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"Sopratavola soprammobile come dite voi": Lists in L1 and L2

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Lists are a cognitive resource for speakers and have a wide range of semantic and pragmatic functions. One of the main objectives of this paper is to further clarify the links between lists and language proficiency. To do so, we focused on lists produced by native and non-native Italian speakers during a lexical search in the context of spontaneous spoken language. The study presented here is based on a corpus of oral productions elicited through a task. As the paper will show, some elements usually considered in the literature as completely disparate can be considered together within the framework of lists. Furthermore, it will show the gradual emergence as construction of a particular subset of lists of lexical searches.*

KEYWORDS: lists, approximation, Formulation, Constructions, Second Language Acquisition.

1. Introduction

Lists are cognitive resources which lend themselves well to various uses, not only on the linguistic level. In a volume dedicated to lists in figurative arts and literature (Eco 2009), they are conceived as semiotic tools. They are considered similar to sets, capable of representing infinity through a finite number of elements.

From a linguistic point of view, considering a provisional definition that will be refined in §2, lists are characterized by a combination of two or more units of the same type, linked by particular relations and organized in sequence.

In this paper, we intend to analyse formal and functional features of lists in L1 and, especially, in L2 uses. The main objective of this paper is to describe the lists produced by native and non-native speakers of Italian to further clarify the links between lists and language proficiency; to do so, we focused on lists produced during the

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operations of formulation, denotation and approximation. Our analysis is based on a corpus of spoken Italian.

The concept of list helps to interpret some phenomena usually considered of many and varied types. In addition, the analysis shows the gradual emergence as construction of a particular subset of lists linked to the process of denotation and approximation, and their connection to increasing levels of language proficiency.

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 correlates the study of lists with various typical elements of spontaneous spoken language, such as reformulations, self-repairs, and more general linguistic phenomena linked to lexical search. In section 3, the objectives and research tools of this study are presented in detail. In sections 4, 5 and 6, we analyse and classify the lists of the corpus.

2. Field of research

Numerous linguistic studies have been dedicated to lists,[1] which are very common in various languages and have a wide range of semantic and pragmatic functions. The work by Bonvino *et al.* (2009), and in particular, Masini & Pietrandrea (2010), and Benigni (2015) analysed lists as Constructions in the framework of Construction Grammar. According to Masini (2016: 20), a Construction is "the conventionalized association of a form and a meaning, where function stands for semantic and pragmatic-discourse information."

Our goal, within the research field of lists, is to demonstrate that the notion of list allows us to consider elements usually interpreted as completely disparate as syntactic coordinations, repetitions, self-repairs, reformulations, together within the same framework. Such phenomena share a common structural pattern, namely the list: "a combination of two or more units of the same type realizes one and the same constructional slot" (Bonvino *et al.* 2009; see also Masini, Mauri & Pietrandrea *this issue*).

The original contribution of this paper to the debate on lists concerns some dimensions of spoken language, of comparison between native speakers' (**NSs**) and non-native speakers' (**NNSs**) oral productions, and of word search through operations of formulation, denotation and approximation, as shortly commented here below.

Even though lists do not only concern spoken language (see Bonvino *et al.* 2009; Blanche-Benveniste 2011; Benigni 2015), we will focus on data from spoken language. Indeed, many phenomena typical of spontaneous speech such as disfluencies, reformulations, self-

repairs, lexical searches, speech planning strategies can be considered lists, since they are characterized by repetitions of several units that interrupt the flow of speech. In line with many works by Blanche-Benveniste (see, for example, Blanche-Benveniste 1987, 1997, 2001), we consider different fragmentation phenomena as indicative of the production process, with mechanisms and regularities shared by all speakers, not exclusively idiosyncratic or random.

In the literature, the phenomena of disfluencies mentioned above are mostly analysed in L1 for their phonetic and prosodic aspects,[2] or in relation to the speakers' ability to detect and correct their errors. In particular, in Conversation Analysis (**CA**), repair practices have been extensively examined by a large number of researchers (Fox *et al.* 2010; Kitzinger 2013; Lerner & Kitzinger 2007, 2010; Schegloff 1979, 1987, 2000; Schegloff *et al.* 1977) and across a wide range of languages.

In psycholinguistics and in L2 studies, they are usually associated with L2 proficiency levels and the degree of monitoring of the user's own production (Levelt 1983; Lennon 1994; van Hest 1996; Kormos 1999; Nuzzo & Pedica 2016).

Simpson *et al.* (2012: 2) highlight that, by accepting Schegloff's broader definition of self-repair (2000: 207) as "practices for dealing with problems or troubles in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk in conversation", the spectrum of the phenomena referable to self-repair may broaden, overcoming the widespread association between self-repair *stricto sensu* and error correction. However, in our opinion, also in this last definition, the words 'problems' and 'troubles' refer to a defective perspective that does not capture the process of meaning construction. From a different perspective but one that does not consider the constructional process, Fox Tree (1995: 705) states that speech disfluencies are "generally defined as phenomena that interrupt the flow of speech and do not add propositional content to an utterance". As specified by the author, they include "long pauses, repeated words or phrases, restarted sentences, and the fillers *uh* and *um*". Therefore, the lack of propositional content seems to be a distinctive feature of these phenomena.

Such speech phenomena have also been investigated in relation to the concept of *fluency* (Biber *et al.* 1999; Hasselgren 2002; Müller 2005; Rühlemann 2006; Bergmann *et al.* 2015). In this regard, for example, Götz (2013) investigates fluency in native and non-native English speech. Especially relevant to the present paper is the definition of self-corrections – taken from Biber *et al.* (1999) – in which the concepts of 'retracing' and 'replacing' something resurface:

> In spontaneous speech, it happens quite frequently that the speaker says something incorrect (either content- or grammar-related) and needs to correct him/herself. Then [as stated in Biber *et al.* 1999] "the speaker retraces (or notionally 'erases') what has just been said, and starts again, this time with a different word or sequence of words" (Götz 2013).

A similar perspective of 'replacing' is claimed by other authors; for example, Lennon maintains that "the speaker edits out of production a segment of discourse and replaces it with an alternative version" (Lennon 1994: 87).

We are aware that this short excursus does not exhaustively deal with the complexity of the research in this field; that, as stated also in Kitzinger (2013), repair operations can have different functions, according to the goal of the speaker(s); and that some phenomena as self-repairs can partially overlap with those phenomena analysed in our corpus. For example, the analysis of the so-called "appropriacy repairs" (Levelt 1983; Kormos 2000; Nuzzo & Pedica 2016) goes away from the idea of correction with respect to a norm and gets closer to the additive perspective adopted in this study.

However, we will not consider the perspective of the CA in this paper,[3] firstly, for the trivial reason that the lists analysed here are not examined in a dialogic sequence within a conversation; besides, for three more important reasons:

1. we analyse phenomena that only partially overlap with those defined as self-repair;
2. in the approach adopted here, speech phenomena as self-corrections, interruptions, word searches, are almost never considered as 'fixed' or 'repaired' pieces, but rather as elements which contribute to create a denotation or to convey approximation to meaning, according to an additive logic (see also §4.2);
3. we are interested in the "list" pattern from a constructionist perspective, since it allows a broader range of generalizations, as well as the possibility to link and integrate the observed phenomena.

By analysing the lists produced by NS and NNS it is also possible to extend the research to the field of Second Language Acquisition, as well as to apply the notion of communicative competence (see Bonvino *et al.* 2018).

Actually, in this paper, we analyse different types of lists produced by speakers during the process of "lexical search". From a cognitive point of view, the process of preparing words in speech production is

fast, accurate and very complex (Levelt *et al.* 1999), and is one of the most largely investigated issues in language production (Navarrete *et al.* 2016). We will use the notion of lexical search (taken from Levelt & Maassen 1981) in a general meaning: it refers to the process of speech production and research of the term. It may involve operations of formulation, denomination, denotation and approximation. In the cases analysed here, in which the speakers did not know the words or they had to name objects with low frequency denominations, it is not relevant to our objectives to know if the speakers did not know the word or could not retrieve it from their memory (lexical retrieval). Instead, we are interested in observing how NSs and NNSs cope with the lack of a lexical item during a lexical search task, considering that NSs and NNSs differ in their communicative competence levels.

In the process of lexical search in unplanned speech, speakers hesitate, correct and repeat, or produce lists of words and constructions that progressively approach the required word, according to associative and paradigmatic relationships. As we will see, they also often use two types of approximation:

a. Approximation as a process, which is a progressive approach to a specific target. In particular, the lists analysed in 4 are lists of approximation to meaning, in which the speaker explores various possibilities in search of a good denotation.
b. Approximation as one of the manifestations of intentional vagueness, which can be defined as a semantic-cognitive operation characterized by a low degree of specification in the distinctive features of linguistic trait (Voghera 2014: 35).[4]

Our working hypothesis is that the theoretical framework of the studies on lists may give an overall unified view on disparate phenomena, such as those concerning lexical search and approximation.

The analysis of the corpus allows the integration of the list taxonomy outlined in Bonvino *et al.* (2009) and refined in Pietrandrea & Kahane (2012), verifying its validity also through the analysis of L2 oral productions.

3. Goals and tools

3.1. Goals

This study focuses on a type of list that appears to be a communicatively efficient tool used by speakers to cope with the lack of a lexical item. The main purposes of this experimental study are to:

- Observe and describe the features of the lists produced by NSs and NNSs of Italian during a task aimed at eliciting lists, and check whether there are differences between the two groups.
- Verify whether a perspective that analyses different phenomena interrupting the syntagmatic (and linear) chain of spoken language can be useful to describe L2 competence.
- Verify whether there are constructions that are permanently and conventionally associated with lexical search or approximation.

To achieve our goals, the construct of the list was researched in different types of data, which are described in the following paragraph.

3.2. Tools: the task and the corpora

The present research is based mainly on a task used to elicit lists. The task (described in Castelli 2011) consists in hiding some objects in a canvas bag and asking the subjects to identify every object by touching it with one hand – first from outside, then from inside – without looking at it. The hidden objects are deliberately unfamiliar to the subjects or have very uncommon names in Italian (e.g., a styling concentrator for hairdryer, a lizard-shaped keychain, a knickknack, a staple remover). Castelli (2011) proposed the task as an activity to teach approximation to Italian learners.

Although it may engage the speakers in different cognitive activities,[5] in our research this task is used to elicit the linguistic output produced by native and non-native speakers of Italian (not to identify those processes from a psycholinguistic perspective nor to teach approximation). It is a very powerful tool to observe how the subjects cope with the lack of precise words while defining an object or how they deal with the uncertainty derived from the failed identification of the object.

A description of the participants taking part in our study is presented in Table 1. The NNSs represent all the competence levels described in the CEFR (A1 to C2). Some data were collected in the Language Centre of the University of Roma Tre, while the remaining data were collected by master degree students[6] in different contexts. All participants were recruited with the understanding that the session would be recorded.

Table 1. Participants in the study

	Males	Females	Total
NSs	24	29	53
NNSs	17	38	55
Total	41	67	108

Subsequently, the recordings were transcribed using a simplified set of transcription characters[7] and coded using NVivo software. The corpus was coded by one of the researchers and then the results were discussed with the other members of the group to establish consensus.

We integrated data taken from two corpora, in our analysis: the corpus List.IT and the corpus described in Bonvino *et al.* (2009). The corpus List.IT, which was started in 2016 and is still in progress, consists of extemporaneous lists collected in various spoken corpora, caught 'on the fly' and lists elicited through the task described above.

4. Formulation Lists

4.1. Lists produced by NSs and NNSs

In this section, we will describe the lists found in the corpus List.IT, highlighting their features and the differences between NSs and NNSs. Due to the nature of the task, the participants were led to attempt to recognize the object contained in a canvas bag and to name it and, after identifying the referent, activate a search in order to find the appropriate denomination along with some strategies for achieving the communicative task. Therefore, we found numerous lists that contain repetitions, hesitations, self-repairs, etc. Additionally, these lists contain several metatextual expressions (thus widely involving the enunciation level), since the lexical search process is caused by a temporary or permanent lack of access to the speaker's linguistic system.

The list in (1)[8] clearly shows an example of lexical search in which the NS does not succeed in expressing the term that he was searching for but is ultimately pleased with the solution that he managed to formulate.

(1) *come si dice – ehm – del – riduttore del del – fono – ehm – bocchettone quelli che si usano per il fono per ridurre l'aria e mandarla ehm – più – come si dice - di focalizzare di più l'aria – l'aria del fono in questa fessura - di questo ridut:tore – non so riduttore – c- ehm – non non si chiama diffusore perché diffusore è quell'altro (xxx) vabbè di preciso come si chiama: — riduttore: – del fono - per fare uscire la -l'aria calda o fredda del fono – eh — ri- rid- — diciamo col calore più concentrato: più concentrato ecco […]*
'how do you say – hmm – of the – reducer of the of the – hair dryer – hmm – receptacle those to be used for the hair dryer to reduce the air and to address it hmm – more – how

do you say it - to focus more on the air – the air of the hair dryer in this opening - of this reducer – I don't know reducer – c- hmm – it is not it is not called hair diffuser because hair diffuser is the other one (xxx) well precisely what's its name: — reducer: – of the hair dryer - to blow out the the hot or cold air of the hair dryer – eh — re- red — let's say with more concentrated heat more concentrated that's it […]'

come si dice 'how do you say'				Insertion
ehm *'hmm'*				Hesitation
		del 'of the'		Hesitation
	riduttore 'reducer'	*del* 'of the'		X_1
		del fono 'of the hair dryer'		Specification
ehm *'hmm'*				Hesitation
	bocchettone 'receptacle'			X_2
	quelli 'those'	*che si usano per il fono* 'to be used for the hair dryer'		X_3
		per ridurre 'to reduce'	*l'aria e mandarla ehm più* 'the air and to address it hmm more'	
come si dice 'how do you say it'				Insertion
		di focalizzare di più 'to focus more'	*l'aria* 'the air'	Specification
			l'aria del fono in questa fessura di questo riduttore 'the air of the hair dryer in this opening' *of this reducer*	Specification
non so 'I don't know'				Insertion
	riduttore c- 'reducer c-'			X_4
ehm *'hmm'*				Hesitation
non 'it is not'				Hesitation
non si chiama 'it is not called'				Insertion

	diffusore 'hair diffuser'			X_5
perché 'because'	*diffusore* 'hair diffuser'	*è quell'altro* 'is the other one'		X_6
vabbè 'well'				Insertion
di preciso come si chiama: 'precisely what's its name:'				Insertion
	riduttore 'reducer'	*del fono* 'of the hair dryer'		X_7
		per fare uscire la 'to blow out the'	*l'aria calda o fredda del fono* 'the hot or cold air of the hair dryer'	Specification
eh 'eh'	*ri-* 're-'			Hesitation
	rid- 'red-'			Hesitation
diciamo 'let's say'				Marker
			col calore più concentrato 'with more concentrated heat'	Specification
			più concentrato 'more concentrated'	Specification
ecco 'that's it'				Insertion

The speaker is in search of a good denotation but, since he is not sure of the precise word, he simply says just the preposition (*del* 'of the') then adds a noun before it (*riduttore del* 'reducer of the'), then a noun after it (*del fono* 'of the hair dryer'); then he tries to use another noun (*bocchettone* 'receptacle'), he defines the function (*quelli che si usano per* 'those which are used to') describing its use in various ways (*ridurre l'aria, mandarla più, focalizzarla* 'reduce the air', 'to address it more', 'to focus it'); he repeats the first noun again (*riduttore* 'reducer'), probably because he thinks it is the more appropriate choice, then uses another noun (*diffusore* 'hair diffuser') which is preceded by a negation (*non* 'not') and a metatextual expression (*si chiama* 'it is called'). The whole operation aims at putting the term 'diffuser' as a sort of comparison (see "approximate comparisons" in Blanche-Benveniste 2008). The speaker wants to indicate it as a term of the same domain, not suitable to designate the referent, which however

shares some traits with the referent indicated. He repeats the first choice (*riduttore* 'reducer'), followed by the explanation of how the hidden object works, producing a number of hesitations (*eh ri- rid-*) and stating several times that he does not know the word (*come si dice, non so, vabbè di preciso come si chiama* 'how do you say, I don't know, ok what's its name precisely').

The NS in (2) tries to name the object, which he recognizes, but he is not sure of its name or maybe he does not know it.

(2) *questa questa è una: m- sì l'ho riconosc- è una pinzatri- una: — quella per fare i buchi – non so come si chiama – sì – è una: non so il nome però — è per fare i buchi sulla carta*
'this this is a: m- yes I recogni- it's a stap- a: — that one to make holes – I don't know its name – yes – it's a: I don't know its name though — it's to make holes on the paper'

questa 'this'					
questa 'this'		*è* 'is'	*una m-* 'a m-'		Hesitation
	sì l'ho riconosc- 'yes I recogni-'				Insertion
		è 'it's'	*una pinzatri-* 'a stap-'		X_1
			una 'a'		Hesitation
			quella 'that one'	*per fare i buchi* 'to make holes'	X_2
	non so come si chiama 'I don't know its name'				Insertion
	sì 'yes'				Insertion
		è 'it's'	*una:* 'a'		Hesitation
	non so il nome però *'I don't know its name though'*				Insertion
		è 'it's'		*per fare i buchi sulla carta* to make holes on the paper'	Specification

At first, he makes an attempt with the name *pinzatri-* (It. *pinzatrice* 'stapler') but hesitates and interrupts himself. Then, he decides to describe the function of the object (*quella per fare i buchi* 'that one to make holes') and adds a metatextual insertion (*non so come si chiama* 'I don't know how to call it'). Finally, he tries again (*sì è una* 'yes it's a'), but fails in the attempt to recall the lexical items of which he enunciates only the article (*una* 'a'*)*. The speaker concludes his list

with a further metatextual insertion (*non so il nome* 'I don't know its name'), before repeating its function and adding a specification (è per i fare buchi sulla carta 'it's to make holes on the paper').

Among NNSs, the same type of list with a very similar structure was found. In (3) the speaker, a Spanish learner of Italian (attending an A1 level course), recognizes the object.

(3) *questo - non so come si di- non so come - come si *como* è la parola precisa *pero è per usarlo quando *estudi — non è una penna è di colore — *subrayador**
'this - I don't know what's its- I don't know how - how it's what [in Spanish] is the precise word but it's to be used when you study — it's not a pen it's coloured — highlighter [in Spanish]'

questo 'this'				
	non so come 'I don't know what's'	*si di-* 'its'		Hesitation
	non so come 'I don't know how'			Hesitation
	come 'how'	*si* 'it's'		Hesitation
	como 'what'	è la parola precisa is 'the precise word'		Insertion
pero 'but'				Insertion
	è 'it's'		*per usarlo quando estudi* 'to be used when you study'	Specification
	non è 'it's not'	*una penna* 'a pen'		X_1
	è 'it's'		*di colore* 'coloured'	Specification
		subrayador 'highlighter		X_2

The speaker states that she does not know the word in Italian (*questo - non so come si di-* 'this - I don't know what's its-') and adds she does not know the exact word (*como è la parola precisa* 'what's the precise word'). This need to be precise is sometimes observed also in our NS data, as in example (1). Subsequently, the speaker makes an attempt to carry out the task by shaping it in the form of a list. The speaker proceeds gradually narrowing the field. As a first element, she omits the noun but adds a specification, i.e. a functional feature of the object (*è per usarlo quando estudi* 'it is to be used when you study'). Then she approximates the word through a construction (*non è una penna* 'it's not a pen') (see also point d in §4.2). By doing so, the speaker creates an implicit link with the first element because she places it in the category of 'objects to study'. The third element

is again a specification with the omission of the noun (*è di colore* 'it's coloured'). After demonstrating that she recognizes the object, she decides to close the list with the Spanish word (*subrayador* 'highlighter').

The NNS in (4), a Croatian learner of Italian (attending B1 level), produces the same type of list with a sequence of hesitations and metatextual insertions.

(4) *un — penso che *pel — per *li bambini come — un ogg- — un gio- — come si dice — a toy — gio- per gioco ahah — una *giocattola*
'a — I think that for the — for kids like — an obj- — a to- — how do you say — a toy [in English] — to- for kidding hahah — a toy'

		un 'a'			Hesitation
penso che 'I think that'					Insertion
				pel 'for the'	Hesitation
				per li bambini 'for [the] kids'	Specification
	come 'like'				Marker
		un 'an'	*ogg-* 'obj-'		Hesitation
		un 'a'	*gio-* 'to-'		Hesitation
come si dice 'how do you say'					Insertion
		a 'a'	*toy* 'toy'		X_1
			gio- 'to-'		Hesitation
		per 'for'	*gioco* 'kidding'		X_2
ahah 'hahah'		*una* 'a'	*giocattola* 'toy'		X_3

This speaker, as in example (3), bounds the semantic field of the object (*per *li bambini* 'for kids') that he seems to recognize from the beginning. He recalls the first syllable of the noun (*un gio-* 'a to-'), but he fails to recall the whole word. He accepts that he does not know (or does not remember) the word, by addressing his interlocutor (*come si dice* 'what to call it') and proposing the corresponding English lexical item (*a toy*) in position X_1. The element in X_2 (*per gioco*) may be interpreted as a non-target subordinate VP (*per giocare* 'to play with'), as a non-target NP lacking an article (*per il gioco* 'for the game') or as an attempt to use an unanalysed chunk of language, *per gioco*, but

per gioco is normally used to declare that something is just for fun. Nevertheless, the speaker seems to have learnt it as a formula; while he is searching for the lexical item with the first syllable in *gio-*, the expression comes to mind. As a result of this process, in the last position, a near target word is produced by the speaker (*una *giocattola* 'a toy'; the correct word in Italian is *giocattolo*).

Finally, in (5) a list performed by a non-native speaker of Italian at C1/C2 level is presented.

(5) *non so come si chiama una cosa una specie di - da fare credo sui capelli che ti rilassa una specie di di non è una spazzola ma una cosa per far rilassare*
'I don't know what to call it a thing a kind of - to do I think on your hair that relaxes you a kind of of it's not a hairbrush but a thing to relax you'

non so come si chiama 'I don't know what to call it'						Insertion
		una 'a'		*cosa* 'thing'		X_1
		una 'a'	*specie di* 'kind of'			Marker
					da fare credo sui capelli 'to do I think on your hair'	Specification
					che ti rilassa 'that relaxes you'	Specification
		una 'a'	*specie di* 'kind of'			Marker
			di 'of'			Hesitation
	non è 'it's not'	*una* 'a'		*spazzola* 'hairbrush'		X_2
ma 'but'		*una* 'a'		*cosa* 'thing'	*per far rilassare* 'to relax you'	X_3

Even if the speaker is non-native, she makes use of some vagueness markers typically used by NSs (*cosa*, *specie di*) and of the term *spazzola* ('hairbrush'), a word classified by the NVdB dictionary (De Mauro 2016) as belonging to the category of High Availability.

Based on our data, lexical search in both NSs and NNSs is performed through the use of paradigmatic lists. Those lists show a high degree of variety, according to individual choices and strategies, linked to the communicative situation or the language skills. Indeed, the lists collected show the following elements of variety:

a. Number of elements: the quantity of elements in the list varies. In the examples above there are respectively 2 elements (see examples (2) and (3)), 3 (see examples (4) and (5)), and 7 (see example (1)).
b. Markers: some approximation markers appear to be used more frequently by Ns or NNSs at C1/C2 level as in (5) *cosa*, *specie di* (see Bonvino *et al. in press*).
c. Insertions: there are numerous metatextual insertions (es. *l'ho riconosc-, come si chiama, non mi viene la parola, non so il nome*), hesitations and interruptions (*un gio-, un ogg-)* that do not allow the speaker to overcome the (temporary) lack of the lexical item; clues indicating the search for a good denotation or the precise word (*non so come è la parola precisa*).
d. Use of lexical approximation: speakers use 'vague words', that is general words whose function is to fill the lack of a more specific term. Although this phenomenon is common among speakers during a lexical search (namely denotation), greater variety (for example *affare* 'thing', *accrocco* 'bodge', *aggeggio* 'gizmo') and occurrences of *coso* 'thingumajig' are attested in the NSs group compared to the group of NNSs[9]. The productions of the latter focus on the words *cosa* 'thing', *oggetto* 'object', *attrezzo* 'gizmo', *coso* 'thingumajig' (also shared by NSs). Also *strumento* 'instrument' (very frequent) and *accessorio* 'accessory' can be found among NNSs, but not in the NSs group.
e. Use of foreign words: it is quite natural that NNSs sometimes make use of words in languages other than the target language to fill gaps during the lexical search (namely denotation) (Bonvino *et al. in press*). Those words can be in the L1, as in (3) (e.g. *subrayador* 'highlighter'), or in a foreign language other than the target one, as in (4), where the native Croatian speaker uses the English word 'toy', probably because he considers his mother tongue would be less understandable than English.

Among these various examples, one can identify clear trends that highlight salient differences between our groups of NSs and NNSs. These trends show that each group manages approximation differently. As for the NSs, they show a greater and lexically richer use of approximation, while in the NNSs group there is a trend for precision, as seen in the use of foreign words. In addition, NSs also seem to produce more metatextual elements.[10]

4.2. Patterns and regularities

In the lists seen in the previous section (see 'formulation lists' in Masini, Mauri & Pietrandrea *this issue*), both NSs and NNSs appear to explore different possibilities when looking for a good denotation (Pietrandrea & Kahane 2012). This type of list accounts for a process and it is produced in the attempt to get close to a target (in (1) 'styling concentrator', in (2) 'staple remover', in (3) 'highlighter', in (4) 'massage roller', in (5) 'tingle head massager'). Nevertheless, the whole list, along with its attempts, false starts, reformulations, hesitations, negations, and all the metatextual insertions, constructs and conveys the meaning.

We do not consider all of these examples as mere reformulations or self-repairs in which there is one erroneous element that is to be corrected little by little once it is perceived as a mistake in a replacement logic (see also §2). In speech, it is not possible to go backwards: it is possible only to add words to what has been said. Even when there is a need for a self-repair, one can only start from what s/he has previously said and expand the construction in progress. In fact, what our data of unprepared speech shows is that the process is gradual: speakers add words as the painter adds new brush strokes to another layer, following an anticipatory logic, in which the previous material (words and paint) prepares the ground for what comes after.

As seen in the previous paragraph, the identified lists show great variety. Nevertheless, some regularities emerge:

a. Nature of syndesis: this type of list is generally asyndetic, as in example (2).
b. Relation between elements: the elements in the lists are normally part of the same semantic category or, when they are not co-hyponyms, share semantic features. For example, the hyperonym in (2) is 'a stationery object to use with sheets' whilst in (3) 'a stationery object to leave a trace on the paper'.
c. Filling-the-gap strategy: in order to find the appropriate denotation, the speaker often adopts a constructional strategy, through which s/he gradually outlines a construction around a gap or a vague word. This construction establishes the boundaries, whether at syntactic or semantic level, of the word object of the lexical search. The gap is supposed to be filled with the lexical item, if it is found. During the process of loud lexical search, a context is created, partly because of

the functions and the attributes, and partly because of the syntactic context in which the vague words occur. Moreover, the use of these vague words makes it possible to develop a strategy by which some hints about the part of speech of the searched word are given. Finally, the lists can be accompanied by phrases or clauses. The phrases express the function of the object in general (see example (2) *per fare i buchi* 'to make holes') and/or the context in which the object is used (as in example (3) *per usarlo quando estudi* 'to be used when you study').

d. Negation strategy: examples in (1), (3) and (5) share a common feature, i.e. a term (verb) is introduced by the negation *non* (*non si chiama diffusore* 'it's not called hair diffuser'*; non è una spazzola* 'it's not a hairbrush'; *non è una penna* 'it's not a pen). In our opinion, this choice cannot be considered at all as a denial or a self-repair. In this process of approaching the meaning, which is very frequent in our corpus, the speaker starts by proposing a term, even if it is not exact but close to the good denotation. In this construction, the analogic and anticipatory logic is clear: the speaker is aware that it is not exact but she says it, since she knows that the addressee, based on the analogic association,[11] would understand that the searched word is close to the one denied. Nevertheless, the negated word anticipates the part of speech of the target word and shares some of its semantic features. The representation of this feature is shown in (6):

(6) X_1 … (NEG) X_2, X_3, …

This construction is related to a common adversative structure such as 'not this, but that'; in addition, our data show that it does not only have a negative function, but is also usually inserted in a list of lexical search.

e. Approximation: all the lists in this section are of approximation to meaning, in a sense (see also the classification in Bonvino *et al.* 2009). The use of lexical approximation is certainly the lowest common denominator, although the identified lists are characterized by elements of variety (see 4.1., d).[12] As shown in Table 2, various types of elements can form the lexical search lists (words, phrases, clauses), and can

vary in number and type of relation. They generally include approximation markers and different kinds of insertions, mainly at the metatextual level.

Table 2. Features of the formulation lists in the List.IT corpus

Units (x_1, x_2…)			Markers	Insertions	Nature of syndesis[13]		
Type of elements	Number of elements	Relation between elements			S	P	A
words, phrases, clauses	2 or more	co-hyponyms; same category	some approximation markers	metatextual insertions, reformulations, hesitations	–	±	±

In conclusion, we can say that the lists we observed in the process of lexical search are characterized by huge variability in form and number of the elements. Thus, although the lists identified in the corpus do not show enough stable structures to be considered constructions, they can certainly be considered as patterns in which it is possible to observe some regularities shared by all speakers, both NSs and NNSs (points a-e above) and that may allow the emergence of constructions devoted to express approximation (see points c and d above; §§5-6).

5. Metalinguistic Approximation Lists

Among lexical search lists, an interesting phenomenon is that of morphologic lists, based on the word forms, which we call 'metalinguistic approximation lists'. These lists end with an element that is a list marker, which has the function of a General Extender in most cases, since it extends the list on the metatextual level. Some examples taken from the corpus List.IT – (7) and (8) – illustrate this type of list:

(7) *brancolio °brancolamento come cazzo si dice*
'grope.SFX grope.SFX what the fuck they say' [NB: the diacritic ° stands for a morphologically possible but not existing complex word]

brancolio 'grope.SFX'	X_1
°brancolamento 'grope.SFX'	X_2
come cazzo si dice 'what the fuck they say'	List Marker

(8) *casolesi casolani come si chiamano*
'Casol.SFX Casol.SFX what do they call it

casolesi 'Casol.SFX'	X_1
casolani 'Casol.SFX'	X_2
come si chiamano 'what do they call it'	List Marker

In both (7) and (8), the speaker is looking for the good denomination, so he works on the word paradigm, modifying the affixes or the base. The structure of the Construction is 'X_1, X_2, List Marker' and it conveys formal approximation. Indeed, what is approximated is not the referent or the concept, but the word form, its morphology and, in these cases, the suffix. Therefore, the lists belong to the enunciation level.

Also in the productions elicited through the task – (9-12) –, mainly by NSs or advanced NNSs, we found some lists showing repetition of a part of words. Therefore, the list deals with the word form, of which an approximate version is given. For example, in each of the following lists, the speaker does not know the exact word, but is more or less pleased with the names he has provided.

(9) *lo chiamano di solito boccuccia becchetto qualch-*
'they normally call it mouth.SFX beak.SFX some-'

lo chiamano di solito 'they normally call it'	*boccuccia* 'mouth.SFX'	X_1
	becchetto 'beak.SFX'	X_2
	qualch- 'some-'	List Marker

(10) *bocchetta o becchetto non lo so neanch'io eh*
'mouth.DIM or beak.DIM I don't know it either'

bocchetta 'mouth.DIM'	X_1
becchetto 'beak.DIM'	X_2
non lo so neanch'io 'I don't know it either'	List Marker

NNSs usually tend to search for a good formulation, also on the word form level. Nevertheless, as in (11), lexical search in advanced NNSs (as in NSs) may result in intentional approximation.

(11) *assomiglia a una °sopratavola soprammobile come dite voi*
'it looks like a *PFX.table PFX.furniture as you say'

assomiglia a una 'it looks like a'	°*sopratavola* 'PFX.table'	X_1
	soprammobile 'PFX.furniture'	X_2
	come dite voi 'as you say'	List Marker

The extracts presented above exemplify highly conventionalized constructions expressing approximation and are based on word forms.

Table 3 shows the types of elements that can form the metalinguistic approximation lists (words, affixes), their number and type of relation. They include general extenders or list markers.

Table 3. Features of the metalinguistic approximation lists in the List.IT corpus and elicited through the task

Units (x_1, x_2…)			Markers	Insertions	Nature of syndesis		
Type of elements	Number of elements	Relation between elements			S	P	A
words, affixes	2 + marker	realizations of the same word	general extender or list marker (metalinguistic or *verba dicendi*)	–	–	±	±

6. Approximating Denotation Lists (ADLs)[14]

Some lists identified in the corpus are characterized by approximation marks and vague vocabulary, and tend to be placed on the denotation level. Bonvino *et al.* (2009) define this kind of list as Conceptual Approximation Lists; they are called Hyperonimic Lists by Pietrandrea & Kahane (2012), because through a series of co-hyponyms the speaker aims at a hyperonimic denotation, whereas they are named Approximating Denotation Lists (**ADLs**) in Masini, Mauri & Pietrandrea (*this issue*), who keep them apart from Categorizing (i.e. hypernym-creating) Denotation Lists, despite their obvious similarities.

ADLs are used to create a denotation, that is, to designate a meaning by proposing a sequence of alternatives that approximate the reference (Pietrandrea & Kahane 2012). They can be used to

widen existing meanings (De Mauro 1982), to create meanings that do not exist in the language or to designate unlabelled categories ('ad hoc categories', Overstreet 1999). They can also be used to remain vague and provide a denomination to something that is not wanted or that cannot be recovered within the vagueness of information. These types of lists, already described in previous studies (Bonvino 2005; Bonvino & Ambroso 2009; Bonvino *et al.* 2009; Masini *et al.* 2012; Benigni 2014, 2015), are constructions, which have a high degree of conventionalization and are used instead of vague words.

In (12) and (13) we present some examples of ADLs taken from previous works based on corpora. In (14), taken from the List.IT corpus, we introduce a list built with lexical material that is very similar to that of list (13). As we can observe, the structure most frequently found is composed of two elements in list, followed by another element working as a general extender.

(12) *è una che c'ha una figlia un figlio non so*[15]
'it's a woman that has a daughter a son I do not know'

è una che c'ha 'it's a woman that has'	*una figlia* 'a daughter'	X_1
	un figlio 'a son'	X_2
	non so 'I do not know'	General Extender

(13) *poi torna sempre 'sta mosca 'sta zanzara quello che sia*[16]
'then it is always coming back this fly this mosquito whatever'

poi torna sempre 'then it is always coming back'	*'sta mosca* 'this fly'	X_1
	'sta zanzara 'this mosquito'	X_2
	quello che sia 'whatever'	General Extender

(14) *tipo una zanzara una mosca eccetera*
'like a mosquito a fly etcetera'

tipo 'like'		Marker
	una zanzara 'a mosquito'	X_1
	una mosca 'a fly'	X_2
	eccetera 'etcetera'	General Extender

The cases exemplified in (12), (13) and (14) could be interpreted in a substitutive logic as reformulations and self-repairs. In this way, the list in (13) could be represented as follows:

'sta mosca> (I correct myself)> *'sta zanzara*> (I correct myself)> *quello che sia* (whatever, I don't know what it is).

Nevertheless, we consider it more appropriate to adopt a perspective that interprets the whole list as a construction that conveys a meaning of approximation. The representation of the construction can be presented as follows:

Form: X_1, X_2, General Extender
Meaning: Approximation

These constructions inherit features from the disjunctive coordination (see Bonvino *et al.* 2009), even though in our corpus they show no disjunctive marks (asyndesis):

Disjunctive List Construction
Form: X_1, (DISJ) X_2, … (DISJ) X_{LAST}
Meaning: alternative relation between listed elements

Considering the type of task used to elicit our data, in our corpus ADLs are less likely to be found than the lists described in section 4. The ADLs are, however, more frequent among NSs or NNSs with a high level of competence, and belong to the approximation phenomena described above, which is related to intentional vagueness (for more quantitative details see Bonvino *et al. in press*).

The example in (15) is a list taken from the corpus List.IT. In the example, the NS suggests two possible alternatives within a list structure. Due to the task, this list represents a referent identification process in which the speaker may not have actually recognized the type of object, but he seems to settle for a good conceptual approximation, indicated by some markers (*tipo* 'a kind of'; *che ne so* 'I don't know'). The markers are followed by two co-hyponyms belonging to the set of accessories for the body (*orecchini* 'earrings'; *bracciale* 'bracelet') and a general extender (*qualcosa del genere* 'something like that') that ends the list.

(15) *potrebbe esse' tipo che ne so orecchini bracciale qualcosa del genere*
'it could be kind of I don't know earrings bracelet something like that'

potrebbe esse' 'it could be'				
	tipo 'kind of'			Marker
		che ne so 'I don't know'		Insertion
			orecchini 'earrings'	x_1
			bracciale 'bracelet'	x_2
			qualcosa del genere 'something like that'	General Extender

The list presented in (16) was produced by a NNS, a native Spanish speaker attending a B1 level course of Italian. In an attempt to complete the task, she introduces an instrumental definition of the object. Thus, in the first two positions, there are two prepositional terms introduced by *per* ('for') as subordinate implicit clauses (*per le carte* 'for papers'; *per le lettere* 'for letters') followed by a general extender (*cose come questo* 'things like this').

(16) *ah questo è serve per per le carte per lettere cose come questo*
'ah this is for for papers for letters things like this'

ah questo 'ah this'	*è* 'is'			
	serve 'is'	*per* 'for'		Hesitation
		per 'for'	*le carte* 'papers'	X_1
		per 'for'	*lettere* 'letters'	X_2
			cose come questo 'things like this'	General Extender

The lexical search lists presented in section 4, and defined by Bonvino *et al.* (2009) and in Pietrandrea & Kahane (2012) as metatextual or formulation lists, favour the plan of enunciation. The ADLs, by contrast, are constructions that refer to the denotation level. This is indeed what happens in all the examples seen above: in (13), (14) and (15), the speakers seem not to consider it relevant to specify what kind of object they are talking about; but they seem to settle for a good conceptual approximation referring to that kind of object. Example (16), however, shows that the line between lexical search and conceptual approximation is not so well-defined. The first element in the list (*carte*) could be the Spanish form for 'letters' (Sp. *cartas*), but it also could be the hyperonym of paper objects (Sp. *papeles*, It. *carte*), understood as material, and

proposed by the speaker as an adaptation to the Italian in the second position ('letters'). All this could be a true self-repair. However, the general extender (*cose come questo* 'things like this') proposes a hyperonymous closure that indicates to the interlocutor that she is referring to that kind of object. In a sense, it is as if the speaker, during the lexical search process, decided to settle for and use one of these preconfigured constructions and transformed the rephrasing into approximation.

The permeability between lexical search processes and approximation constructions leads us to share the position of usage-based models according to which "usage events play a double role in the system: they both result from, and also shape, the linguistic system itself in a kind of feedback loop" (Kemmer & Barlow 2000: 3).

The types of elements that can form the Approximating Denotation Lists (words, phrases), their number and type of relation are shown in Table 4. They include general extenders or list markers.

Table 4. Features of the Approximating Denotation Lists in the List.IT corpus, in the corpus described in Bonvino *et al.* (2009) and elicited through the task

Units (x_1, x_2…)			Markers	Insertions	Nature of syndesis		
Type of elements	Number of elements	Relation between elements			S	P	A
words, affixes	2 + general extender	co-hyponyms	general extender or list marker (approximation on the metatextual level)	–	–	±	±

7. Conclusions

The main objective of this paper was to describe the lists produced by native and non-native speakers of Italian to further clarify the links between lists and language proficiency. The approach adopted for this study about speech in NSs and NNSs is part of the study on lists outlined in this special issue and, in our opinion, allows us to analyse some phenomena of fragmentation in speech during a lexical search in an organic and comprehensive perspective.

We first discussed the common features and the differences between the lists produced by native and non-native speakers during a lexical search task. Subsequently, we observed how speakers carry out lexical research at all levels of expertise and discussed how they seem to share the same process and strategies.

NSs, as well as NNSs at C1/C2 level, are highly competent in managing approximation. They convey vagueness (vague words, approximation markers) through a wide and appropriate lexical repertoire. In addition, they use so-called Approximating Denotation Lists (ADLs) (Masini, Mauri & Pietandrea *this issue*), which show that the speaker is pleased with a vague denotation.

In contrast, NNSs have a less rich lexical repertoire for conveying approximation, and tend to look for precision through formulation lists of metatextual approximation. Moreover, NNSs frequently use periphrases to describe the referent and resort to foreign words from their linguistic repertoire in order to reach a good denotation.

In relation to approximation, this analysis allows us to state that the lexical search, made through the mechanisms examined here, is used by all the speakers at every competence level.

We have also seen that the approach adopted here is suitable for describing competence of second language speakers. The ability to convey approximation through special constructions is important because it helps to cope with vagueness in real-life communicative situations. The number of hesitations and reformulations is sometimes considered to be inversely proportional to the level of linguistic competence (see CEFR descriptors for fluency in this regard). This study shows that it is not the quantity of disfluencies, but rather their quality and typology, that indicates a speaker's level of competence.

Some of the lists identified in the corpus do not show enough stable structures to be considered constructions, but can certainly be considered as patterns in which it is possible to observe some regularities shared by all speakers, both NSs and NNSs (§ 4.2, points a-e) and that may allow the emergence of constructions devoted to express approximation (see §§5-6).

In this study, during the analysis of our data, we also identified those that we call here 'Metalinguistic Approximation Lists', that is lists that deal with the word form, of which an approximate version is given. In the examples presented in §5 we observed highly conventionalized constructions based on word forms expressing approximation.

During the lexical search process, we also identified some constructions that could be attributed to simple reformulation in another theoretical framework, as is the case for ADLs or formulation lists. Instead we see these as constructions in all respects, which deliver established recognizable contents that are part of the linguistic competence of the NSs (their use increases as linguistic competence increases), and as such must be described.

Our examples are taken from corpora (cf. §4). They clearly show that by considering reformulation phenomena and other phenomena usually analysed in literature as linguistic phenomena (as some kinds of lists and many coordination phenomena) within the same analysis, it is possible to interpret factors regarding lexical search and approximation. Moreover, it may also be helpful to explain L2 oral production.

Notes

[1] See Benigni (2014, 2015); Jefferson (1991); Overstreet (2005); Selting (2007), among others.
[2] For Italian, see Pettorino & Giannini (2005).
[3] For a review on this topic, see Kitzinger (2013) among others.
[4] In Italian, several linguistic devices can express approximation. Approximation can also be conveyed through grammatical elements (Voghera & Collu 2017), prosodic features (Romero-Trillo 2015), or through list constructions (cf. Bonvino, Cortés & Fiorenza *in press*).
[5] As the process of lexical retrieving, denotation construction or referent identification.
[6] Sara Rosini, Veronica Guerrini and Ginevra Ambrosini.
[7] Colons (e.g. *e:*) represent elongated speech or stretched sound. Pauses are represented by means of hyphens and dashes (-, –, —), in proportion to their length. If a hyphen is placed next to a letter (e.g.: *cal-*), it indicates an interrupted word. Question marks (*?*) indicate an interrogative intonation.
[8] All examples are followed by analysis grids that show the progressive construction of the speech highlighting the paradigmatic dimension. For further details see Blanche-Benveniste *et al.* 1979.
[9] For quantitative data, see Bonvino, Cortés & Fiorenza (*in press*).
[10] See Bonvino, Cortés & Fiorenza (*in press*) for further details.
[11] A similar analogic association has been called by Blanche-Benveniste (2008) "le procédé de la comparaison approximative".
[12] As we will see in §§5-6, approximation is not only conveyed through words expressing vagueness, but also through one type of list.
[13] In Tables 2, 3 and 4 the nature of syndesis is presented as S (syndetic, that is one element of syndesis), P (polysindesis, that is more than one element) and A (no element).
[14] See Masini, Mauri & Pietrandrea (*this issue*).
[15] Taken from Bonvino & Ambroso (2009).
[16] From Bonvino (2005).

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