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ABSTRACTS



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**Corpus linguistic
approaches to epistemic
and evidential marking in
talk-in-interaction
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Distribution and function(s) of parenthetical *mi sembra*/*mi pare* in spoken Italian

Panel contribution

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In the literature, parenthetical *mi sembra* and *mi pare* ‘it seems to me’ have been classified as hedges, i.e., mitigators that take scope over the whole host clause (Caffi, 2007; Schneider, 2007), and are considered to only mark the speaker’s uncertainty, without referencing any specific information source.

Given the lack of dedicated studies on these two parentheticals, we want to provide a more in-depth description of the distribution and the functions of parenthetical *mi sembra* and *mi pare*. In particular, we hypothesize that these parenthetical verbs can also take scope over a phrasal constituent, as suggested by Kaltenböck (2010) for *I think*. Moreover, following some observations made on the construction with *mi sembra* as main-verb (Miecznikowski & Musi, 2015), we hypothesize that these parentheticals can also have an evidential, memory-related meaning.

We extract 139 total occurrences of the two constructions from the spoken Italian corpora KIParla (Mauri et al., 2019) and LIP (De Mauro et al., 1993). The occurrences are coded for four variables: the type of interaction they appear in, their position within the host clause, their scope (clausal/phrasal), and their epistemic or evidential function. We perform a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the occurrences.

Our preliminary results show that *mi sembra* and *mi pare* are more frequent in unplanned and less constrained interactions. Furthermore, we find occurrences in which the parenthetical takes scope on phrasal constituents:

(1) c’è un pezzo che lui registra **nel cinquantotto mi pare** in un disco [...]

‘there’s a piece that he recorded **in nineteen-fifty-eight it seems to me** in a record [...]

However, we expect these cases to be less frequent than the ones having a clausal scope. Instead, we expect many occurrences to show an evidential function. For instance, in cases like (1), the uncertainty marked by *mi pare* is due to the speaker’s difficulty in retrieving the correct information from their memory. We hypothesize this function will be present mainly in less planned interactions (e.g., free dialogical interactions), where the speaker has fewer available sources to justify their claims.

References

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