

Zero quoting in the speech of British and Spanish Teenagers: A contrastive corpus-based study

Abstract:

Quotatives have been studied extensively in the language of teenagers in the last few years since they present distinctive features of their own that make them partly different from those used by adults in mainstream English and Spanish. However, zero quoting has not received all the attention it certainly deserves since it has not been fully probed in terms of its discourse and pragmatic functions. This corpus-based study is focused on the strategies used by British and Spanish teenagers to introduce constructed dialogue without the use of a particular marked and an explicit quotative form.

The results indicate that the absence of quotatives is not casual; there are some linguistic contexts which favour the existence of this type of quotatives, namely non-lexicalised and sound words, and the dramatic recreation of situations where the speaker(s) perform new voices. The lack of quotatives also serves to involve the interlocutor more directly and in a higher degree in what is being told and gives more self-assurance to the narrator. These tendencies apply equally to English and Spanish.

The study of null/zero quotatives should go then beyond the simple reporting of an absence of a verbal mark and should address pragmatic and interpersonal factors closely associated with the context where they occur and with the speaker's attitude and communicative intention and purpose.

Keywords

quotative, zero quoting, teenagers' speech, narrative, spoken language