markers contribute to the coherence of discourse. In particular, she investigates how the same item has to be understood differently according to its role at different points in the conversation. The flexibility and the lack of constraints of her analysis do not always permit to make successful generalisations on the basis of a few context-dependent interpretations. The merit of this research lies however in the attempt to propose a

taxonomy of discourse functions.

Fraser (1990) identifies three different types of markers: "basic pragmatic markers", "commentary markers" and "parallel markers". Discourse markers are one type of "commentary markers", whose main task is that of pointing out how the message relates to the preceding text. So their function is mainly to pinpoint a sequential relationship within discourse. Fraser's approach is aimed at establishing the nature of markers, and consequently how they should be defined as a linguistic category. He disagrees with Schifffrin's statement about markers' core meaning and suggests they have only a core pragmatic meaning, without any content meaning. Discourse markers are kept apart from other types of commentary markers, from vocatives, interjections, and expressions such as "y'know", "I mean", which he does not treat as markers.

Bazzanella (1985, 1986, 1990) prefers to use the term "connectives". She distinguishes "phatic connectives", which correspond to what other linguists call "discourse particles/markers", from "pragmatic connectives", which play a metatextual role. She shares Fraser's thesis concerning markers' lack of relation to the propositional content of an utterance. In her final classification (1995) she identifies three main functions: the interactional (markers which belong either to the speaker's line or to the addressee's line), the metatextual (for those markers which organise the text), and the cognitive function.

The taxonomies proposed either establish criteria for distinction on the basis of syntactic features, semantic properties or discursive functions, very often mixing up the parameters, or record the different uses a marker may have in discourse (Wierzbicka 1986).

2. Starting hypotheses

Besides the syntactic criteria (the tests of interrogation, negation and pronominal substitution; see Bazzanella 1995) which establish that markers do not belong to the number of the obligatory constituents of a clause, another prerequisite is the fact that they do not contribute to the propositional content (Fraser 1990: 389; Bazzanella 1995: 228). It is true that the propositional content does not change if the connective¹ is erased, yet if a connective has been chosen among many options, its meaning should be somehow relevant to the content.

Both *in fact* and *infatti* satisfy the above mentioned syntactic criteria, and their lexical meaning seems to contribute to the definition of the illocutionary force of the utterance. If we admit that they both have some influence on the illocutionary force of the utterance, and if we recognize that their lexical meaning is more or less correspondent, we are justified in expecting similarity in their pragmatic functions. In reality it must be acknowledged that similarity is very scanty indeed. What I actually found is the following pattern. Whereas *in fact* introduces an autonomous argumentative assertion, *infatti* signals acquiescence or compliance. So in English *in fact* is forward-oriented, in that it allows semantic and pragmatic progression of discourse and interaction, while *infatti* displays agreement with the co-speaker but points backwards. In other words, it does not allow text progress.

¹ The term "connective" appears more useful in that it stresses the general relational function that this category usually performs.

A suitable starting point for my argumentation is a comparison of the discursive functions of both connectives. Among many models, I have adopted Bazzanella's taxonomy of functions, which is displayed in the following figures.

INTERACTIONAL FUNCTION

SPEAKER		HEARER
1a turn-taking device		1b interrupting device
2 filler/correction indicator		
3a call for attention	INFATTI→	3b attention confirmed
4 phatism/vocative		
5 modulation mechanism	←IN FACT	
6a checking reception		6b reception confirmed
7a asking for agreement/confirmation	INFATTI→	7b agreement/confirmation granted
8 giving the turn		

METATEXTUAL FUNCTION

IN FACT →	Topic management Text articulation	← INFATTI
IN FACT →	Focaliser	
IN FACT →	Reformulation:	
IN FACT →	a) paraphrase	
IN FACT →	b) correction	
IN FACT →	c) exemplification (specification)	

In assigning functions to connectives we generally discriminate and choose the most relevant ones, but there may be a coalescence of many in a single utterance. Bazzanella (1995), for instance, distinguishes the metatextual from the interactional function and to the former she ascribes all the indicators of reformulation, whereas to the latter the markers of modulation, e.g. cataphoric signals of precision. But in this respect I think that it is hardly possible to fix a boundary between the two functions, since both reformulation and modulation in terms of grades of precision serve the same goal of communicative effectiveness. Modulation may be conceived as an instance of the more general act of reformulating (cf. Caffi 1990), where modulation is seen as the superordinate category of both intensification and mitigation).

Let's now consider some examples² and identity functional correspondence, if any.

² The English examples are drawn from the Cobuild Spoken Corpus and the British National Corpus. My Italian data include several sources: The PIXI corpora on bookshop encounters, the LIP corpus

- (1) A: Er 'creosote is not a thick liquid it's a very thin liquid. It looks sort of you expected it to be thick but **in fact** it's about as thin as water (C)
- (2) A: say well **in fact** what's happening is that the central bank is willing to re-discount loans that the commercial banks make and so they can they will **in fact** expand loans through the commercial banks through the rediscount procedure. So the banks don't have the resources to make more loans erm you know nobody's increasing (C)
- (3) A: so the the the criminal once he knows he's being watched he he knows that he's going to be caught sooner or later and he may **in fact** be deterred in fact he will be deterred because ...
B: Yeah but it's important to make sure that that erm you ou that erm you know things are ess easy for criminals that the fact ...(C)
- (4) A: and the one that they have is actually like a big plunger but it's kind of like this suction sticker thing here. Right. So like if you push this down in here it sticks. **In fact** this one sticks incredibly hard (laugh) (C)
- (5) A: It's already you've already wiped all the surfaces and (pause) washed up
B: I used to make cakes
A: So I keep hearing
B: (laughs) in a former life
A: **In fact** have I actually sampled one of your cakes? (C)
- (6) C: *Comunque anche cercargli le parole sul vocabolario e fargli vedere*
A: *Ecco ecco*
C: *Come si usa il vocabolario*
A: *(?) indispensabile*
B: *Certo*
C: **Infatti**
A: **Infatti** e - gli fa anche bene io gli ho detto a me mi va bene se porti tedesco. (LIP-FI)
C: Anyway you can also look up words in the dictionary for him and show him
A: That's true
C: How to use a dictionary
A: *(?) vital*
B: **Absolutely**
C: **That's right**
A: Yes and it'll do him good I said to him it's fine for me if you prepare German
- (7) C: *Be no Sgarbi con ricomincio da due o da tre che sia non mi ricordo della Raffaella Carrà il sabato fa una lezione di arte e lui va lui va nei vari posti così italiani magari anche posti sconosciuti però che magari si lasciano un po' perdere e li presenta per esempio quan(do) è stato al tempio di Bramante*
B: *Ma questo è un pericolo pubblico si sposta pure*
A: *Sì sì infatti* (LIP-MI)

of spoken Italian, TV programs, some extracts from everyday conversations and newspapers I have personally collected. I have used the following abbreviations: C: Cobuild Spoken Corpus; BNC = British National Corpus; PIXI = the PIXI corpora; LIP = Lessico di frequenza dell'Italiano parlato, where FI stands for data recorded in Florence and MI for data recorded in Milan.

- C: Well no Sgarbi with Let's start again from number two or three [title of a TV programme] whatever I don't remember starring Raffaella Carrà he lectures on art on Saturdays and goes and visits various places, I mean in Italy, also unknown places, which people may disregard a little and he introduces them for instance he went to Bramante's temple
- B: But he's a public menace for he's always on the move
- A: **He is indeed**

(8)

- B: *Andiamo avanti allora chi parla?*
- F: *Eh Paolo da Milano*
- B: *Buonasera Paolo*
- F: *Buonasera saluti a tutti*
- B: *Alzi la voce per cortesia grazie [...]*
- F: *Senta volevo domandare questo eh non credete che nell'Inter [pausa] al di là dei giocatori che non si impegnano più di tanto perché molto probabilmente sono demotivati ma credo che Trapattoni oltre ad essere un buon allenatore gli altri anni faceva anche da dirigente nell'Inter cioè faceva eh*
- B: *Sì sì*
- F: *Legava tra i giocatori e la società oggi a me sembra che questa società non abbia collegamenti [...]*
- B: *Qualcuno diceva ma Trapattoni lì si deve occupare un po' di tutto invece dicevano eh guarda il Milan il team manager eh il coso di qui e Ramaccioni e Braida adesso*
- A: *E infatti (LIP-MI TV program)*
- B: Let's go on then. Who is it?
- F: It's Paolo from Milan
- B: Good evening Paolo
- F: Good evening to everybody
- B: Can you speak up please [...]
- F: I'd like to ask this mm don't you think that Inter players well apart from the fact that they don't put much in it maybe because their heart's not in it but I think that Trapattoni what's more is a good coach in the past he was also one of the team managers that is he
- B: Yes he was
- F: He was a link between the players and the society but now I think this club has no links [...]
- B: Somebody said Trapattoni has to attend to everything but in fact people said look Milan have their team manager and what's-his-name and Ramaccioni and Braida [two of the team managers] now
- A: **That's true**

(9)

- A: *Ma cos'è questa storia dei taxi che cambiano colore?*
- B: *Sì infatti*
- A: *Lei ce l'avrà già bianco*
- C: *No ce l'ho sempre giallo*
- B: *Come la mia moto*
- C: *E infatti lavoro molto più dei miei colleghi (La Ruota della Fortuna 27/5/95)*
- A: What about the fact that taxies are a different colour now?
- B: **Yes, they are**
- A: Yours must be white
- C: No, I've got a yellow one
- B: Like my motor-cycle
- C: And I **actually** work much more than my colleagues

(10)

- C: Perché telefoni col microfono?
 A: Eh?
 C: Perché stai telefonando col microfono?
 A: Perché devo aiutare la mia mamma che deve registrare le telefonate
 C: Ah
 A: Sì *infatti* (f) ascolta
 C: Dimmi
 A: (?) andiamo con una macchina sola? (LIP-FI, telephone conversation)
 C: Why are using a microphone?
 A: What?
 C: Why are speaking in a microphone?
 A: Because I'm helping my mother to record phone calls
 C: Mm
 A: Well, listen
 C: Alright
 A: (?) Shall we go all in one car?

Number (1) to (4) are all instances of metatextual functions. (1) is a correction, (2) and (3) are reformulations, (4) is a modulation in more precise terms (which in Bazzanella's taxonomy belongs to the interactional function, but I think it is practically equivalent with the metatextual reformulation); (5) signals topic management³, i.e. a topic shift. Example (1), (2), and (4) seem instances of monologic argumentative discourse, but they are actually inserted in dialogic exchanges, where the speaker is trying to uphold her/his own opinion and finally convince the listener.

Number (6), (7) and (8) show how *infatti* signals agreement in responses; in (9) the first instance of *infatti* is an attention-granting device, rather than a signal of agreement, whereas the second codes a causal relation. *Infatti* is often used to link results to their causes (Serianni 1988: 542): The second occurrence in (9) is an example of this type. Yellow was the most typical colour for taxis, until white was also introduced. But yellow cars are immediately identified as taxis, whereas white ones are not. One needs to read the word taxi or identify a company logo before being sure that it is a taxi.

In Italian the "causal" *infatti* is widely used both in conversation and in monologic discourse. The functions it performs in these two discourse modes are not totally divergent. A⁴ Although monologic argumentative discourse is not within the scope of this paper, I will

³ For a description of the role of topic in the construction of conversational coherence and cooperativeness see Bublitz 1988.

⁴ As I have already stated, monologic argumentative discourse is not the focus of the present paper. Yet a brief look at an example of legal discourse (Alcaro 1996) shows that "causal" *infatti* is widely used:

- a) Non avrebbe senso [nel caso degli atti cosiddetti personalissimi] parlare di una mera incapacità di agire: Nessuno *infatti* protrebbe sostituire il soggetto nel compimento di quegli atti e dunque si potrebbe pensare all'assenza della stessa titolarità astratta della situazione giuridica venendo a mancare cioè l'imputabilità stessa dell'effetto giuridico. Il soggetto non può *infatti* in nessun modo essere parte della situazione in esame, per cui, rispetto a quegli atti, egli appare non solo incapace di agire, ma anche incapace giuridicamente (Alcaro 1996: 31);
- b) La formula dell' 832 [del codice civile, S.B.] deve essere peraltro, caso per caso, rapportata ed integrata con le discipline speciali dettate per i singoli beni, con risultati ed effetti che potranno comprimere l'assolutezza e la pienezza del diritto. Sarebbe *infatti* illusorio pensare che possa esistere un concetto univoco di proprietà adatto per tutte le categorie di

briefly come back to this later.

As for *infatti*, Bazzanella's model is not fine-grained enough to describe the scalar dimension of agreement. On the addressee scale she identifies the function "agreement/confirmation granted", but she does not specify the intensity, which is essential for *infatti*, because it does not belong to the economy of her investigation. As we shall see, sometimes *infatti* is uttered by a speaker with a low degree of commitment, either when s/he wants to end the present topic, or when s/he employs it as a safe way to participate a conversation which s/he finds boring and dull. In (10) *infatti* underlines a topic closing. As can be seen, only example (5) of *in fact* finds a functional correspondence with *infatti* of (10), and the area of functional divergence is certainly wider. The only discursive function they seem to share is that of topic management.

3. *In fact/infatti* and the nature of the illocutionary force

A first hypothesis and a first step in the analysis has been that in each language the expression preferentially occurs in some speech act types. It is the context within which *in fact* and *infatti* occur that specifies the global force of the markers. According to our investigation *in fact* appears preferentially in assertives. Conversely, the overwhelming majority of instances of *infatti* occur in second-speaker responses, either alone or with other words (*e* 'and', *si* 'yes', *no* 'no'). These short answers are sequences to implied disagreement, passing through the middle stage of partial agreement.

The illocutionary status of an utterance results from the calculation of the effect of many different micro-oscillations produced by the different constituents of an utterance, each of which is an illocutionary force indicator (for a discussion of the dimensions of illocutionary force to which downgrading/upgrading applies cf. Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 1994: 281). Markers of the type of *in fact/infatti* contribute to this count as illocutionary force indicating devices that interact with other indicators. Modification of illocutionary force may concern different dimensions. As Bazzanella et al (1990) have shown, illocutionary force may be modified, either by downgrading or upgrading its intensity, on four different dimensions: 1) propositional content, 2) expressed inner states, 3) modal roles of participants and 4) perlocutionary goals. Each category is then divided into finer sub-categories.

Let's first have a look at the English examples of assertives.

ASSERTIVES:

(1)-(4) quoted above

(11) A: Which foot have you got a verruca on? Just get another sock out. You must have millions.

 B: I haven't got very many socks. I haven't got any socks **in fact**. (C)

(12) A: I only missed two preps. That is strange. In fact I only missed one prep (BNC)

beni (Alcaro 1996: 35).

This metatextual function in monologic discourse should be further investigated, for it might prove to be an area where the English and the Italian connective perform similar or identical functions.

- (13) A: at the time, I can't remember much about it. **In fact** I can't remember anything about it ... (BNC)
- (14) A: and you [laugh] may as well do your own thing.
 B: So in the summer term in theory you could continue that part-time attendance then is that right?
 A: Yes I think **in fact** if you hadn't put in your erm appropriate amount you had to continue.
 B: Yes.
 A: The school had to take you on if you hadn't done as much as as many d [incomprehensible] half days as ... (C)

With the class of assertives variation of force especially applies to the illocutionary point and to sincerity conditions (Searle 1969; Searle and Vanderveken 1985), or to the propositional content and to the modal roles of the participants, especially to the speaker's commitment, if one refers to Bazzanella et al. (1990).

Most of the occurrences of *in fact* in assertives are corrections, or, in other words, upgradings of the propositional content or augmentations in terms of precision or determinacy. Here *in fact* undertakes the cataphoric function of indicating the reformulation which is to follow in variable forms: Paraphrase (repeating the same content/*signatum* with alternative lexis/*signans*), very rarely relevant for *in fact*, correction (entailing a total change) and specification, usually in numeric details. *In fact* fits an illocutionary act which displays the speaker's intention of making her/his contribution as clear as possible, and signals that cooperativeness is being pursued. The maxims of Quality and Quantity (Grice 1975) are carefully complied with, especially through correction and details, whereas the maxim of Manner is taken care of through paraphrase and exemplification.

Assertives generally expound the locutor's personal point of view on a certain state of affairs; this entails a modalization⁵ of discourse both at a global and local level (this is what Bazzanella et al. subsume under the label of "modal roles of participants"). Since argumentative discourse develops from the cognitive sphere of personal beliefs, epistemic modality is here particularly relevant. An epistemic modifier can contribute to the truth of a micro- or a macro-proposition. So *in fact* is included in the speaker's line of argumentation and belongs to the epistemic dimension.

There are, however, other indicators pertaining to the receiver's isotopic line, which do not interfere with the locutor's subscription of her/his thesis. This latter group expresses the high degree of inferability of a statement. My next aim is to ascertain whether *in fact* actually belongs to the class of epistemic or to that of inferability indicators. In other words, as Merlini Barbaresi (1987) claims for other expressions, even when a speaker judges the degree of inferability of her/his own thesis s/he signals in the meantime her/his own commitment. Therefore s/he performs two functions simultaneously. Yet, since both functions are acted out by the speaker, who strategically anticipates possible objections

⁵ For a similar notion of "modalization" see Merlini Barbaresi (1987). For a complete discussion on modality cf. Kiefer (1987). The three most important notions of modality Kiefer identifies are the following: 1) modality as an expression of possibility and necessity; 2) modality as the meaning of propositional attitudes; 3) modality as expression of the speaker's attitudes (which is the aspect in which I am interested in the discussion of *in fact*).

from the addressee by temporally performing the opponent's role, it is difficult to establish incontrovertibly to which line the modifier belongs. In this concern, Merlini Barbaresi proposes to consider this new line as referring to a third participant role as "a projection of the locutor's mind engaged in alternative courses of reasoning" and to subsume it under the epistemic evaluation. Still, there are cases where the patent value of obviousness corresponding to a high degree of inferability makes the thesis objective and self-evident. Lyons (1977, 1981) seems to refer to this borderline area when he distinguishes and displays, as we have already pointed out, the speaker's epistemic responsibility, while in the latter the evidence of the truth of the utterance does not lie within the speaker's epistemic world but may be ascribed to the so-called shared knowledge, available both to the speaker and to the addressee. Lyons calls this operation "objectivized modality".

In (2) the speaker engages in a modification of her/his own speech s/he first states a possibility with "can" but adds "will" followed by *in fact*. The modals intervene here to define the speaker's epistemic certainty. With "can" s/he first suggests the possibility of future action, by stating the actual ability of her/his referent to perform an action. The assignment of ability insinuates that the action will be performed. Then, with "will", s/he expresses a higher degree of certainty, and a high degree of subjective commitment. The following element, *in fact*, signals the high inferability of the speaker's thesis. The presence of two elements belonging subjectiveness and objectiveness. In (3) as well there is a progression of predictions: "going to" (announcing inevitable future events), then "may" + *in fact*, and finally "will". The second prediction is less certain than the first and *in fact* introduces the same propositional content, but changes in terms of argumentation. With "will" the speaker moves towards certainty and responsibility, yet preserving inferability.

In examples (11) to (14) *in fact* announces a reformulation in more precise terms. A shift towards more precision implies an upgrading of the propositional content. The meaning of *in fact* gives us the key to the interpretation: Its function is that of making it easier for the addressee to follow the reasoning of the speaker. Thus it is not so much an expression of the speaker's belief as of her/his attitude towards the degree of inferability of her/his statements. The presence of *in fact* signals that the speaker judges her/his assertions easily inferable.

In case of high inferability, the speaker decides to emphasize the self-evidence of her/his reasoning, which means a shift towards less personal commitment or a downgrading of subjective involvement. This does not mean that the overall assertive force is downgraded (it is argumentative force that is downgraded). Quite the contrary, for although the speaker does not show her/his involvement ("expressed inner states" in Bazzanella et al.), the propositional content is often intensified in precision and objectiveness. *In fact* is aimed to express the locutor's certainty by way of underlining the high degree of inferability of her/his thesis. In this way, by emphasising its objective, easily perceivable quality, the speaker achieves the goal of making a subjective idea acceptable.

If we check what happens with other speech act types we find out that *in fact* again introduces the speaker's elucidation of her/his own previous statement (there are a few cases of modification of other people's contribution, obviously for politeness implications). The locutor clearly displays her/his intention to make her/his contribution clearer.

DIRECTIVES

- (15) A: What how did you manage then er going through this erm
uncompromisingly dangerous j er on this er uncompri compromisingly

- da dangerous journey? How **in fact** did you manage to get round to laying foundations and?
- B: In our innocence we thought that we ought to go to an architect and we did who welcomed us with open arms and ... (C)
- (16) A: That I've never heard and I f I have great difficulty finding and I have to go to a big old dictionary [incomprehensible word]
- B: [incomprehensible word]
- A: Yeah that sort of thing what's a (incomprehensible word) **in fact** how do you pronounce it (C)

In (15) and (16) *in fact* contributes to define the degree of strength of the illocutionary force by operating on the propositional content. In both cases it serves the purpose of clarification. In (15) it dispels the confusion the speaker himself generated (in uttering "uncompromisingly" and "compromisingly") and in (16) the locutor interrupts himself in order to organise her/his ideas and give them a higher degree of precision with a second attempt. In (5) *in fact* announces a topic shifting and highlights a dishomogeneity in the management of textual topics. The degree of precision is looked for to prevent the addressee's possible objections. The ultimate degree of strength results thus from the calculation of the synergic modifications of all the different indicators.

With commissives, (17) to (19), *in fact* shares the same function and introduces a reshaping of the content in the direction of more precision. Especially with commissives, where a speaker undertakes a responsibility for the future, it is important to specify the limits of the commitment. In (17) the speaker's commitment is not actually specified in detail, but it is nonetheless upgraded.

COMMISSIVES

- (17) A: A very distressed state of mind
 B: That's very worrying isn't it?
 A: I just feel horrified and I I intend to do (pause) something about **in fact** I intend to do a lot about it (C)
- (18) A: Why don't I give you the name of [incomprehensible word] all the programme controllers of local radio
 B: That would be very helpful
 A: Erm **in fact** I'll give you a back copy of [proper noun] Pimms which has got or no a back copy of Editors. I've got a mag I've got a er a book that just lists all the key (C)
- (19) A: the hostage exchange being pretty close. It's the speculation is it ain't far way. Well I'll tell you what's twenty-four hours away well less actually is the show music **in fact** in twenty-one hours I'll be back with you. And on the show tomorrow night we shall be meeting Seline Dionne a Canadian singer doing awfully well in Quebec [pause] and now ... (C)

Let us turn to Italian. As I anticipated above, *infatti* mainly occurs in second-speaker agreement responses. *Infatti* actually occurs in monologic and written discourse too. In these two formats it mainly operates as a conjunction which marks exemplification or demonstration of thematic connectedness. Sometimes, even in dialogic spoken or demonstration of thematic connectedness. Sometimes, even in dialogic spoken discourse, *infatti* may underline this aspect of textual coherence. In general, in all these cases it is used argumentatively to support what has been stated before. This function is not totally different from the one that can be found in second-speaker agreement, but the commitment is definitely stronger. In other words, the monologic argumentative use of *infatti* might be envisaged as an extension of the agreement expressing dialogical function. The matter should however be more extensively investigated (for a discussion of *infatti* in argumentative discourse see Freddi 1998).

The range of functions it performs is more limited than that of *in fact*; yet, in agreement sequences *infatti* may occur with varying degrees of commitment: On the gradient of agreement it can express the maximum level of agreement, a partial level, or even ironic disapproval. Simple forms of agreement are shown in examples (6), (7), (8) above.

Sometimes the contribution of the addressee is so limited that the sequence where *infatti* occurs does not seem to promote any new information unit either concerning the interaction or the locutor's own discourse. As always when scalar dimension is at stake, there are numerous intermediate positions between the pole of unconditional agreement and that of absolute disagreement. I have observed that in partial agreement *infatti* can convey an uncommitted subscription to the locutor's line of reasoning, which may be due to the addressee's desire to rapidly come to an end or to express feigned solidarity for politeness. In both cases, *infatti* is almost desemanticized, inclining clearly to a pathic response. In example (10) speaker A is answering listlessly to his friend's question. His '*sì infatti*' sounds final and leaves no room to objections or expansions, for it is followed by the focaliser '*ascolta*', which is forward-oriented.

- (20)
- | | |
|----|--|
| A: | <i>Poi ti vie li prendi, a te da sola eh in un colpo solo</i> |
| B: | <i>Li prendo tutti</i> |
| A: | <i>Sì può fare un po' di sconto</i> |
| B: | <i>Ecco bene questo è un buon discorso infatti perché se no</i> |
| A: | <i>Mm sui libri sì sulle cassette no perché mi costano molto a a me</i> |
| B: | <i>Eh a infatti immagino sì sì Sempre sì sempre il solito discorso. (PIXI Bof F-18/b5)</i> |
| A: | Then I you come take them, you alone all at once |
| B: | I'll take them all |
| A: | You can have a discount |
| B: | Well, that's a good thing Ø because otherwise |
| A: | Erm there is a discount for books, but not for tapes because they're expensive for me |
| B: | Mm but I see it's always the same matter |

In (20) the second occurrence of *infatti* uttered by B does not seem to signal a deep-felt

agreement: There are actually several indicators of B's disappointment when she is told that types are excluded from the discount formula: The parenthetical verb "*immagino*" narrows the subscription to the truth of the proposition. Yet, being a subjective evaluation (Venier 1991: 118), it still leaves the matter unsettled. It is in uttering "*sempre il solito discorso*" that the speaker presents her conclusion through implicature. Without explicitly stating that, she means that the preceding explanation is the typical excuse bookshop assistants produce when asked for discounts. Irony usually corresponds to pretended empathy, with the intent of hurting the listener (Litman and May 1991: 147; see Merlini Barbaresi for "aggravation strategies").

We admitted the possibility of finding cases of implied disagreement on the basis of intuitive predictions and experience, but in our corpus we actually came across two examples:

- (21) A: *La gente pensa che un insegnante non faccia niente. Mi dicono ti cerchiamo ma non ci sei mai sei una girottolona* (dialect for *girellona*, 'a gadabout'). *Si infatti...*
- A: People think that teachers don't work enough. They tell me that I can never be found at home, that I always gad about. **They have every right to say so!!**
- (22) *La Stanza di Montanelli "Milano: a favore dei vigili. Una politica sconsiderata"*
- A: *Vigili picchiati in piazza Duomo, leggo in un articolo del Corriere del 28 marzo. Ecco il frutto della sconsiderata politica di Albertini e della sua giunta e degli articoli di Montanelli nei confronti dei vigili. S'è mai visto che un sindaco non faccia altro che acuire la tensione tra i suoi vigili e la cittadinanza? Queste due righe non saranno pubblicate, dato il conclamato malanimo di Montanelli nei confronti dei vigili. Elda Carini, Milano.*
- B: **Infatti.**
Montanelli's room [page where a famous journalist publishes and comments letters from his readers] "Milan: supporting policemen against an irresponsible policy"
- A: On the 28th march I read in the Corriere that some policemen had been beaten in Piazza Duomo. That is the outcome of Albertini [the mayor] and the town council's irresponsible policy and Montanelli's articles against policemen. Has it ever been heard that a mayor favours conflict between his policemen and citizens? There is no doubt that this letter will not be published because of Montanelli's sworn ill-will towards policemen. Elda Carini, Milan.
- B: [the journalist publishes the letter and adds his comment]: **Here it is!**⁶

In (21) *infatti* occurs in the speaker's turn of speech, but the apparent agreement, which is actually disagreement, refers to an absent interlocutor's hypothesis. *Infatti* is ironically uttered and its true meaning is retrievable through intonation and prosody, beside the contextual situation. The potential of irony enclosed in *infatti* counts on the interlocutors' shared knowledge: The speaker knew that her addressee was well aware that she is a scrupulous teacher. In (22) the journalist ironically comments on the reader's letter. With one word only he rejects her accusation by showing that he is neither prejudiced nor ill-

⁶ This example is not a real conversation, but it presupposes nonetheless a sort of interaction.

disposed towards policemen. Here again *infatti* has to be taken ironically, that is to say as something which means the opposite of what is actually said. In other words, a confirmation at the level of *signantia* implies a dis-confirmation at that of *signata*.

The reason for the low number of occurrences of *infatti* with this meaning is probably the high degree of mutual knowledge between co-speakers and the restricted situational setting, e.g., colloquial, familiar, peer group, or particular text type it requires.

4. Conclusions

On the whole I can advance a tentative conclusion, based on the results of my limited investigation. *In fact* is a typical connective in argumentation, preferentially used by the speaker when reshaping her/his previous assertion for precision's sake. Its modalizing function depends on its interaction with the other epistemic operators in the utterance, yet it frequently strengthens the credibility of a statement through its objective quality: it is the lexical meaning of in-(actual)-facts that enables the performance of this task. In argumentation it plays a very active, progressive role, not only for the speaker, but also for the interaction. By contrast *infatti* belongs to the addressee's line and occurs mostly in agreements. It can cover a wide range of intensity of the illocutionary force, but most frequently it represents a low degree of commitment in agreement, and its lexical meaning tends to be obliterated. Although it does not prevent conversation from going on, it does not contribute to its progress either.

When translating my Italian examples into English, I never rendered *infatti* with *in fact*. This is partly due to the fact that I deliberately chose examples in which the two connectors perform totally different functions. In examples (6)–(10) I translated *infatti* with the following expressions: "absolutely", "that's right", "he is indeed", "that's true", "yes, they are", "actually", "well". In one case I completely omitted it. In most cases I had to find a translation equivalence through the analysis of the pragmatic meaning of the utterances, which eventually led me to find a functional equivalence. In the vast majority of occurrences *infatti* expresses some type of agreement. Then I evaluated to what extent the speaker is actually committed, if s/he agrees with the content or with her/his interlocutor, if the tone is formal or informal (Sinclair 1992). If instead I had to translate my English examples into Italian it would probably be acceptable to render some of the instances of *in fact* with *infatti* (cf. Browne 1987: 129).

From this analysis I think I have demonstrated that *in fact* has a remarkable progressive quality, whereas *infatti* is usually regressive. This confirms my initial thesis that correspondence between connectives across languages is often problematic: For *in fact* and *infatti* the area of functional equivalence amounts to almost nothing. They share only two basic discursive functions: They can function as topic management indicators and signal thematic connectedness in monologic discourse. In this latter case, both in English and in Italian, the connector establishes an explanatory link between two text chunks, which it connects causally (Serianni 1988: 542).

Probably I would find much to add to this partial conclusion by extending the scope of my analysis, either enlarging the textual types investigated, or introducing other connectors in order to ascertain if there is at least functional correspondence across languages (even if performed by semantically unrelated items).

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