

Interrogatives in Conversational Spanish

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Abstract

Numerous studies have privilegedly described the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic characteristics of Spanish interrogatives (among others, Escandell-Vidal 1984, 1999; Dumitrescu 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2015; Sánchez López, 2020). As is well known, it has been pointed out that there is no biunivocal correspondence between the interrogative modality and the questioning speech act (Searle, 1969). The distinction between interrogative (understood as the grammatical form that a question speech act adopts) and the question speech act - conceived as the act that aims at seeking information that the speaker ignores (Searle, 1969: 66) - has given rise to the differentiation between "marked" interrogatives (Escandell-Vidal, 1999: 3978 et seq.) from the "unmarked" ones (Escandell-Vidal, 1999: 3973 ff.), according to their pragmatic behavior, which is more or less distant from the search for information. At the heart of this question is the fact that there is, in the grammars' conception of interrogatives, an equation between the speech act of questioning and the habitual use of a standard interrogative. Different researchers (in other languages) have noted that, in real interaction, things are not so simple: under the surface of the communicative exchange there seems to be a tension of constant adjustments in the speaker's position with respect to the epistemic knowledge of the other participants (Labov and Fanshel, 1977), disruptions in the course of the communicative interaction (Schegloff, 2000), claims of the speaker's subjectivity, etc. that decisively intervene in the use of interrogatives. These observations cast doubt on the widespread opinion that the canonical interrogative is that which is produced as a speech act of requesting information. Thus, this paper focuses on the actual use that Spanish speakers make of interrogatives with the intention of investigating the real uses they make of them. Conversation constitutes one of the most privileged observatories to attend to the linguistic forms that emerge in it. Thus, this paper studies the spontaneous conversation of Spanish from the Val.Es.Co. corpus (Valencia, Español Coloquial) in order to find the linguistic formats that interrogatives acquire and to relate them to the conversational acts for which they are most frequently used. For this purpose, we follow the same pattern of research carried out by Stivers et al. (2010), which is framed within the so-called

"interactional linguistics" and which studies the linguistic patterns that make up the question-answer pair based on data collected from ten different languages, among which Spanish is not included.

Keywords: Interactional pragmatics, conversation analysis, interrogatives, oral corpus, conversational Spanish.