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Discussion note

A relevance reassessment of reformulation markers☆

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1. Introduction: Blakemore's analysis of reformulation markers

This discussion note deals with the reformulation markers (RMs) *that is*, *that is to say*, *in other words*, *namely*, *i.e.* and *viz.* and the role they play in linguistic communication as described by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995). According to Blakemore (1996), items such as *that is (to say)* and *in other words* are conceptual and non-truth conditional. This fact makes her conclude that classifying them with discourse connectives like *so* and *after all* (procedural and non-truth conditional) under the category of discourse markers (as in, for example, Fraser, 1990, 1996) has no theoretical value. Blakemore (1996) bases her analysis on Wilson and Sperber's (1993) account of linguistic meaning and on Ifantidou-Trouki's (1993) explanation of parenthetical constituents. Blakemore (2002: 179–183) retakes part of her analysis of RMs to prove the same point: That there is no single category of discourse markers and that research on discourse markers as a class has no value.

Blakemore (1996) distinguishes two types of use: Discourse sequence uses (1) and nominal apposition uses (2):

(1) The patient is still alive; the surgeons have retired while anxious relatives hover at the bedside. *In other words*, the pound has survived another day without intervention. (Blakemore, 1996: 328)

(2) The republicans, *that is*, the third party in the centre-left coalition, disagreed with the legislation. (Blakemore, 1996: 329)

☆ Most of the points developed in this article form part of a previous study by the author (Murillo, 2000a), and of a paper presented at the Xth Seminario Susanne Hübner (Murillo, 2000b).

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First of all, Blakemore takes into account Wilson and Sperber's analysis of sentential adverbs, which, in their view, are conceptual and non-truth conditional, that is, they encode concepts which are constituent not of the proposition expressed, but of higher level explicatures.[1] For example,

(3) *Regrettably*, I couldn't help you. (cf. Wilson and Sperber, 1993: 17)

Here, the adverb does not contribute to the truth conditions of the utterance (i.e., ''Mary couldn't help Peter''), but it does contribute to its higher level explicature:

(4) Mary regrets that she couldn't help Peter.

Blakemore (1996: 333–334) explains that Wilson and Sperber's arguments for the conceptual status of these adverbs are also relevant for RMs. First, Blakemore states that ''in contrast with a speaker who uses *so* or *after all*, a speaker who uses [*that is* or *in other words*] can be charged with untruthfulness'' (1996: 333). She uses the following evidence (1996: 334):

(5) (a): She said she no longer requires your services.
(b): *In other words*, she said I'm fired.
(c): That's not true. She didn't say that.

Second, she points out that *that is to say* and *in other words* are productive expressions. Thus, there are variants such as *to put it in other words*, *putting it more elegantly*, or *putting it more concisely*. Third, these expressions have synonymous counterparts that encode concepts contributing to the truth conditions of the utterances that contain them. For example (1996: 334):

(6) He asked me to put it in other words.

(7) That is the same as saying I'm fired.

Following Ifantidou-Trouki's (1993) analysis of parentheticals, Blakemore then states that *that is* and *in other words* can be analyzed as contributing to propositions which have their own relevance, although they do not contain the main point of the utterance as a

[1] In relevance theory, the propositional form of an utterance is its main explicature and carries the truth conditional content of the utterance. In order to recover a propositional form, an utterance must be decoded, a process which yields a logical form. Several inferential processes are involved in what is called the development of the logical form: disambiguation, reference assignment and further enrichment. Higher level explicatures are the result of (optionally) embedding the propositional form of an utterance in a speech act description or in an attitudinal description. These higher level explicatures are linguistically communicated (i.e. they are a further development of the logical form of an utterance), but they do not contribute to the truth conditions of the utterance. Regarding implicatures, they fall into two types: implicated premises and implicated conclusions. Implicated premises ''must be supplied by the hearer [...]'' and ''lead to an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance'' (Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995: 195).

whole. Thus, in discourse sequence uses, the discourse marker consists of a parenthetical that expresses a proposition such as:

(8) That is another way of putting it.

(9) These are other words for something. (1996: 337)

which in turn leads the hearer to recover a higher level explicature expressing a reformulation:

(10) The speaker believes that P is a faithful representation of a thought Q (1996: 340)

where Q is the thought communicated by the reformulated utterance. This analysis is based on the idea (Blakemore, 1993 in Blakemore, 1996: 338–340) that reformulations are representations of utterances which they resemble. As she points out, ''where the resemblance involves the sharing of logical and contextual implications, the utterance can be said to be relevant as a representation of a thought, or as Sperber and Wilson would say, as an INTERPRETATION of a thought'' (Blakemore, 1996: 338). Further, a speaker who produces an utterance which is a representation of another utterance cannot be creating expectations of truthfulness, but of faithfulness (Blakemore, 1996: 338), hence the expression of the higher level explicature in (10).

In nominal apposition uses, the member introduced by *that is* or *in other words* is a parenthetical whose relevance is attained by contributing to reference assignment of the host utterance. If we return to example (2), the parenthetical is communicating the proposition:

(11) The term *the Republicans* is coreferential with the term *the third party in the centre-left coalition*. (1996: 341)

According to Blakemore, then, both uses of RMs are coherent with their conceptual status: They contribute to the explicit side of communication, either to higher level explicatures, in discourse sequence uses, or to explicatures, in nominal apposition uses.

However, her arguments have been objected to. As Shloush (1998: 71) indicates, some discourse markers also have conceptual counterparts, for example, *so*, *then* and *well*. With reference to Blakemore's first argument, Tanaka (1997: 371), Shloush (1998: 70–71) and Schourup (1999: 247) point out that the claim of falsity in (5c) applies to the proposition expressed by *she said I'm fired*. This is not the case with sentence adverbials, which can be claimed to be false in themselves.[2]

[2] Rejecting Blakemore's second argument, Cuenca (2003) classifies *in other words* as a simple marker. For her, simple markers correspond to parenthetical connectives: ''grammaticalized, fixed connectives which are syntactically detached elements, separated from the rest of the sentence by 'comma intonation'" (Cuenca, 2003: 1074). She also gives further indirect evidence: *in other words* is used more frequently in her corpus than its non-fixed complex counterparts in Spanish and Catalan (Sp. *en otras palabras*, Cat. *en altres paraules*), and this is consistent with the fact that fixed single markers are more frequent than complex ones (Cuenca, 2003: 1084).

At this point, it can be already seen that the conceptual status of RMs is not all that clear. It is evident that their meaning can be deduced from their separate parts, but also that they are different from sentence adverbials. If we take into account certain uses of RMs, this conceptual status is further challenged. First, *that is* can be used to introduce a restriction:

(12) [. . .] The result is a fairly wild, and often gutsy, dance music that would effectively suit the internationalist conscience of the UK rave scene—if the UK actually still had a rave scene, *that is*. (*Vox*, October 1993, taken from COBUILD*direct*)

Second, *in other words* can introduce consequences:

(13) They have even set up a hotline for people 'who want to tell the CLA about ''unauthorised copying'''. *In other words*, do you hate your boss? One quick, anonymous call, one dawn raid and hey presto, he or she is lumbered with a massive fine and terrible publicity! (*The Times*, 18th November 1995, taken from COBUILD*direct*)

The point is that *that is* is the only RM that introduces restrictions. Not even *that is to say*, which is sometimes accounted for as a longer form of *that is*, can introduce a restriction. In the same way, *in other words* is the only marker that introduces consequences. These particular uses cannot be explained in conceptual terms. If all these markers encode similar concepts, they should appear in the same uses.

These markers are then both procedural and conceptual, and this can be explained because they are in a process of grammaticalization, as Archakis (2001) suggests. They are conceptual, as their meaning can be deduced from their separate parts, but this does not exclude the fact that they are procedural. In fact, Blakemore's work does not exclude the existence of items with both procedural and conceptual bits of meaning (Blakemore, personal communication). As Nicolle (1998: 15) points out, ''if an expression can (as Nicolle, 1997b, proposed) encode both conceptual information and procedural information, then grammaticalization (the development of a procedural semantics) need not result in the loss of lexical (conceptual) semantic features''.[3]

As the above examples show, Blakemore's analysis falls short as an explanation of all the cases in which RMs appear. I believe an alternative analysis must be done on procedural grounds; such an analysis should be based on a more complete picture of the role these discourse markers play in communication. I will try to sketch out such a picture by showing how RMs work at all the levels of the process of utterance interpretation.

[3] The explanation of this grammaticalization process falls obviously outside the scope of the present paper. See Archakis (2001) for an account of the dynamics of grammaticalization of Modern Greek RMs.

2. The role of RMs in the process of utterance interpretation

The examples that illustrate this discussion have been taken from the TIMES and UKMAGS (UK magazines) subcorpora of COBUILD*direct*.[4] The reason for this selection is that journalistic data are a reliable guide as to the use of language in a written text. In my opinion, the use of a corpus of natural data can contribute in a good measure to the study of the linguistic properties or the cognitive role of discourse markers. This is due to the fact that a number of examples extracted from a fairly large corpus can bring certain key cases to the linguist's attention.

2.1. Explicatures

In this discussion I intend to focus on the cognitive relationship established between the two members of a reformulation. As Portolés points out, ''reformulation markers [. . .] present their host member as the new perspective from which the previous member is to be interpreted [. . .]. They assign a new interpretation to the previous member on the grounds that the *desired inferences* have not been achieved'' (1996: 211) (translation and emphasis my own).

If we take the first step in the process of utterance interpretation, the development of the logical form, *that is* may help in the inferential process of reference assignment in nominal apposition uses, as Blakemore explains (see example [2]). An example with *that is to say* in this step would be:

(14) Peace is merely an interlude; when it is over, life, *that is to say* war, goes on. (*The Times*, 18th November 1995)

where *that is to say* provides reference for the word life in the analogy.

Examples with *in other words*, *i.e.*, *namely* and *viz.* also appear in the corpus.

That is may also help in the inferential processes of disambiguation. In example (15), *that is* is used to state that BC means ''Before Carter'', instead of ''Before Christ'':

(15) It[s] odes seem, as the fourth Carter USM album's subtitle has it '2 million years BC'. Before Carter, *that is*. (*VOX*, October 1993)

That is and *i.e.* have been found to make an inferential enrichment explicit. In (16), *i.e.* helps to delimit the temporal scope of now:

(16) You need to pinpoint what you want and the necessary steps to get there. There are at least four things you can do now, *i.e.,* in the next half hour:
Visit the local library. Reference books can tell you about qualifications and courses. [. . .] (*Good Housekeeping*, July 1992)

[4] The data were extracted during January 1998 and October–December 1999. For a complete description of these subcorpora, see ''CobuildDirect'' <http://www.titania.cobuild.co.uk/direct_info.html> (24 April 2001).

Then, the second member of a reformulation may act at the level of the explicatures of the reformulated member. At this level the speaker may reformulate an utterance, making it closer to what she intended to communicate, even by correcting or changing it substantially. In these cases, the information supplied would not be exactly contextual: The speaker would reformulate an utterance so that the intended pragmatic or contextual information may be more easily accessed and the utterance may be more easily understood. Let us consider some examples from the corpus. Instances with all the RMs except for *namely* or *viz.* have been found. In (17), *that is* reformulates the previous utterance by introducing a restriction (as pointed out above, this is the only RM which appears in this discourse process):

(17) But to get you started we've decorated a selection of small boxes which would make ideal gifts for friends at Christmas, *that is*, if you can bear to give them away! (*House Beautiful*, November 1993)

In the next example, *i.e.* reformulates a previous member with more colloquial language:

(18) If you have been dithering about buying shares, now could be the time to take the plunge as they have the potential to produce not only income but capital growth as well, *i.e.,* your ''pot'' should get larger. (*Cosmopolitan*, June 1993)

2.2. *Implicatures*

Implicatures fall into two subgroups: Those that make implicated premises explicit and those that concern implicated conclusions. When the addresser feels that the addressee does not have enough accessible conceptual information for the derivation of the intended contextual effects, she may provide these contextual assumptions to facilitate the process of interpretation. In other words, implicated or contextual premises may be made explicit. (cf. Blakemore, 1997: 15). Examples with all the RMs except for *viz.* have been found. In (19) *namely* explains the term Ma Tai Sien Koo:

(19) A typical example is Ma Tai Sien Koo, *namely* water chestnuts and mushrooms blended in a light vinegar and lemon sauce, seasoned with chilli, sesame seeds and cherry tomatoes, served on a bed of lemon bean curd. (*Asian Times*, 11th May 1993)

Contextual information may also be provided in the middle of a proposition:[5]

(20) Carver chairs—*that is*, any style with arms—are much more comfortable, but they do take up a lot more room. (*Ideal Home*, October 1992)

Finally, *that is, that is to say*, *i.e.* and *in other words* may make explicit an implicated conclusion. This is the case when they introduce conclusions (all these items) or consequences (only *in other words*). These last examples illustrate *in other words* introducing a conclusion (21) and a consequence (22):[6]

(21) Among the statistics released last week was the real shocker: One-third of British homes have three or more television sets. Television, *in other words*, is increasingly a solitary experience. (*The Times*, 20th December 1995)

(22) Nearly everyone in the study believed people who boasted or used positive statements were 'significantly more competent' than the humble speakers. *In other words*, stress your good points hard enough and people start to believe you: but put yourself down constantly and they won't think you are endearingly modest, they'll think you are as useless as you say you are! (*Company*, October 1992)

Needless to say, the fact that no examples appear in the corpus for one marker in one particular step does not mean that these cases are not possible. However, considering the very large number of words of the corpus (ca. ten million), such cases would be rather infrequent if indeed they existed.

[5] One of the anonymous reviewers has pointed out that, while the above examples are possible, it is not possible to find examples in which the reformulation makes explicit an implicated premise used for deriving an implicated conclusion following a condition-consequence line. Thus, the following example should not be possible

(i): (a): Did you get invited to the conference?
(b): They said my paper was too long.
(c): #*In other words*, if one's paper is too long, one should not be invited to the conference.

In contrast, the following example would seem less strange (even if admittedly rather far-fetched)

(ii) (a): Did you get invited to the conference?
(b): They said my paper was too long, so I wasn't invited.
(c): *In other words*, if one's paper is too long, one should not be invited to the conference.

As implicated premises usually remain implicit, no examples like these have been found in the corpus used here. However, that does not mean they are not grammatical or possible.

[6] As one of the anonymous reviewers has indicated, generalized conversational implicatures can also be made explicit

(iii) (a): If any of the students have failed I'll be in trouble.
(b): I'm afraid some of them have.
(c): *In other words*, not all of them have. I'm glad to hear that.

3. Conclusions

RMs assist, to varying degrees, in the inferential process by making explicit reference assignment, disambiguation, further enrichment and elliptic material in connection with the recovery of the propositional form. They do this also by supplying further explicatures, which in their turn bring about the intended contextual effects, and by explicitating implicated premises and conclusions. We may conclude that, in general, they help in all sorts of inferential processes that are involved in the interpretation of an utterance.

As shown above, these markers are procedural (and conceptual) and non-truth conditional. So, by way of completing Blakemore's (1996) analysis, it might be said that in cases involved with the development of the logical form—reference assignment, disambiguation and further enrichment—RMs are a procedural indication of the recovery of explicatures of the host utterances. Another set of items that are procedural and contribute to explicatures is that of the personal pronouns (Wilson and Sperber, 1993); Blakemore (2002: 178) has, along the same lines, analyzed temporal *then* as encoding procedural constraints on explicit content. However, whereas these items contribute to the proposition of their host utterance, items such as *that is* or *in other words*, being placed in a parenthesis, as it were, do not contribute to the truth conditions of the main utterance.

In the rest of the cases—restatement of explicatures and explicitation of implicatures—these discourse markers contribute procedurally to the recovery of higher level explicatures. This is the case even if they are situated in the middle of an utterance, as the process of utterance interpretation does not necessarily take place in a (linearly) ordered way. Other linguistic items are procedural and contribute to higher level explicatures: Mood, word order, or illocutionary particles (Wilson and Sperber, 1993). Likewise, the Sissala hearsay particle rɛ̲ encodes a constraint on the construction of a higher level explicature (Blass, 1990 in Blakemore, 2002: 182–183). Thus, these discourse markers are markers of the explicit (as they contribute either to explicatures or to higher level explicatures), and they relate to implicit or contextual information in multiple ways.

Tanaka (1997: 371) points out that, when RMs reformulate the implicated conclusions of the previous utterance, higher level explicatures should be considered as playing no role in understanding them. However, in my view, RMs are always markers of the explicit: They do not draw inferences, and they make inferential information explicit at all levels. In this way, they are different from other discourse connectives. As Portolés (1996: 211, 1998: 141) states, connectives join semantically and pragmatically two segments of the discourse in such a way that the inferences obtained are determined by the two members, whereas RMs present their host member as the new perspective from which the previous member is to be interpreted.

In fact, Matsui (2002) has recently analyzed the Japanese RM *dakara* along the same lines. She shows how this discourse marker is clearly procedural and, taking as a basis the notion of interpretive resemblance, she describes it as contributing to the recovery of different higher level explicatures, depending on the context. For example, if *dakara* introduces a repetition, the marker can guide towards the recovery of a higher level explicature like ''The speaker believes that P shares all the implications with Q'', and if it introduces a consequence, this higher level explicature could be ''The speaker believes that P is a consequence of Q''. This possibility of recovery of different higher level explicatures is certainly a field for future analyses of English RMs.

No doubt there are (procedural) constraints which help explain why some markers are used in particular discourse contexts (introduction of restrictions, consequences, and the like), while others are not. Yet, the framework outlined here can certainly be a common background for the whole class of items which reformulate, and help to interpret, previous stretches of language. The framework is relevant for English RMs, for RMs of other languages which retain conceptual meaning (French *c'est-à-dire*, Spanish *es decir*), and for those of other languages which are clearly procedural, as Greek *ðilaði* (Archakis, 2001: 1239) or Japanese *dakara* (Matsui, 2002).

It is now clear that not all discourse markers impose constraints on implicatures, as is the case for *so* or *after all* (Blakemore, 2002). As we have seen, RMs act at all levels of the process of utterance interpretation; the present account of RMs contributes to revealing the complex picture of the field of discourse markers. Discourse markers have particular roles and there are differences between their various groups and items. Connectives like *after all* and *so* are relevant in virtue of the inferential connections they express (Blakemore, 1987), while all of them explicitate or help to make certain inferences. However, RMs have very important characteristics in common, viz., their procedural meaning, the fact that they are non-truth conditional, and the fact that they guide inferences in discourse. All discourse markers are just a natural result of the way language is made up and of the way it works.

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