

The different functions of agreement discourse markers *okay* and *sì* in L1 and L2 Italian: a semasiological approach

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Agreement is one of the clearest manifestations of cooperation between interlocutors and has been examined from various linguistic perspectives (*inter alia*, Sacks, 1987; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Santamaría García, 2004; Wang et al., 2010; Bazzanella, 2015; Sansò, 2020). Borreguero & Ferroni (2020) consider agreement as an umbrella term including diverse discursive functions, i.e. acknowledgment, alignment and approval (agreement *stricto sensu*). This topic is crucial in the field of second language acquisition. Here several studies have explored the ways agreement is encoded by discourse markers (DMs) expressing this function in interactions involving learners and native speakers (among others, in the context of Romance language acquisition, De Marco & Leone, 2012; Andorno, 2016; Koch, 2016; León & Solís García, 2017; Ferroni, 2018).

However, two main issues emerge from these studies. First, agreement DMs have generally been analysed in terms of their interactional and communicative functions (e.g., Pomerantz, 1984; Condon & Čech, 2007; Solís & León, 2016), while less attention has been paid to their three distinct functions (Borreguero & Ferroni, 2020). Second, research in Romance language acquisition of DMs has primarily focused on learners whose L1 is closely related to the target language and is spoken in cultures characterized by strong affiliative norms (Bravo, 2004).

This study presents a corpus-based analysis, adopting a semasiological, top-down approach, to examine the functions of two agreement DMs, *okay* and *sì* ('yes'), in both L1 and L2 Italian, starting from the classification proposed by Borreguero & Ferroni (2020). These DMs were selected due to their widespread use as agreement markers among L1 and L2 Italian speakers.

The research is based on spoken corpora, namely the KiParla corpus (Mauri et al., 2019) and a longitudinal corpus of L2 Italian interactions collected from university students in Czech Republic, whose L1 is a Slavic language (Czech and Slovak, and, to a lesser extent, Russian and Ukrainian). To balance the two samples, the study focuses on one specific type of interaction found in both corpora: semi-structured interviews.

L2 participants were recorded in interactions with familiar interlocutors (Lorenzová & Albanesi, 2025) and received no explicit prompt to use agreement DMs, allowing for naturalistic data

collection. For both corpora, agreement DMs were identified through their pragmatic function and were annotated with respect to participant role—whether the marker was produced by the speaker of the main turn or by the hearer as a backchannel.

The study has a dual objective: first, to shed light on the different pragmatic functions of agreement DMs, expanding the range of strategies identified by Borreguero & Ferroni (2020); second, to examine whether Slavic learners acquire these markers in a manner that follows or diverges from the patterns observed in Romance learners, for instance in terms of self-confirmation (1). Specifically, we argue that the agreement DM *okay* can represent a topical bridge between two utterances (2) rather than closing the previous one (Sansò, 2020), while *sì* can also play a role in turn-taking mechanisms (3), showing other metadiscursive functions not strictly connected to agreement.

Examples:

(1) RI: c'è qualche attività durante cui ti rilassi? (.) che per te è antistress,

KK1: mmh: forse quando: sono and- quando: **sì** sono andata nella vacanza con la mia famiglia
perché: noi spesso andiamo nelle montagne quindi quando facciamo una gita nelle montagne

RI: is there any activity during which you relax? that is stress-relieving for you,

KK1: mmh: maybe when I wen- when: **yeah** I went on I went on holiday with my family
becaus: we often go to the mountains so when we go on a trip to the mountains
(Corpus L2 Italian)

(2) TOI014: [quin]di:: (.) sto aspettando di trovare un'occupazione per poter poi ripartir[e]

TOR001: [sp]ostarti

TOI014: s[i]

TOR001: **[o]kay**

TOR001: ma tu qui vivi con i tuoi?

(KiParla)

TOI014: so I'm waiting to find a job so I can then leave again

TOR001: move

TOI014: yes

TOR001: **okay**

TOR001: but do you live here with your parents?

(3) TO041: e:h è sempre battuta.

TO055: ah.

TO055: ma d[ai.]

TO041: [**sì**] è anche più facile [tenerl(a) ri]spetto che non da noi che non qu:i perché,

(KiParla)

TO041: eh it's always a joke.

TO055: ah.

TO055: come on.

TO041: **yeah** it's also easier to keep it compared to us, not here because,

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