Exploring exemplification in interaction: a comparative study on L1 and L2 Italian speakers

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Exemplification is a crucial cognitive and discursive resource in the construction of common ground (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs 1986; Clark 1996; Deppermann & De Stefani 2019). Traditionally associated with conceptual clarification, exemplification is far more multifaceted. From a cognitive perspective, it enables speakers to build *ad hoc* categories (Mauri & Sansò 2018; Mauri 2021), anchoring abstract concepts to concrete and accessible experiences. On the pragmatic and interactional level, it plays functions of mitigation, alignment reinforcement, and shared-knowledge construction (Lo Baido 2018; Barotto & Lo Baido 2021). Yet, little is known on how exemplification is employed by L2 speakers.

Our study aims to explore exemplification strategies adopted by adult L2 learners of Italian, in spontaneous spoken interaction, and compare them with those used by L1 speakers. Our analysis is based on data from the KIParla corpus (Mauri et al. 2019), specifically the modules Stra-ParlaBO, ParlaBO and KIPasti (tot. 170 h).

We will present a pilot study that aims to explore similarities and differences between L1 and L2 speakers in the use of exemplification, by answering the following research questions:
- To what extent and in which contexts do L2 speakers rely on exemplification?
- Do the pragmatic functions of exemplification coincide in L1 and L2 data?
- Do innovative formal strategies emerge in L2 speech?
- Is there evidence of native language influence in L2 exemplification patterns?

The analysis, which adopts a qualitative methodology, is based on a sample of (i) 12 hours of **adult L2** Italian spoken in spontaneous contexts (6 hrs of interviews and 6 hrs of free conversations between speakers from Moroccan, Bengali, Chinese, and Ukrainian migrant communities), and (ii) 12 hours of **L1** speech (6 hrs of semi-structured interviews and 6 hrs of kitchen-table conversations).

All the exemplification sequences identified in the sample were coded according to the following parameters:
- Explicit categorization: presence or absence of an explicit category formulation and semantic type (event, entity, frame)
- Exemplification strategy: presence or absence of dedicated markers, morphosyntactic properties of the construction, function in discourse
- Interaction management: e.g. presence of co-construction, phenomena of agreement or disagreement, overlaps and turn-taking

Preliminary results reveal that L2 speakers regularly adopt exemplification strategies, which are often characterized by the use of available linguistic resources. In many cases, learners rely on the marker *un esempio* ('an example') combined with creative or redundant structures, such as the expression *come*, 'like', *un esempio* 'an example', and *tipo*, 'like' (see ex. 1).

(1) SBIB006

PSB050	*ma questa che televisione è?*
	'but what is this tv channel?'
PSB049	*questo è una: televisione come:*
	'this is a tv channel like'
	questo di: **come: un esempio** eh **tipo** *bolognese bologna*
	'this of **like an example like** bolognese bologna'
PSB050	*ah ok[ay]*
PSB049	*[di] bologna questo tivu noacali*
	'of bologna this tv channel noacali'

Moreover, L2 speakers demonstrate flexibility in using exemplification markers, and innovative strategies emerge, not in terms of function, but the originality of the constructions and their adaptation to available resources (e.g. *per così,* see ex. 2).

(2) SBIB006
PSB049 *sì questo x festa perchè (.) eh perchè se tu sei tanti però non conosci nessu:no non capisci chi è*
'yes this x party because if it is many of you but you don't know anyone you don't understand who is'
lui di mio $sitta se così: questo xx abbiamo fatto come: co- questo festa abbiamo fatto come: conoscere come:
'he is from my city if like that this xx we did like this party we did like know like'
un $exemplo *tu $sitta di noacali*
'an example you city of noacali'
*però tu non mi conosci che anche io sono $sitta di noacali **per così** >**un esempio**< io ti c-*
'but you don't know that I am city of noacali **for example** I'
*chiamato questo giorno abbiamo (>questa<) festa venga (.) io chiamato un altro lui chiamato **per così** abbiamo organizzato questo fest(a)*
'called you this day we have this party come I called someone else he called **like that** we have organized this party'

The comparison with data from KIPasti and ParlaBO confirms that exemplification is widely used by both L1 and L2 speakers, though with partially different configurations. In L2 Italian, exemplification tends to serve speaker-oriented functions, such as reformulation, lexical compensation, or referential clarification. In contrast, L1 speakers often employ exemplification with more intersubjective aims, mitigation, managing disagreement, or reinforcing epistemic reciprocity and common ground, as illustrated in (3), where two interlocutors co-construct reference and use exemplification for mutual alignment (cf. *sì sì tipo…* 'yes yes, like…').

(3) KPN021
PKP072 *sì, (.) però posti freddi tipo::: in svezia o in finlandia io la vorrei una casa,*
'yes but cold places like sweden or finland I would like a house'

PKP070 *ma casa proprio io direi tipo andiamo in vacanza con il nostro jet privato e fin[e]*
'but a real house I would say like let's go on holiday with our private jet and stop'

PKP072 *[a]nche o tipo ma no casa [che dev'essere per forza casa]*
'also or like but not a house that is necessarily a house'

PKP070 *[c(io)è il jet privato che ci compra] lui*
'I mean the private jet that he buys for us'

PKP072 *tipo: appartamento capito (.) che però è tuo e d[ici]*
'like a flat you know that however is yours and you say'

PKP070 ***[ah s]ì sì sì tipo mi faccio le vacanze to'***
'yes yes yes like I go on holiday'

PKP072 *sì sai quelli che hanno le finestre che arrivano fino al tetto*
'yes yes you know those that have windows up to the roof'

PKP072 *non [so se hai prese]nte*
'I don't know if you know'

PKP070 ***[sì sì tipo:]***
'yes yes like'

PKP070 ***tutta vetrata***
'all windows'

In conclusion, exemplification emerges as a fundamental strategy in spontaneous interaction, extensively employed by both L1 and L2 speakers to establish reference and reinforce common ground. As such, it offers a privileged point of view to investigate meaning-negotiation dynamics in interaction.

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