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Spanish vs. English mediated lectures: A contrastive approach to the use of evidential markers

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ABSTRACT

In the last ten years, Spanish universities have started to incorporate English as a means of instruction. As a consequence, many lecturers –who regularly use their mother tongue for their teaching activity– have adapted their syllabus contents into English, resulting in lectures that show evidence of cross-linguistic influence (Odlin, 1993). The goal of this paper is to analyze the use and distribution of evidentials in Spanish and English mediated lectures by the same teachers and to evaluate the extent to which linguistic interference is made visible when it comes to the use of evidentiality. To this aim, a corpus of three Engineering lectures delivered in English and three Engineering lectures delivered in Spanish by the same native speakers of Spanish lecturers has been used as a means of exemplification.

Keywords: evidentiality, cross-linguistic influence, source language interference, English mediated education, Tertiary Education.

1. Introduction

This paper is aimed at analyzing the possible similarities and differences in the use and distribution of evidential markers in both English-mediated and Spanish instruction in current Tertiary Education in Spain. In order to achieve this goal, it is first necessary to focus the analysis by trying to reach a categorization of evidential markers. For methodological reasons, this paper has opted for an inclusive view of evidentiality given the fact that “the overwhelming majority of scholars who have concerned themselves with the relation between evidentiality and epistemic modality have asserted that there is a very close connection between these two” (De Haan: 2001, p. 201). It is equally true though that one of the most interesting problems that scholars of evidentiality are faced with is the relation between evidentiality, the marking of the source of the information of the statement, and epistemic modality, the degree of confidence the speaker has in his or her own statement (2001, p. 201). Kasper Boye (2009, 2010a, 2010b) explains in this sense that “most definitions of evidentiality make reference to one or more of the notions ‘information source’, ‘evidence’, and ‘justification’ (Bybee 1985, Crystal 1991, Aikhenvald 2004)” (2009, p. 11). It is hence important at this point to go back to Bybee’s words: “evidentials may be generally defined as markers that indicate something about the source of the information in the proposition” (1985, p. 184). Chafe’s perspective, meanwhile, points to attitudes when stating that “evidential expressions involve attitudes towards knowledge” (1986, p. 262) and includes:

- Expressions of belief such as “I think”, “I guess”, “I suppose”.
- Inductive expressions such as “must”, “seem”, “obvious”, “evidently”.
- Sensory evidence like “I see”, “I hear”, “I feel”, “She looks like she is...” (p. 262)

Yet the author distinguishes also between several sources of knowledge –No source, Evidence, Language and Hypothesis– which he connects with four modes of knowledge:

- Belief, which is expressed by mental state predicates such as “I think”, “I guess”, “I suppose”.

- Induction.
- Hearsay, with phrases like “have been said to”, “is supposed to”, “apparently”, “it seems”.
- Deduction (Chafe, 1986).

Quite in the light of Bybee and Chafe, Willet’s (1988) typology of evidentiality includes a distinction between direct and indirect information. For this author, the direct source of information can be visual, auditory, or contain other sensory information. Indirect information, meanwhile, is subdivided into reported information and speaker oriented inferential statements. Already in the 21st century, Aikhenvald (2004, p. 367) seems to have developed Willet’s typology when she identifies the following parameters for evidentiality: visual, sensory, inference, assumption, hearsay, quotative. Meanwhile, Squartini (2008, p. 918) points back to Chafe’s distinction between “the mode of knowing or type of evidence as opposed to the source of evidence”.

These previous key ideas considered, and for methodological reasons, the present paper will focus on the analysis of the following selected cognitive, sensory and hearsay evidential markers –possible similarities and differences in frequency of use and distribution– in three lectures conducted in Spanish and three other English mediated lectures delivered by the same native speakers of Spanish teachers:

- Cognitive: “know”, “suppose”, “think” // “saber”, “suponer”, “creer”, “pensar”.
- Hearsay: “It says”, “It is said”, “As we have said” // “Dice que”, “Se dice que”, “hemos dicho”.
- Sensory: “I see”, “I can see”, “It is seen”, “It seems” // “Veo”, “Puedo ver”, “Se ve”, “Parece”, “Me parece”.

Also, the present study stems from one basic assumption: English mediated lecturers, in their teaching activity, choose L2 words and structures which show a striking resemblance to others existing in their L1. And it is our intention to see if this influence makes itself present when it comes to the use and distribution of evidentiality. For Odlin (p. 27), source language interference, or transfer

(Kellerman: 1995), is “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired”. According to Odlin, although transfer is not simply interference (due to the negative connotations of the latter; hence the term ‘negative transfer’), the word ‘interference’ is still used in the literature (p. 26). Equally, ‘cross-linguistic influence’ seems to be the terminology commonly employed in current literature to refer to this linguistic phenomenon (Cenoz, Hufeisen & Jessner, 2001, p. 1). In this particular case, this could be due to the insufficient knowledge of the foreign language on the part of the lecturers –who are also, or have been, learners of that language: as self-reported, they have an intermediate or high intermediate level of English, and their L1 acts as a direct cause of erroneous performance. As pointed out by Kellerman (1995, p. 129), L2 speakers use ‘compensatory strategies’ on which the effect of the L1 is frequently noted, that is, speakers resort to their L1 to solve linguistic problems, in an attempt to ‘compensate’ their lack of knowledge. Yet cross-linguistic influence could also be the result of a common practice carried out by lecturers who have Spanish as their mother tongue: the ‘self-translation’ of their own L1 materials—sometimes with the visual support of PowerPoint slides and handouts. During the process of rendering these materials into a different language, Chesterman’s ‘principle of perceived similarity’ may apply: “When looking for solutions, translators tend first to consider those resources in the TL that are perceived as being similar to the SL” (Chesterman, 1988, p. 69). The potential effect of translation on the resulting lectures will be extensively dealt with elsewhere (Braga & Maíz, 2011).

After the section devoted to the method of analysis following the introduction, in which the aim and corpus of analysis are presented, the analysis and results section follows in section 3 of the paper; section 3.1 focuses on English mediated lectures while section 3.2 is aimed at analyzing Spanish lectures. Results are presented in section 4 of the paper. Appendixes 1 and 2 close the paper with tables including frequency of use and ratio for each of the markers under study.

2. Method of Analysis: Aim and Corpus

The aim of this study is to look into the use of evidential markers, their recurrent frequency and distribution, in academic lectures conducted in English and Spanish: i) **cognitive**: “know”, “suppose”, “think” // “saber”, “suponer”, “creer”, “pensar”; ii) **sensory**: “I see”, “I can see”, “It is seen”, “It seems” // “Veo”, “Puedo ver”, “Se ve”, “Parece”, “Me parece”; iii) **hearsay**: “It says”, “It is said”, “As we have said” // “Dice que”, “Se dice que”, “Como hemos dicho”. With this goal in mind, a corpus of English and Spanish lectures has been selected as object of analysis and, for analytical reasons, the linguistic study carried out by Lynne Young in 1994, in which the macro-structure of university lectures and the most prominent features that contribute to this structure are described, has been followed. According to Young, university lectures are configured into phases, or “strands of discourse that recur discontinuously through a particular language event and, taken together, structure the event” (1994, p. 165). Every university lecture consists of six phases: Discourse Structuring, Conclusion, Evaluation, Interaction, Theory/Content and Examples (1994, pp. 166-168). Each of them plays a different role within the lecture. With Discourse Structuring, lecturers “indicate the direction that they will take in the lecture” (p. 166), whereas the Conclusion summarizes the points made throughout the discourse. Evaluation assesses the information. The contact with the audience is kept through Interaction. Theory and Content, meanwhile, show the lecturer’s aim, that is, “transmit theoretical information” (p. 167), which is in turn illustrated thanks to the Examples. Young’s division will be applied to the corpus selected in order to identify which phases are more prone to present higher numbers of each of the evidential markers under study.

As previously mentioned, the data of this analysis comes from a corpus of three Engineering English lectures and three Engineering Spanish lectures delivered by the same three lecturers (31,523 words approximately) given during a course on the topic of Formula 1 cars held at Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. Each lecture lasted approximately one hour and was attended by 26 students of nationalities other than Spanish who used English as their *lingua franca*. The three lecturers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the course were native speakers of Spanish. Two of them had no previous experience in

lecturing in a foreign language and all of them lacked translation training of any sort. As self-reported, their level of English ranged from intermediate to upper intermediate. While the tagging was carried out manually, MONOCONC was used to obtain frequencies and ratios.

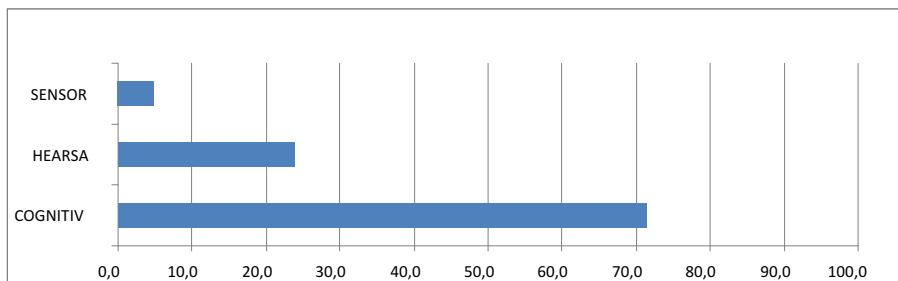
3. Analysis and Results

3.1 English¹

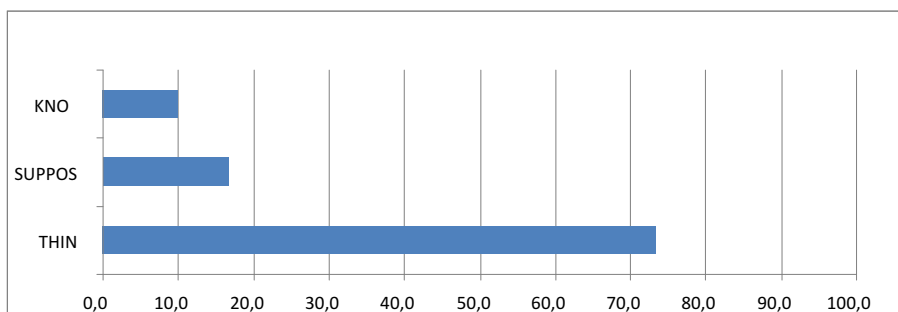
As shown in graphs 1 and 2 below, cognitive evidentials (71.4%) are preferred by the three lecturers when speaking English, followed by far by their use of hearsay (23.8%) and sensory (4.8%) evidentials. Among the cognitive evidential markers under study, “think”, “suppose” and “know” are mostly chosen by the lecturers, being “think” (73.3%) the most recurrently used marker, quite surpassing “suppose” (16.7%) and “know” (10%). Sentences 1 to 6 illustrate the lecturers’ use of cognitive evidential markers throughout the different phases of their lectures:

1. [...] *...the information is in Spanish, I think—I’m not sure. Well, in a...*
<COGNITIVE, THINK, INT>
2. [...] *...why it is forbidden... oh sorry. I think it is a competitive problem...*
<COGNITIVE, THINK, E>
3. [...] *this is a-is a SEAT model—I think the model is Ibiza. I don’t...*
<COGNITIVE, THINK, EX>
4. [...] *...r improvement of Renault and I suppose it will be in the future,...*
<COGNITIVE, SUPPOSE, C>
5. [...] *...ther composite material that I suppose tomorrow you’ll see. Pau...*
<COGNITIVE, SUPPOSE, DS>
6. [...] *...fibre ebb I don’t know ...umm. I think...* <COGNITIVE, KNOW, INT>

¹ For distribution and use of English evidentials (frequency and ratio) see Appendix 1.

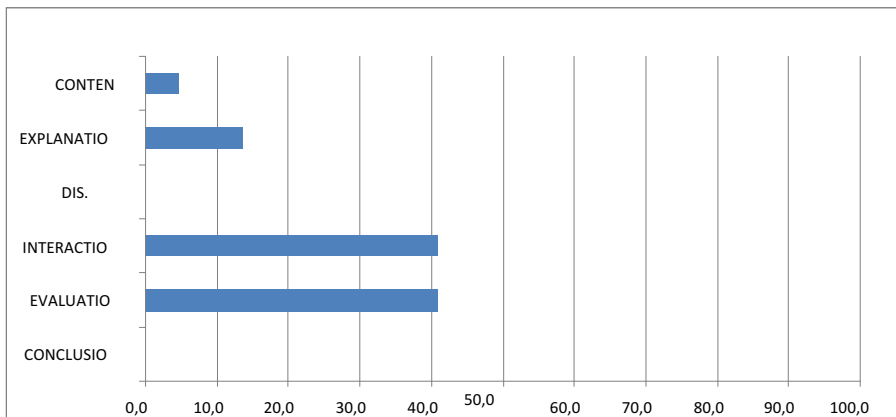


Graph 1. Evidentials

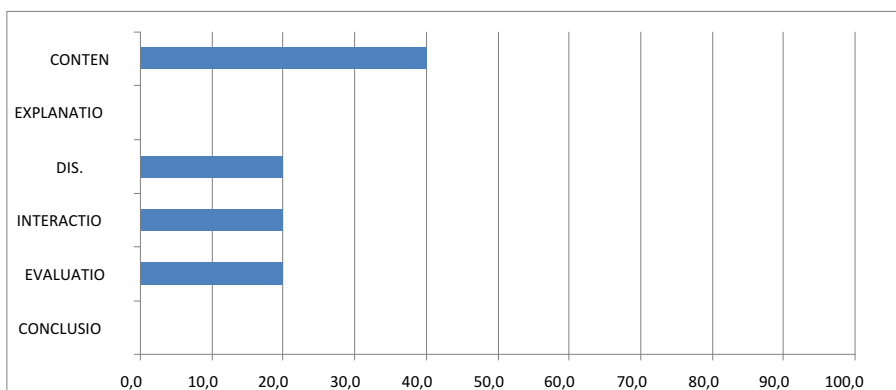


Graph 2. Cognitive evidentials

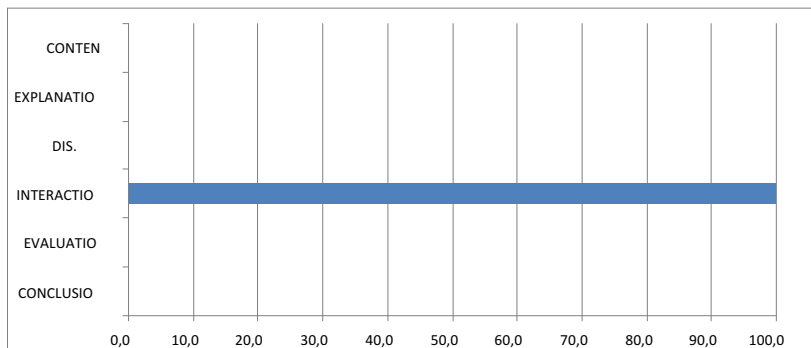
Graphs 3 to 5 below clearly show that, if analysing the distribution of cognitive evidentials according to the different phases of the lectures (Young, 1994), “think” can be easily identified as being mostly used during the interaction (40.9%) and evaluation (40.9%) phases of the lecture while “suppose” is mainly preferred for content explanation (40%) and “know” is only used for interaction with student purposes (100%).



Graph 3. Cognitive “think” according to phases



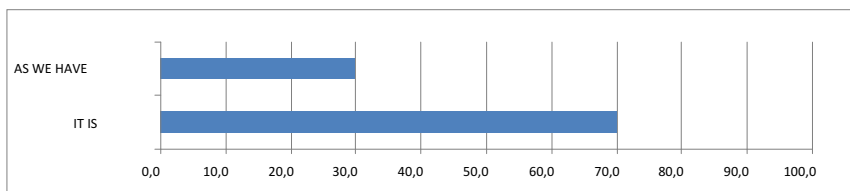
Graph 4. Cognitive “suppose” according to phases



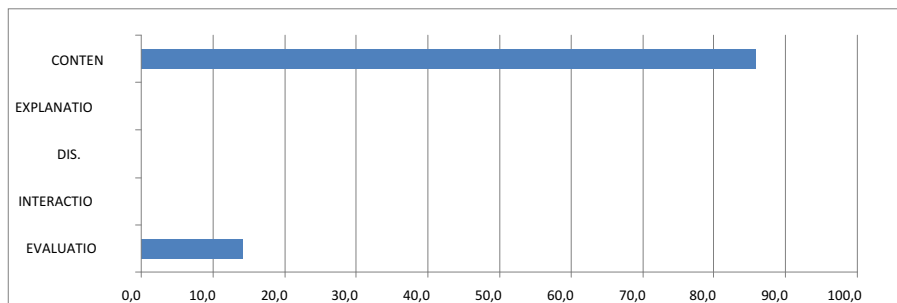
Graph 5. Cognitive “know” according to phases

Only hearsay marker “say” has been found in the English corpus, being basically uttered by the lecturers through two main expressions: “As we have said” (30%) and “It is said” (70%), which is by far the most frequently used hearsay expression and tends to concentrate on the content phase of the lectures (85.7%). “As we have said” only appears to be used in the content phase of the lectures (100%). See graphs 6 to 9 and examples 7 to 9 of the lecturers’ use and distribution of hearsay evidential markers throughout the different phases of their lectures:

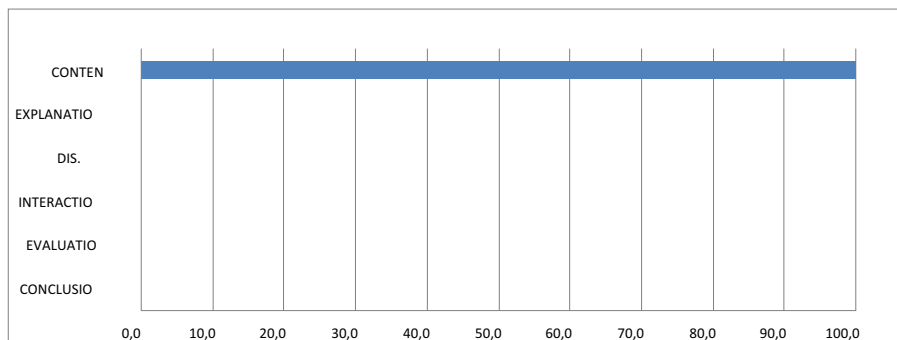
7. [...] ...tre with eight cylinders and it is said that it shouldn't be done ...
<HEARSAY,SAY,C>
8. [...]... What is important, as it is said here, is, of course,... <HEARSAY,SAY,E>
9. [...]... I mean, we can, as we have said, we can never move from here,...
<HEARSAY,SAY,C>



Graph 6. Hearsay



Graph 7. Hearsay “It is said” according to phases



Graph 8. Hearsay “As we have said” according to phases

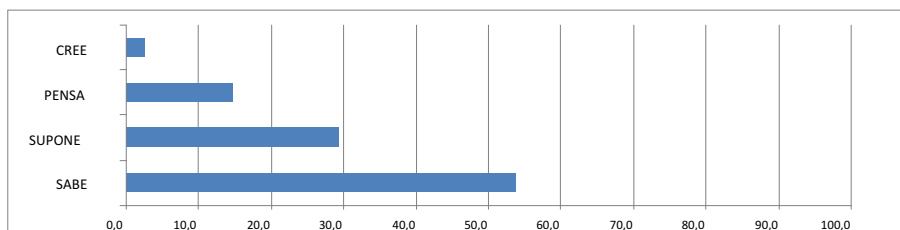
Only two instances of sensory evidential markers were found in the English corpus: “see” and “seem”. Examples 10 and 11 below reproduce the two examples:

10. *We are, we can see that appears the amount of...* <SENSORY, SEE, C>
11. *[...] ...e plastic but it doesn't seem to try to get a better value...* <SENSORY, SEEM, C>

3.2 Spanish²

Quite in the fashion of the lectures conducted in English, cognitive evidentials (76.8%) can be said to be preferred by far by the three lecturers in the corpus when using their mother tongue for teaching purposes. Hearsay evidentials (10.7%) seem meanwhile to be quite on a par with sensory evidentials (12.7%). In the case of English, though, the choice of hearsay (23.8%) above sensory (4.8%) evidentials was more than clear.

Among the cognitive evidentials under study, Graph 9 clearly shows that the lecturers' order of preference is the following: "saber" (53.7%), "suponer" (29.3%), "pensar" (14.6%), and "creer" (2.4%). This was not the case in English, where the cognitive evidential marker "think" (73.3%) appeared to be the most recurrently used marker, quite surpassing "suppose" (16.7%) and "know" (10%). See Section 3.1 in the present paper.



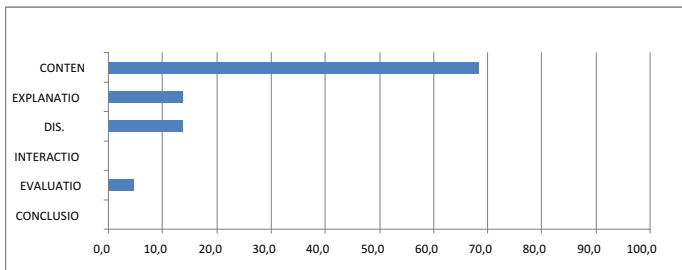
Graph 9. Cognitive evidentials

Similarly, Graphs 10 to 13 below clearly show that, if analysing the distribution of cognitive evidentials according to the different phases of the lectures, "saber" can be easily identified as being mostly used during the interaction (40.9%) and the evaluation (40.9%) phases of the lecture while "parecer" is only used during the content phase (100%), closely followed by "pensar", with a 66.7% of the uses located in the content phase and another 33.3% found in interaction. On the other hand, "suponer" is evenly distributed

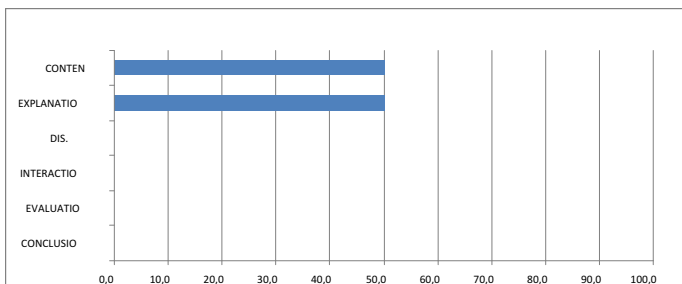
² For distribution and use of Spanish evidentials (frequency and ratio) see Appendix 2.

between the content (50%) and the explanation (50%) phases. Finally, “creer” is only used for interaction with student purposes (100%). Immediately preceding the graphs, examples 12 to 14 provide corpus examples illustrating the lecturers’ use of the different cognitive evidential markers in the different phases of their lectures:

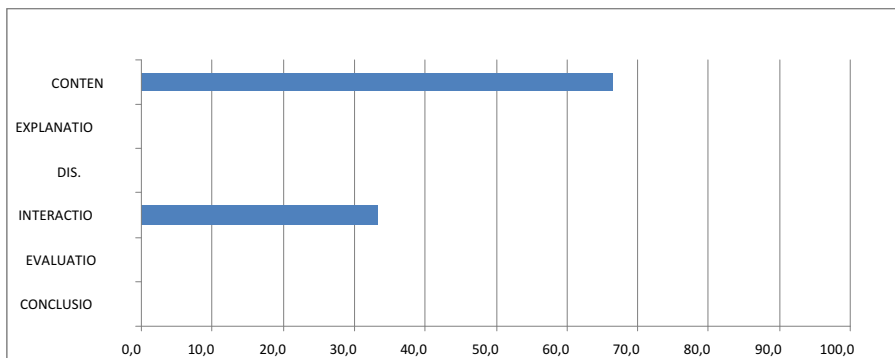
12. *Ya sabemos, porque ya lo hemos estado comentando, que esas aleaciones*
<COGNITIVE, SABER, DS>
13. *Ahora bien, uno podría suponer que por aquí debajo está la otra semiala.*
<COGNITIVE, SUPONER, C>
14. *[...] y forma otro carburo distinto y gamma prima, alguien podría pensar que es perjudicial.* <COGNITIVE, PENSAR, INT>
15. *[...] yo creo que deberíais, memorizáis desde la primera página a la última...*
<COGNITIVE, CREER, INT>



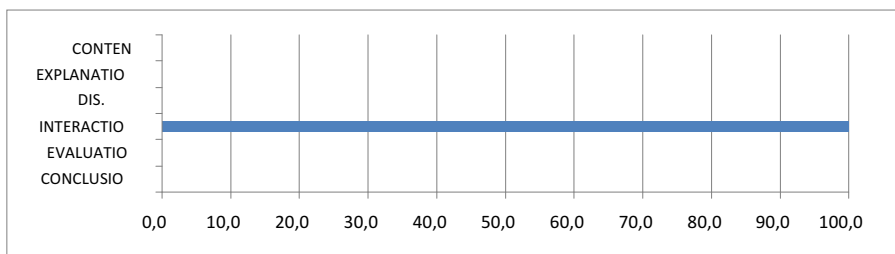
Graph 10. Cognitive “saber” according to phases



Graph 11. Cognitive “suponer” according to phases



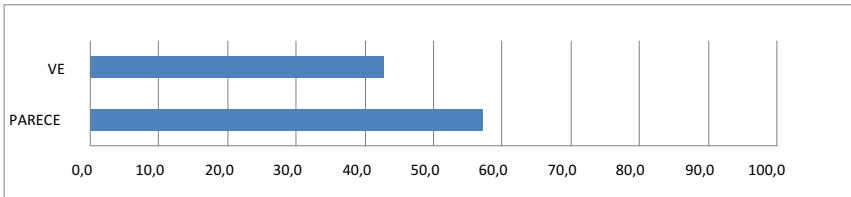
Graph 12. Cognitive “pensar” according to phases



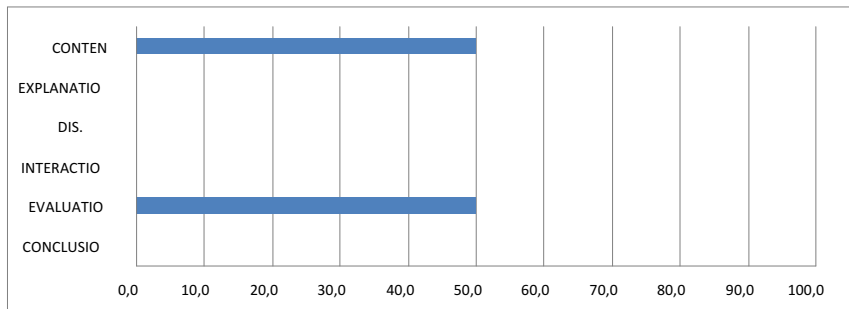
Graph 13. Cognitive “creer” according to phases

Graphs 14 to 16 below reveal that the use of sensory evidentials in Spanish (12.5%) is a bit more extended than it is in English (4.8%), with expressions including the verbs “parecer” (57.1%) and “ver” (42.9%). While “parecer” appears to be evenly distributed between the content (50%) and the evaluation (50%) phases of the lectures, “ver” is more commonly found in the content phase (66.7%) than in interaction (33.3%). Right before the graphs, sentences 16 and 17 provide corpus examples illustrating the lecturers’ use of the different sensory evidential markers in different phases of their lectures, content and evaluation:

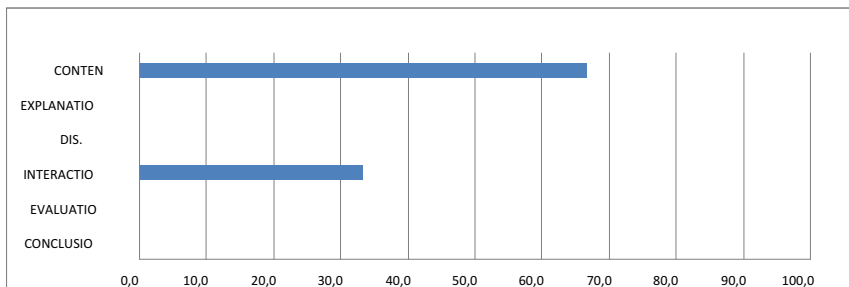
16. [...] y se ha visto que esta transformación, cuando se produce, que no suele ser habitual... <SENSORY, VER, C>
17. [...] ya que tiene una complejidad más allá de lo que se ve a primera vista <SENSORY, PARECER, E>



Graph 14. Sensory



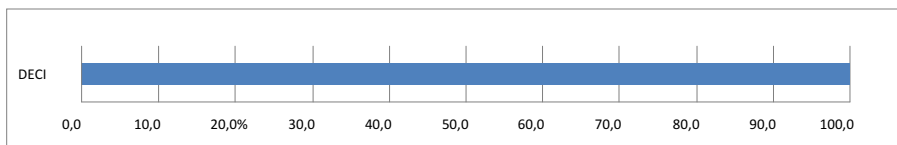
Graph 15. Sensory “parecer” according to phases



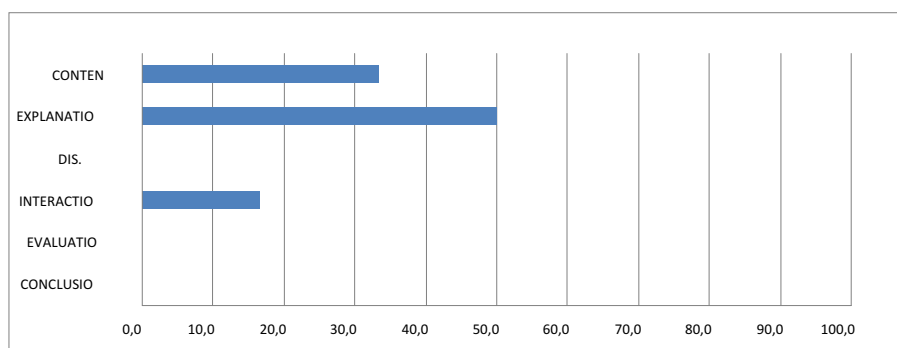
Graph 16. Cognitive “ver” according to phases

In the case of hearsay evidentials, only expressions with the verb “decir” were found, and these were mainly present in the explanation phase of the lecture, closely followed by content and interaction. For the sake of clarity, Graphs 17 and 18, and sentences 18 and 19 below, show two examples of the use of the verb “decir” in the expression “dice que” in two different phases of the lectures, content and explanation:

18. [...] *y que se corresponde con esta tendencia que dice que W1 partido por W2 es igual al cociente de...* <HEARSAY, DECIR, C>
19. *Teníamos una definición arbitraria que dice que era una pata recta en la que...* <HEARSAY, DECIR, EX>



Graph 17. Hearsay



Graph 18. Hearsay “decir” according to phases

4. Conclusion

This paper was first aimed at analyzing the similarities and differences in the use and phase distribution of evidentials in both English mediated and Spanish University lectures by the same three native speakers of Spanish. Results were expected to lead us to some conclusions on linguistic interference in the use of evidentials. In this sense, it can be first said that the analysis reveals that cognitive evidentials were the preferred choice by the lecturers in both English and Spanish. However, the cognitive marker “think” was mostly chosen for the English lectures while the “saber” marker –“know”– was mostly used for Spanish. Also, when compared with English mediated lectures, Spanish lectures showed a higher variety of cognitive evidentials and a lower use of “suppose” and “think”, this last “think” being only used during the interaction phase. Curiously enough, though, “suppose” was the preferred choice for content explanation in Spanish.

The use of hearsay evidentials followed that of cognitives in English, with the markers “As we have said” and “It is said” being mostly used for content explanation. Meanwhile, sensory evidentials happened to be almost nonexistent in the English mediated lectures. In Spanish, though, these sensory were preferred to hearsay evidentials.

It can also be concluded that, rather than the expected linguistic interference, results reveal a lack of English vocabulary that forces lecturers to resort to the repetition of the proved to be recurrent cognitive evidential “think” in most of the cases. At the same time, this reveals a lack of confidence in the lecturers which seems to affect content, with the cognitive marker “suppose” used for content explanation in English while “saber” –“know”– was preferred in Spanish for this same purpose.

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Appendix I

ENGLISH			
1. EVIDENTIALS		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	COGNITIVE	30	71,4%
(2)	HEARSAY	10	23,8%
(3)	SENSORY	2	4,8%
	Total	42	100,0%
2. COGNITIVE		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	THINK	22	73,3%
(2)	SUPPOSE	5	16,7%
(3)	KNOW	3	10,0%
	Total	30	100,0%
3. COGNITIVE THINK ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	9	40,9%
(3)	INTERACTION	9	40,9%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	3	13,6%
(6)	CONTENT	1	4,5%
	Total	22	100,0%

4. COGNITIVE SUPPOSE ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	1	20,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	1	20,0%
(4)	DIS. STR.	1	20,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	0	0,0%
(6)	CONTENT	2	40,0%
	Total	5	100,0%
5. COGNITIVE KNOW ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	0	0,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	3	100,0%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	0	0,0%
(6)	CONTENT	0	0,0%
	Total	3	100,0%
6. HEARSAY		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	IT IS SAID	7	70,0%
(2)	AS WE HAVE SAID	3	30,0%
	Total	10	100,0%
7. HEARSAY - IT IS SAID - ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	1	14,3%
(3)	INTERACTION	0	0,0%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	0	0,0%
(6)	CONTENT	6	85,7%
	Total	7	100,0%

8. HEARSAY - AS WE HAVE SAID - ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	0	0,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	0	0,0%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	0	0,0%
(6)	CONTENT	3	100,0%
	Total	3	100,0%
9. SENSORY		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	SEE	1	50,0%
(2)	SEEM	1	50,0%
	Total	2	100,0%

Appendix II

SPANISH			
10. COGNITIVE -SABER- ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	1	4,5%
(3)	INTERACTION	0	0,0%
(4)	DIS. STR.	3	13,6%
(5)	EXPLANATION	3	13,6%
(6)	CONTENT	15	68,2%
	Total	22	100,0%

11. COGNITIVE -SUPONER- ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	0	0,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	0	0,0%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	6	50,0%
(6)	CONTENT	6	50,0%
	Total	12	100,0%
12. COGNITIVE -PENSAR- ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	0	0,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	2	33,3%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	0	0,0%
(6)	CONTENT	4	66,7%
	Total	6	100,0%
13. COGNITIVE -CREER- ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	0	0,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	1	100,0%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	0	0,0%
(6)	CONTENT	0	0,0%
	Total	1	100,0%
14. SENSORY		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	PARECER	4	57,1%
(2)	VER	3	42,9%
	Total	7	100,0%

15. SENSORY -PARECER- ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	2	50,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	0	0,0%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	0	0,0%
(6)	CONTENT	2	50,0%
	Total	4	100,0%
16. SENSORY -VER- ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	0	0,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	1	33,3%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	0	0,0%
(6)	CONTENT	2	66,7%
	Total	3	100,0%
17. HEARSAY		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	DECIR	6	100,0%
	Total	6	100,0%
18. HEARSAY -DECIR- ACCORDING TO PHASES		Frequency	Ratio
(1)	CONCLUSION	0	0,0%
(2)	EVALUATION	0	0,0%
(3)	INTERACTION	1	16,7%
(4)	DIS. STR.	0	0,0%
(5)	EXPLANATION	3	50,0%
(6)	CONTENT	2	33,3%
	Total	6	100,0%