

Deverbal discourse-pragmatic markers in English and Spanish: A contrastive corpus-based study on *wait* and *espera**

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DEVERBAL DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC MARKERS IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH: A CONTRASTIVE CORPUS-BASED STUDY ON WAIT AND ESPERA

ABSTRACT: This paper offers a contrastive analysis of two deverbal discourse-pragmatic markers, English *wait* and its equivalent in Spanish *espera*. Although discourse-pragmatic markers have been widely explored over the years, *wait* and *espera* have received very little scholarly attention, especially from a contrastive viewpoint. This paper intends to contribute to fill this gap in the literature by offering a corpus-based analysis of English *wait* and Spanish *espera* as discourse-pragmatic markers. The data analysed are retrieved from the spoken component of the British National Corpus 2014, for English, and Corpus XXI, for Spanish. The results throw light on the uses of these two discourse-pragmatic markers, distinguishing five different discourse functions and unveiling some similarities and differences across the two languages examined.

KEYWORDS: wait; espera; deverbal; discourse-pragmatic marker; corpus linguistics.

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. 2. Deverbal discourse-pragmatic markers. 3. Prior research on English *wait* and Spanish *espera*. 4. Corpora and methodology. 5. Results and discussion. 6. Conclusion. 7. References.

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LOS MARCADORES PRAGMÁTICO-DISCURSIVOS DEVERBALES EN INGLÉS Y ESPAÑOL: UN ESTUDIO CONTRASTIVO BASADO EN CORPUS SOBRE WAIT Y ESPERA

RESUMEN: Este estudio ofrece un análisis contrastivo de dos marcadores pragmático-discursivos, *wait* en inglés y su equivalente en español, *espera*. Aunque los marcadores pragmático-discursivos han sido ampliamente estudiados a lo largo de los años, *wait* y *espera* han recibido muy poca atención, especialmente desde una perspectiva contrastiva. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo contribuir a llenar este vacío ofreciendo un análisis basado en corpus sobre *wait* y *espera* como marcadores pragmático-discursivos en inglés y español. Los datos analizados se extraen del componente oral del *British National Corpus 2014*, para el inglés, y de *Corpus XXI*, para el español. Los resultados arrojan luz sobre los usos de estos dos marcadores pragmático-discursivos, distinguiendo cinco funciones discursivas diferentes y revelando algunas similitudes y diferencias entre las dos lenguas examinadas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: wait; espera; deverbal; marcador pragmático-discursivo; lingüística de corpus.

SUMARIO: 1. Introducción. 2. Los marcadores pragmático-discursivos deverbales. 3. Estudios previos sobre *wait* y *espera* en inglés y español. 4. Corpus y metodología. 5. Resultados y discusión. 6. Conclusión. 7. Referencias.

LES MARQUEURS PRAGMATIO-DISCURSIFS DÉVERBAUX EN ANGLAIS ET ESPAGNOL: UNE ÉTUDE CONTRASTIVE DE CORPUS SUR WAIT ET ESPERA

RÉSUMÉ: Cette étude offre une analyse contrastive de deux marqueurs pragma-discursifs, *wait* en anglais et son équivalent en espagnol, *espera*. Même si les marqueurs pragma-discursifs ont été exhaustivement étudiés au cours des années, *wait* et *espera* ont reçu peu d'attention, spécialement dès une perspective contrastive. Cette étude vise à contribuer à combler des lacunes dans ce domaine et offrir une analyse de corpus sur *wait* et *espera* comme marqueurs pragma-discursifs en anglais et en espagnol. Les données analysées proviennent de la section orale du *British National Corpus 2014* pour l'anglais et du *Corpus XXI* pour l'espagnol. Les données éclairent les usages de ces deux marqueurs pragma-discursifs, en distinguant cinq fonctions discursives différentes et en dévoilant des similarités et différences entre les deux langues examinées.

MOTS-CLÉS: wait; espera; deverbal; marqueur pragma-discursif; linguistique de corpus.

SOMMAIRE: 1. Introduction. 2. Les marqueurs pragma-discursifs déverbaux. 3. Recherche préalable sur *wait* et *espera* en anglais et espagnol. 4. Corpus et méthodologie. 5. Résultats et discussion. 6. Conclusion. 7. Références.

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1. Introduction

Discourse-pragmatic markers (henceforth DPMs)¹ have been widely explored over the years. However, most studies have concentrated on the most frequent DPMs, with, comparatively, a very limited exploration of minor DPMs. This paper aims to contribute to fill this gap by exploring the use of two deverbal DPMs, English *wait* and its Spanish equivalent *espera*, as illustrated in examples (1) and (2), which, with the exception of Tagliamonte (2021), have received very little scholarly attention so far.

- (1) oh my god yeah we have three extra lectures oh no **wait** two lectures one seminar (BNC2014 S2EF)
- (2) venga / aquí está la moto ¡qué gracioso! **espera** ¿dónde la ponemos? vamos / ¿dónde la ponemos? / venga aquí (CORPES XXI)
'Come on, here's the motorbike, how funny! wait, where do we put it? Come on, where do we put it? okay here'

As shown in (1) and (2), *wait* and *espera* are not primarily used in their literal meaning, that is, to ask the interlocutor to await. Therefore, following Erman (2001: 1339), it could be argued that *wait* and *espera* “can only be understood either through clues in the context and/or situation, or else by having a conventionalized pragmatic meaning mapped onto them”. In particular, the speaker in (1) uses *wait* with a self-correcting function – there were not three lectures, but two lectures and a seminar – and the speaker in (2) employs *espera* to pause in discourse from what he was saying and ask his interlocutor where they are going to put the motorbike. As is typical of DPMs (Brinton, 1996: 6), *wait* and *espera* are used for interpersonal and textual purposes in these cases. Tagliamonte (2021: 424) explains this function as “an extension from an original lexical meaning of pausing or lingering, which has expanded to indicate a pause in discourse as the speaker reflects on or corrects an earlier topic”. As it happens with other DPMs, *wait* and *espera* “are the linguistically encoded clues which signal the speaker’s potential communicative intentions” (Fraser, 1996: 323). In addition, as is also characteristic of other DPMs, *wait* and *espera* are “semantically bleached” (Liu, 2016: 76), that is, there is a loss of semantic content when these words are used as DPMs; “syntactically optional” (Pichler, 2013: 4) or occur “outside the syntactic structure” (Erman, 2001: 1339), given that they do not contribute to the propositional meaning of the utterance; and have a “high degree of context-sensitivity” (Andersen, 2001: 40), resulting in being able to

¹ These units have been referred to with labels such as “discourse markers” and “pragmatic markers”, among others. We opt here for the term “discourse-pragmatic markers” following Pichler (2013: 4) and Tagliamonte (2021: 445).

fulfil multiple functions in discourse. One further evidence that proves their status as DPMs is the fact that we could substitute *wait* and *espera* in these examples for other DPMs, such as *well*.

As mentioned, with the notable exception of Tagliamonte's (2021) work on *wait* in Canadian English, this pair of DPMs have not received scholarly attention, especially from a cross-linguistic perspective (although there seems to be already some work in progress in this respect, see Schwenter *et al.*, 2019). This paper intends to contribute to fill this gap by offering a contrastive analysis that aims to determine the similarities and differences between these DPMs in English and Spanish. The methodology adopted is corpus-based. The data are extracted from two corpora of contemporary spoken discourse. For English, we employ the spoken British National Corpus 2014 (henceforth BNC 2014) (Love *et al.*, 2017; Love, 2020), which samples British English from the years 2012-2016. For Spanish, we use CORPES XXI (0.94 version), the most recent corpus of the Real Academia Española, sampling data from the 2001-2020 period. Since we want our results to be comparable in both languages, and given that the English corpus just samples one variety of this language (British English), we only employ the European Spanish subcorpus within CORPES XXI, selecting data from spoken discourse exclusively so that our results are comparable with the speech transcriptions included in the BNC 2014.

After this introduction, this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 offers an overview on deverbal DPMs. Section 3 focuses on prior research on *wait* and *espera*. Section 4 presents the corpora and the methodology adopted. Section 5 examines the corpus-based results and offers a contrastive discussion. Finally, Section 6 closes the paper with some concluding remarks.

2. Deverbal discourse-pragmatic markers

English *wait* and Spanish *espera* can be included in the category of “deverbal” (Enghels, 2018; Fedriani and Molinelli, 2019), “verb-based” (Haegeman, 2014; Badan, 2021) or “verb-derived” (Tsoy, 2022) discourse-pragmatic markers. As these labels suggest, this category comprises discourse-pragmatic markers which originally derive from a verb.

Examples in English include the classic and widely studied DPMs *you know* and *I mean* (Östman, 1981; Holmes, 1986; Erman, 2001; Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002; Beeching, 2016, to name but a few) as well as DPMs related to verbs of cognition, such as *I think* or *I believe* (Aijmer, 1997; Fetzer, 2014). Further examples include cases originating from imperative verb forms such as *look* (Brinton, 2001; Van Olmen, 2010).

Deverbal DPMs in Spanish include *venga* (from the verb *venir*; English *to come*) (Cestero Mancera and Moreno Fernández, 2008; Daniels, 2014; Tanghe, 2016), *vamos/vaya* (from the verb *ir*; English *to go*) (Fuentes Rodríguez, 1998; Chodorowska-Pilch, 1999; Tanghe, 2016; Polanco, 2017), *oye/oiga* (from the verb *oir*; English *to hear*) (Tanghe and Jansegers, 2014; Porroche Ballesteros, 2020), *mira/mire* (from the verb *mirar*; English *to look*) (Tanghe and Jansegers, 2014; Hane-greefs and González Melón, 2015; Porroche Ballesteros, 2020); *sabes* (from the verb *saber*; English *to know*) (Azofra Sierra and Enghels, 2017); *vale* (from the verb *valer*; English *to be worth*) (Cestero Mancera and Moreno Fernández, 2008), *anda* (from the verb *andar*; English *to walk*) (Tanghe, 2016; Padilla Herrada, 2017), *verás/veamos/a ver/ya ves* (from the verb *ver*; English *to see*) (Cucatto and Cucatto, 2004; Padilla Herrada, 2017; González Sanz, 2017a, 2017b, 2020) and *¡fíjate/fíjese* (from the verb *¡fijarse*; English *to focus*) (Guillén Escamilla, 2018), among others.

As we can notice, most examples in English include a personal pronoun plus a lexical verb, while similar deverbal DPMs in Spanish just include a specific form (or two, in certain cases) of the lexical verb. This absence of the personal pronoun in Spanish is connected, on the one hand, with the fact that many deverbal DPMs in Spanish are derived from imperatives and, on the other hand, in non-imperative cases, with the optionality of an explicit subject before the verb in Spanish. As is also apparent from the previous overview, a further contrast between deverbal DPMs in both languages, is that Spanish includes a wider range of lexical possibilities for deverbal DPMs than English. This richness seems to be a feature that Spanish shares with other Romance languages, such as French or Italian (see, for example, work by Dostie, 2004, on French, or, by Badan, 2021, on Italian).

3. Prior research on English *wait* and Spanish *espera*

As already mentioned, prior research on *wait* and *espera* is very scarce. *Wait* has not been included in previous inventories listing DPMs (see, for example, Brinton, 1996: 32). However, some mentions in passing can be found in previous research. An example is Keller's (1979) repertoire on conversational strategy signals, which includes *wait a minute/second*. As it happens with other DPMs, Keller states that these elements are syntactically independent and are used as turn-taking signals in which the speaker indicates the desire to keep the conversational turn (Keller, 1979: 226, 231). It is important to highlight that these are cases related to <*wait* + adverbial specification> (*wait a minute/second*), but there is no mention to the use of *wait* alone. To date, the only paper just devoted to *wait* exclusively is Tagliamonte (2021).

In her paper, Tagliamonte (2021) examines the use of *wait* as a DPM in Canadian English. She finds that the DPM *wait* develops from its use as verb with temporal specification² to acquire new functions as a DPM at the left periphery, a use that accelerated in frequency since 1970. She distinguishes the following three functions, ordered in rank of frequency (Tagliamonte, 2021: 439): *correction*, in which the speaker corrects something previously said, as illustrated in (3); *commentary*, in which the speaker adds an additional commentary, as shown in (4); and *interruption*, in which the speaker interrupts the discourse, usually to ask a question as in (5).

- (3) One of my cousins, she uh – she got lost. No, **wait**, she ran away herself, right? Because then, I don't know, she got mad at me. (Tagliamonte, 2021: 438)
- (4) Whenever we had a tournament, we'd get a new spy equipment. [laughs] And we'd try it out at the tournament, and our brothers would be playing mini-sticks in the conference room and we'd be spying around, like, "Oh did you see that?" And talking to each other. **Wait**, the coolest thing I had was – it was a headpiece. (Tagliamonte, 2021: 439)
- (5) And Mr. Haskin. **Wait**, did you know Mr. Haskin? (Tagliamonte, 2021: 439)

Tagliamonte's (2021) findings show that *wait* tends to appear at the left periphery of the utterance and usually co-occurs with certain words such as *oh*, *no* and *hey*. She also argues that *hold on* and *hang on* are functional equivalents to *wait*, although they are less frequent than *wait* and tend not to co-occur with *wait* in the same conversation. From a sociolinguistic point of view, her results reveal that *wait* is increasing in apparent time, with younger speakers using the DPM *wait* in a much higher frequency than older speakers.

Turning to Spanish, three major dictionaries exclusively devoted to DPMs were consulted to check the presence of *espera* therein: Santos Río's (2003) *Diccionario de partículas*; Briz et al.'s (2008) *Diccionario de partículas discursivas del español*; and Fuentes Rodríguez's *Diccionario de conectores y operadores del español*, in both the first (2009) and second edition (2018) of her dictionary. It should be noted, however, that the verb *esperar* has two different meanings in Spanish: one equivalent to English *to wait*, with which we are concerned here, and the other equivalent to English *to hope*. Santos Río's (2003) includes some entries related to *espera*: *(como) era de esperar*, *esperemos* and *(eso) espero*. All of them are related to the verb *to hope* and, therefore, they are not equivalent to our cases with *wait*. With respect to the two other

² For an account of the different meanings of *wait* in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), see Tagliamonte (2021: 428).

dictionaries consulted, Briz *et al.* (2008) and Fuentes Rodríguez (2009, 2018) do not include any entry related to *espera*.

Despite being absent in these inventories, in their study of Spanish discourse markers, Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999: 4187) discuss that certain second-person verbal forms – as would be the case with *espera* – can be used as addressee focusers (“enfocadores de la alteridad”), that is, they can be employed as addressee-oriented interpersonal DPMs. In particular, they mention those related to the semantic fields of physical perception, such as *ver* (English *to see*) and *escuchar* (English *to listen*); and intellectual perception, such as *entender* (English *to understand*) and *saber* (English *to know*). As Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999) argue, they share characteristics typical of other DPMs since they are grammaticalized, as these forms always appear in the second person only, and show a certain degree of desematization, given that they no longer indicate a process of physical or intellectual perception but express the attitude of the speaker towards the interlocutor.

The cases we are concerned here – *wait* and *espera* – behave similar to the examples discussed by Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999). *Wait* and *espera* are also fixed units that are used in the second person, thus exhibiting grammaticalization. In particular, the use of *wait* and *espera* seems to originate in their imperative second person use. In addition, they show desematization, since, when used as DPM, *wait* and *espera* no longer have the lexical meaning of awaiting typically associated with these verbs. Instead, they are used for interpersonal functions in discourse, along the lines of other DPMs.

4. Corpora and methodology

The methodology adopted in this paper is corpus-based. The data are extracted from two corpora of contemporary discourse in English and Spanish. For English, we use the spoken BNC 2014 (Love *et al.*, 2017; Love, 2020) and for Spanish, we extract the data from the spoken component of CORPES XXI (examining data from Spain only).³ We base our analysis on spoken discourse exclusively given that DPMs “are predominantly a feature of oral rather than of written discourse” (Brinton, 1996: 33).

The two aforementioned corpora constitute unparalleled resources on present-day spoken discourse and, although they have not been compiled using the same sampling frame, the spoken component in CORPES XXI can be compared with the spoken BNC 2014. However, in terms of corpus size, it should be noted that the spoken BNC 2014

³ Note that CORPES XXI samples both American Spanish (70%) and European Spanish (30%). In addition, it contains data from both spoken and written discourse.

contains 11.5 million words, whereas the spoken component of the European Spanish subcorpus of CORPES XXI is considerably reduced, totalling approximately 3.6 million words.

Searches for *wait* and *espera* were run in both corpora, rendering a total of 2,422 tokens in English and only 267 in Spanish. Given the different sizes of the corpora just mentioned, Figure 1 provides the relative frequency per million words of *wait* and *espera*. As we can observe, the English corpus almost triples the number of tokens of *wait*, 210.61, as compared to its Spanish equivalent *espera*, which just has a relative frequency of 74.17.

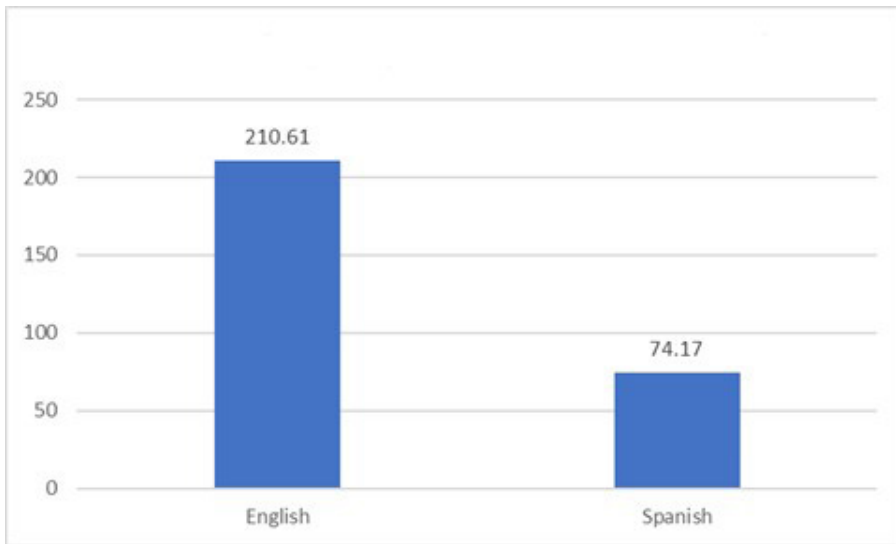


Figure 1. Relative frequency of *wait* and *espera* (pmw)

As mentioned, a search for *espera* in the Spanish corpus renders a total of just 267 tokens. Although the English corpus contains a total of 2,422 tokens of *wait*, we decided to restrict our analysis to an automatically randomized sample of 267 tokens, to match the Spanish sample, so that our datasets are comparable.

Following Tagliamonte (2021), our tokens were first manually disambiguated to discard cases which did not correspond to uses of *wait* and *espera* as DPMs (see Section 5.1 below). As will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.1, it should be mentioned that, once the manual analysis of the 267 tokens in each language was carried out, our datasets of DPMs were considerably reduced due to the fact that most tokens corresponded to cases in which *wait* and *espera* were not used as DPMs. This resulted in frequency differences between the English dataset of DPMs ($N=120$) and the Spanish one ($N=69$). Finally,

DPMs were manually annotated according to discourse function (see Section 5.2).

5. Results and discussion

5.1. FREQUENCY

As mentioned in Section 4, our sample totals 534 tokens: 267 cases of *wait* and 267 cases of *espera*. Table 1 shows the frequency and distribution of *wait* and *espera*. In English, we can distinguish between two types: the use of *wait* as a verb and the use of *wait* as a DPM. In contrast, the classification is wider in Spanish, since our sample also contains cases of *espera* as a noun as well as some false starts typical of speech.

Type	<i>Wait</i>		<i>Espera</i>	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Verb	147	55.06%	113	42.33%
DPM	120	44.94%	69	25.84%
Noun	-	-	82	30.71%
False start	-	-	3	1.12%
Total	267	100%	267	100%

Table 1. Frequency of *wait* and *espera*

Quantitatively, as expected, *wait* and *espera* are primarily used as verbs. Illustrations are provided in examples (6) and (7). These are cases in which *wait* and *espera* are used in their literal meaning. In these cases, the form of the verb can be inflected for person or tense; for example in (6) we could have *waits* if we had a third person singular subject or *waited* if the action reflected a past time event.

- (6) and I had to go slowly with --ANONnameM right the way round the tower round to the back and he stands in the corner and widdles in the corner and I **wait** for him and then I fetch him back (BNC2014, SFER 1146)
- (7) pero si alguien me **espera** / en ese sitio / me voy sola / a donde sea (CORPES XXI)
'but if someone waits for me / in that place / I go alone / anywhere'

It is noticeable, however, that the percentage that *wait* as a verb and *wait* as a DPM represent is more similar in the English sample (55.06% versus 44.94%) than in the Spanish one. In Spanish, the

DPM just represents 25.84% of the total number of cases, while the verb *espera* amounts to 42.33%. Examples (8) and (9) show, respectively, uses of *wait* and *espera* as DPMs. Example (8) is particularly interesting, since it contains two instances of *wait*. The first one, in bold type, illustrates the DPM; in this case *wait* is used by the speaker to make a correction. In contrast, the second instance of *wait* in example (8), in italics, constitutes an example of the verb *wait*, in which it is clear that the speaker is telling the addressee that they have to allow time to pass to receive an invitation.

- (8) **wait** no I'm saying we have to *wait* for an invitation we don't just say we're coming round to dinner (BNC2014, SH4V 707).
- (9) y temía que / que se llegara en el momento en que estuviera arriba / además como no nos habíamos visto nunca **espera** es / hacia allá / a la derecha (CORPES XXI)
 “and I was afraid that they arrived when he was upstairs / also as we had never seen each other wait it's / over there / to the right”

Finally, as mentioned before, the Spanish sample also contains cases of *espera* as a noun. In contrast with what happens in English, in which *wait* can also be used as a noun (although no single instance was found in our sample), the number of *espera* as a noun amounts to 30.71% of the total number of cases in Spanish. Such difference in frequency can be attributed to the fact that, in many contexts, when Spanish speakers would use *espera* as a noun, English speakers would employ the verb, as shown in example (10), in which the noun *espera* is translated into English as the gerund form of its equivalent verb, *waiting*. Although less numerous, other cases of *espera* as a noun in Spanish include compound nouns consisting of <noun + preposition + noun>, such as *lista de espera*. In these cases, English would usually resort to an adjective, as shown in example (11), in which the compound noun *lista de espera* (<noun + preposition + noun>) is translated into English as *waiting list* (<adjective + noun>).

- (10) buenos días y muchas gracias también por la **espera** hoy el mensaje fundamental en la presentación del cuadro macroeconómico es que la economía española va a crecer el año que viene al tres por cien (CORPES XXI)
 “good morning and thank you very much for waiting today the essential message in the presentation of the macroeconomic table is that Spanish economy is going to grow 3% next year”
- (11) que no hay ayuda a domicilio / que es prácticamente insignificante // que hay / escasísimas plazas residenciales / y siempre unas enormes / listas de **espera** (CORPES XXI)
 “there is no home help service / it is almost insignificant // there are very scarce residential places / and always long / waiting lists”

5.2. DISCOURSE FUNCTION

As discussed in Section 3, Tagliamonte (2021: 439) distinguishes three different discourse functions for the DPM *wait*: correction, commentary and interruption. The same three functions were found in our English and Spanish samples. In addition, two further functions were also attested in our sample: alarm and mirativity.

Table 2 shows the frequency of the different functions of the two DPMs in English and Spanish. Quantitatively, we observe that interruption and commentary are the dominant functions in both languages. However, whereas interruption is the most frequent function in English (40.83%), the first position in the Spanish rank of frequency is occupied by commentary (37.68%). Alarm is the third in frequency in both languages, representing 14.16% of the total number of cases in English and 18.84% in Spanish. Correction and mirativity are infrequent in both languages; each represent only 11.67% in English and even less than that in Spanish.

Type	Wait		Espera	
	N	%	N	%
Interruption	49	40.83%	22	31.88%
Commentary	26	21.67%	26	37.68%
Alarm	17	14.16%	13	18.84%
Correction	14	11.67%	3	4.35%
Mirativity	14	11.67%	5	7.25%
Total	120	100%	69	100%

Table 2. Discourse function of *wait* and *espera*

Interruption, a function also included in Tagliamonte (2021), comprises cases in which the speaker, using *wait* or *espera*, interrupts the flow of discourse, usually to ask a question, as illustrated in (12) and (13). In example (12), the speaker interrupts discourse to ask how long his interlocutor had been in a certain place. Similarly, in (13) the speaker makes an interruption by means of *espera* in order to ask about the name of the garden.

- (12) S0290: a snake?
 S0291: no like erm some kind of scorpion
 S0290: well that's a pretty scary **wait** how long were you out there for?
 S0291: we were there for like two days (BNC2014, SVDM 168)

- (13) “un día fuimos por allí a dar una vuelta // y / y fuimos a un jardín // **espera** ¿cómo se llamaba el jar? era como una especie de aquí la Alameda” (CORPES XXI)
 “one day we went over there to go for a stroll // and / and we went to a garden // wait what was the name of the gar? it was something like the Alameda here”

Another function also present in Tagliamonte (2021) is commentary, in which the speaker makes an additional commentary in discourse providing extra information. Illustrations of this function are shown in examples (14), for English, and (15), for Spanish. In (14) the two participants in the conversation are discussing a problem they have with a videogame in which the cartridge does not fit the game console. Speaker S0543 adds a comment, italicized in the example, which is introduced by means of *wait*. Similarly, in example (15), the speaker is explaining which subjects could be studied in different university buildings, and after mentioning where Medicine was studied, he adds a commentary, introduced by *espera*, about where to study Arts.

- (14) S0543: if anyone has Pokemon that they don't wanna play any more
 cos
 S0544: I had silver but the silver doesn't fit in DS any more
 S0543: oh
 S0544: cos er the cartridge is slightly bigger
 S0543: >>oh **wait** *yeah it depends like it depends where DS gave it like cos they only have the older one well not the ol- --UNCLEARWORD*
 (BNC2014, STH5 1529)
- (15) Solo había la Universidad / solo había ese edificio que ahí / se estudiaba / *espera* bueno y después estaba también Medicina **espera** / *ahí se estudiaba / Letras // o sea Filosofía y Letras / Derecho // y Ciencias químicas*” (CORPES XXI)
 “There was only the university / there was only that building / there you could study / wait / well and then there was also Medicine wait / *there you could study Arts // I mean Philosophy and Arts / Law / and Chemical Science*”

Correction – also included in Tagliamonte’s (2021) repertoire of functions – includes cases in which the speaker corrects something previously said, as illustrated in (16) and (17). In (16), speaker S0529 doubts if 2014 was the year in which they went to Paris, to make a self-correction later, by means of *wait*, and assert that that was the year. Similarly, in the Spanish example in (17), the speaker corrects himself by means of *espera* when he remembers a past fright in the mountains. Cases of correction usually refer to instances of self-correction, in which the speakers correct something said by themselves, as evidenced in (16) and (17). However, cases in which the speaker

corrects something said by the interlocutor are also possible, as shown in example (18), in which speaker S0543 makes a correction to speaker S0544 when discussing a photograph which the latter claims that contains something similar to fish.

- (16) S0530: when when when was this year?
S0529: this was in Paris this was erm (.) year nine so (.) what year was that? (.) feels like ages ago (.) erm (.) what year are we in now? (.) two thousand and fifteen?
S0530: two thousand fifteen
S0529: so fourteen was (.) there thirteen was college (.) **wait** was I at college in two thousand and fourteen? (.) no **wait** yes I was (.) yes I was yeah (BNC2014, STMM 1182)
- (17) “mmm no / susto así gordo / bueno / alguno / sí / **espera** sí sí empiezo a recordar alguno / sí / algún susto sí que tuvimos / yo qué sé alguna vez en carretera de montaña en los Pirineos iba de pequeño” (CORPES XXI)
“mmm not / a terrible fright / well / some / yes / wait yes yes I am starting to remember some / yes / we had some frights indeed / I don’t know / sometimes in the mountain road in the Pyrenees [where] I went as a child”
- (18) S0544: it’s like fish usually or er --UNCLEARWORD
S0543: **wait** no that isn’t it is it?
S0544: mm no
S0543: oh no you didn’t send me it on WhatsApp then (BNC2014, SBZ7 185)

In addition to the three aforementioned functions, our analysis reveals two further functions that *wait* and *espera* may fulfil which were absent in Tagliamonte’s (2021) study. These are alarm, used to warn the interlocutor about a situation that is perceived as hazardous or requiring attention; and mirativity, used to convey the surprise or unexpectedness of the speaker about certain information (DeLancey, 1997; Aikhenvald, 2012). In both functions, it is frequent that the DPM is repeated several times, highlighting the alarm or surprise perceived by the speaker. Examples (19) and (20) show instances of the alarming function. In (19) speaker S0556 perceives the anger of one of the participants in the conversation and alarms the interlocutor. Likewise, in (20), the speaker uses *wait* to warn the addressee that he is not able to get the engine of a motorbike started.

- (19) S0405: my hand hurts
S0555: maybe just throw the bottle at the tree
S0556: wai- now **wait wait wait wait** now now **wait wait wait wait wait wait** just give it a minute to calm down
S0405: why?
S0556: it’s angry at you

(BNC2014, SMRV 1401)

- (20) “vale / venga vale / ¿pero ya va? venga va no / no / no **espera /
 espera / espera / espera / espera / espera** no / no / no va /
 no va arráncala tú / Marc Marc / tú que sabes levántate levántate”
 (CORPES XXI)
 “okay / come on okay / but is it going? come on no / no / no wait /
 wait / wait / wait / wait / wait no / no / it’s not going / it’s not going
 / start it Marc Marc / you do know stand up stand up”

With regard to mirativity, examples (21) and (22) show the surprise of the speakers about two different situations happening at the time of speaking: in (21), the changing of colours, and in (22), the fact that F18 aircrafts are going round in circles.

- (21) S0024: I’ll just well I’ll just be hang on hang on blue wait there blue car and now it’s green again oh my god **wait wait wait wait wait** it’s just that didn’t stay red very long did it? (BNC2014, SHJH 259)
- (22) “se he ha dispuesto que dos efe dieciocho cubran la zona / con dos ciento uno / luego hay un dispositivo naval / y **espera espera espera espera** / ¿los efe dieciocho están constantemente dando vueltas? / o están no no no no / el efe dieciocho están en situación scramble es decir pelea o alerta” (CORPES XXI)
 “it has been decided that two F18 [aircrafts] cover the area / with two one hundred and one / then there is naval presence / and wait wait wait wait / F18 [aircrafts] are constantly going round in circles? / or are they no no no no / F18 is in scramble situation that is fight or alarm”

Apart from these two new discourse functions – alarm and mirativity – just discussed, if we compare our results with those reported by Tagliamonte (2021: 439), we can also observe quantitative differences in some of the functions considered in both studies across the two English samples examined (Canadian versus British). While correction was the most frequent function (>30%) in Tagliamonte’s study on Canadian English, the frequency of cases of correction is lower in the British English sample analysed, representing only 11.67% of the cases. Likewise, interruption also shows differences in the British and Canadian samples examined. While it accounts for approximately 17% of the cases in Canadian English, its frequency is much higher in British English, where it represents 40.83% of the cases. In contrast, the commentary function represents very similar proportions in both varieties of English. Figure 2 graphically depicts the differences between British English and Canadian English across the interruption, correction and commentary functions, using 95% Wilson confidence intervals (Wallis, 2021). As can be observed, differences in the interruption and correction functions are statistically significant in British English and Canadian English, whereas the commentary func-

tion does not show statistically significant differences across the two varieties.

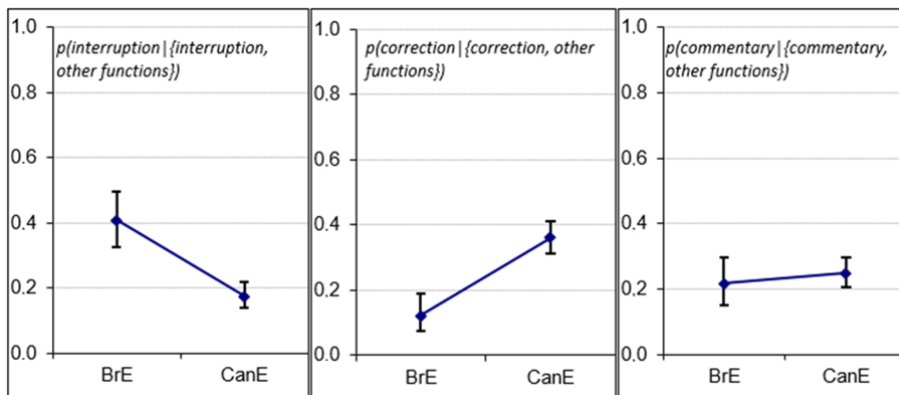


Figure 2. Comparison of the different functions in British English (BrE) and Canadian English (CanE), using 95% Wilson confidence intervals

Given that the use of *wait* and *espera* as DPMs is a low-frequency phenomenon in general (Tagliamonte, 2021: 432), the trends that our results suggest should be confirmed against larger samples. It should be noted that differences across functions may also be affected by the registers included in the corpora examined. Tagliamonte (2021) examines data from the Ontario Dialects Project, which is a sociolinguistic project comprising interviews with people from different towns and villages in the Ontario province. Our British English data, in contrast, are extracted from the conversation component of the BNC 2014. This corpus contains transcripts of conversations in informal settings, which were self-recorded by the speakers themselves (Love *et al.*, 2017; Love, 2020). In an informal context such as this, where conversations take place among friends or family members, it seems that interruptions, for example, are likely to be much more frequent than in an interview. This could partially explain the sharp frequency differences in the results reported for certain functions in British and Canadian English.

6. Conclusion

The results from this paper offer interesting insights into the use of *wait* and *espera* as DPMs. Although further research on larger datasets will enlighten the study of these two DPMs in contemporary speech, some clear trends can be observed.

First, the use of the DPM *wait* is more frequent in English than in Spanish. While the DPM *wait* represents 44.94% of the total number

of tokens in English, its Spanish equivalent just totals 25.84% of the cases.

Second, despite the frequency differences in the use of these two DPMs, *wait* and *espera* fulfil similar functions in discourse. Our analysis includes examples of *wait* and *espera* used for interruption, commentary and correction functions, which were also present in Tagliamonte's (2021) study on Canadian English. In addition, our corpus findings unveil two further functions absent in prior research: alarm and mirativity, which are present in both languages. In these two functions, the DPM is repeated several times, thus emphasizing the alarm or surprise perceived by the speaker. Interruption and commentary are the most frequent functions in both languages, with interruption being the most frequent in English and commentary the most frequent in Spanish. Alarm is third in the rank of frequency in both languages and correction and mirativity only appear very sparsely.

Third, our analysis offers some interesting contrasts between our British English dataset and the sample examined by Tagliamonte (2021) on Canadian English. While interruption is the dominant function for *wait* in British English, correction is the most widely used in Canadian English. Although these differences in frequency are statistically significant, we should not disregard the effect of register on such differences. While the English and Spanish corpora analysed in this paper are fully comparable, the British English corpus and the Canadian English dataset contain different types of spoken discourse. The former samples informal conversation, whereas the latter includes interviews. Certain functions, such as interruptions, may be more prone to occur in more informal discourse. Further research on the topic exploring differences across varieties of English will benefit from employing fully comparable corpora, such as the *International Corpus of English*, to determine whether the differences reported here can be extended to all types of spoken discourse and to all varieties of English. Another line of research for further studies could also be the analysis of *wait* and *espera* across different registers. Our analysis suggests that *wait* and *espera* mostly seem to occur in dialogic contexts, but differences between dialogic and monologic types of discourse should be further explored by future research.

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