Construction of Referents in a Corpus of Live Sports Comment : Informational Structure, Syntactic and Prosodic Realization

The work that we propose to present consists in analyzing reference in a particular type of spoken corpus : live sports comment. In particular, we are interested in the descriptive intervals of this production, that are directly produced in relation to actions that take place on the field, under the speaker's eyes. If every kind of speech is motivated by different factors (Boulakia & Mathon, 2009), the descriptive speech also adapts its structure to this particular communicative context.

The successive naming of players and their actions is the very matter of the descriptive part of sport comment. By analyzing a corpus of descriptive speech (a rugby match), we want to prove that it is not just the enumeration/recitation of players who currently perform the action but that there is a construction of the referential structure, all along the discourse and in every descriptive interval, which makes the discourse coherent.

For the 120 descriptive intervals of the match comment we use for this study (for more information on the corpus, cf. Lortal & Mathon, 2008), we began by identifying the first introduction of every referent (520 cases of "new" referents) and its eventual resumptions (346 cases of "given" referents). More precisely, we distinguished the activation of a referent in a given descriptive interval ("newly activated" or "unactivated" referent, Chafe, 1976 : 30 ; Lambrecht, 1988 : 144...) from the coreferent expression(s) or reactivation(s) ("(already) activated" referent) that follow this introduction, and identified the properties of all these elements (part of speech, prosodic and syntactic realizations).

This analysis led us to distinguish two different ways of building the referential structure inside a descriptive interval:

1/ The referent, a player, is most often introduced for the first time in the descriptive interval by a proper name (76% of the cases), related to one or several actions (or action phases). The close co-referents are relative pronouns or clitics (respectively 35% and 21% of the total of first and second resumptions). If referent A, already named once in the descriptive interval, must be resumed and other referents have been introduced between the first mention of referent A and its reappearance, then referent A is repeated as a proper name. Here is an example of this configuration :

> *Alors c'est pas **Elissalde qui** va se charger de ce renvoi **il** va aller derrière **ses** avants derrière les {inintelligible} // <u>Traille</u> pour un dégagement très lointain sans doute voilà qui est fait // pour aller tout de suite dans le camp argentin // ballon* récupéré par <u>Borgès</u> pour // <u>Hernandez</u> {inintelligible} // ouais alors <u>Harinordiquy</u> / bien // et quelle belle prise de balle / c'est bien / ah ça c'est beau // superbe // **Elissalde** / et y'a des gros là-bas ils vont / avec Michalak // ouais {inintelligible} // **Elissalde** encore pour Dominici //*
>
> Then it is not **Elissalde who** is going to do this sending **he** is going to go behind **his** fronts behind {unnintelligible} // <u>Traille</u> for a very distant release doubtless it is done // to go at once to the Argentine camp // balloon* got back by <u>Borgès</u> for // <u>Hernandez</u> {unintelligible} // yes then <u>Harinordiquy</u> / good // and what a beautiful ball taking / it is good / ah that it is beautiful // haughtiness // **Elissalde** / and there are bigs over there they go / with <u>Michalak</u> // yes {unintelligible} // **Elissalde** still for Dominici //

2/ The introduction of the referent is delayed, mostly for the effect of emphasis. In the example 2 we can note that besides the massive presence of coreferent expressions in the sequence, their prominence is marked by the way they are introduced. Indeed, the extract presents a left dislocation of the descriptive part of the referent (*le buteur de l'équipe de France* / ``the striker of the French team'' is resumed twice by *ce*/it), as well as two presentational utterances (*C'est X* / it is X), structures that lead to the isolation of a syntactic constituent and to a focalisation on its referent.

> ***Le buteur de l'équipe de France** / c'est **lui** / c'est **David Skrela***
> **The striker of the French team** / it is **him** / it is **David Skrela**

We can also find in this group some cases of right dislocations, not necessarily with an emphatic value, as in the following example:

> *Et Hernandez // ne trouvera pas la touche il est tombé sur Harinordoquy //* **Heymans** *// **il** va taper loin devant* **Cédric Heymans**
> And Hernandez // will not find the key he fell on Harinordoquy // **Heymans** // **he** is going to pull far away **Cédric Heymans**

Here, the name (*Heymans*) itself constitutes a sentence; in the macrosyntactic theory, it would be called a nucleus (see Deulofeu, 1998 and Mathon & Boulakia, 2010). In this example, the speaker gives an additional precision on the action led by the referent, and so has to form a new sentence (*il va taper loin devant* / he is going to pull far away). The referent is first resumed by a clitic subject (*il*/he), and in order to avoid any ambiguity, it is also repeated, at the end of the sentence, as a direct anaphora, firstname and family name of the player *Cédric Heymans*. In this kind of example, the presence of a right dislocated constituent seems to be more related to a disambiguation/clarification need than to an informational restriction, and this analysis is confirmed by the prosody as this right dislocation presents the typical melodic contour of a postfix (see Martin, 2009).

Finally, concerning the prosodic realization of referents, we will show that their degree of newness or givenness in both discourse and descriptive interval level is not related to prosodic cues. In fact, we will observe that most of the time, a new referent or a direct anaphora present the same rising-descending melodic contour which takes in the whole phrase.

References

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