Right peripheral discourse markers in SMS: the case of *alors*, *donc* and *quoi*

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Abstract

This paper presents a semantic study of the three most frequent right peripheral discourse markers (DMs) in a French text message corpus gathered in Belgium: *quoi*, *alors* and *donc*. Assuming that DMs are essential for interaction, I focus on the specific functions they may fulfil at right peripheral position in text messages, a spontaneous computer mediated communication type with writing constraints determined by the communication medium and the situation. I show that these DMs share a common spectrum of meanings when they are located at right periphery, thus pleading for a position-driven meaning. At the same time, *quoi*, *alors* and *donc* also fulfill proper functions at right periphery, which I describe in propositional, structural and modal terms.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I present an analysis of the most frequent right peripheral discourse markers (DMs)[34], *quoi*, *alors* and *donc*, in a French text message corpus gathered in

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[34] Here, I do not discuss the concept of DMs. Various terms, generally *discourse markers*, *discourse particles* or *pragmatic markers*, are used with different meanings in this field. In line with Degand and Simon-Vandenbergen (2011, p. 288), it is not my aim to come up with the ultimate definition of what constitutes the class of DMs. I follow Lewis's definition, when she says that DM "is a label for an expression that combines the semantics of discourse-relational predications with syntactic dependency on a clausal host and low informational salience" (2006, p. 44). To date, no agreement has been reached regarding fundamental issues of terminology and classification, and rather than going into the details of the argumentation for or against certain terms, I will use *discourse markers* here as a cover term close to what Fraser calls *pragmatic markers* (Fraser 2006, p. 189). I do, however, wish to relax the feature "discourse-segment initial because, although front position is characteristic and frequent with DMs, they can also be very versatile and occur in medial as well as in final position" (Degand & Simon-Vandenbergen 2011, p. 288). Furthermore, I am interested in the distribution of the markers to the extent

Belgium. I have chosen to analyse a corpus that shows graphic immediacy (*immédiat graphique* in Koch & Oesterreicher 2001, p. 614) parameters. Text messaging is an asynchronous and monomodal communication type (Hård af Segerstad 2005, p. 34). It is a spontaneous computer mediated communication type on which writing constraints are placed by the communication medium (space, cost, time, encoding) and by the communication situation (physical channel, cultural use, primary purpose of communication, relation of communicative participants to each other, to the external context, and to the text, following Biber 1988, p. 39), but not very much by traditional written norms (that can be found in snail mail, postcards, homework or even telegrams among others). In addition, involvement (with the audience, with oneself and with concrete reality, as defined by Chafe & Danielewicz 1987, p. 105-110) is characteristic of SMS language, since most messages are sent between people who know each other already. Indeed, senders rely "on the receiver's ability to pragmatic inference when decoding the message" (Hård af Segerstad 2005, p. 46). By analysing DMs, this work aims to provide an empirical access to the dimensions of texting as a genre (Biber 1988).

The use of an SMS corpus distinguishes this study from the considerable amount of research on French *quoi* 'what, as it were, so to speak', *alors* 'at that time, then, so' and *donc* 'so' that have been studied through oral and written corpora (for *quoi*, Andrews 1989, Auchlin 1981, Beeching 2004 & 2006, Hölker 1984; for *alors*, Bouacha 1981, Degand, forthc., Degand & Fagard 2011, Forget 1986, Franckel 1989, Gerecht 1987, Hansen 1997, Hybertie 1996, Jayez 1988, Zenone 1982; for *donc*, Bolly & Degand 2009, Culioli 1990, Degand 2011 & forthc., Ferrari & Rossari 1994, Forget 1986, Hansen 1997, Hybertie 1996, Pander Maat & Degand 2001, Rossari & Jayez 1996 & 1997, Schiffrin 1987, Zenone 1982).

Here, I focus on the relationship between the different meanings of *quoi*, *alors* and *donc* and the right peripheral position they occupy in the sentences. As Degand and Fagard (2011, p.30) maintain, the idea of this relationship joins the functional idea that the form and the function of a linguistic element are related in a determining way (cf. references listed there). In line with these functional studies, my work aims to unravel

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that it allows me to determine their semantics and their functions in the construction of discourse, and I do not take into consideration the notion of modal particle.

how *quoi*, *alors* and *donc* have come to act in the right periphery in a diversity of meanings.

Two specific research questions will help me to reach my goal. Which specific meanings do *quoi*, *alors* and *donc* encode when they occur in the same syntactic position? Which meanings do they share when they occur in the right periphery?

Before proceeding to the analysis of *quoi*, *alors* and *donc*, I would first like to review the literature on the semantics of these three items and to distinguish their common and different uses. Secondly, I will outline the parameters I used to distinguish the position and the meaning of *quoi*, *alors* and *donc*. Thirdly, I will describe the data and the methodology I used for this work.

2. Semantic distribution of *alors*, *donc* and *quoi*

Alors, donc and *quoi* show a wide variety of semantic uses, but they also have features in common (cf. authors mentioned in the previous section). While they all can fulfill DM functions, more precisely as structural and modal markers, only *alors* and *donc* can be propositional markers (following the DMs basic functions presented by Cuenca & Marín 2009). In addition, *quoi* can be pronominal and exclamative.

To distinguish *quoi* as a pronoun from the other uses, the parameters I used are the dependency on a head and the possibility of glossing *quoi* by *quelque chose* 'something'. The fact that *quoi* is attached to the clause shows that *quo*i is an interrogative pronoun as in (1) or a relative pronoun as in (2).

(1) Tu fai **k** d beau? [SmsFBF[35]]

   'What are you doing?'

(2) Je te dis **quoi** demain [SmsFBF]

   'I'll let you know tomorrow'

To distinguish its exclamative use, I tested the possibility for *quoi* to be used in isolation or accompanied by a particle and/or the presence of an exclamation or question mark.

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[35] I have chosen to use the original SMS and not its "translated" version, viz. the Standard French version (see Fairon, Klein & Paumier 2006 for the corpus). In order to help readers who do not know French, the English translations are not literal.

In this use, *quoi* emphasises the focus and denotes threatening, defiance (Robert 2010) and impatience (Hölker 1984, p. 49) as in (3).

(3) **Quoi** tu fais quoi demain!? [SmsFBF]
   '**Exactly** what are you doing tomorrow!?'

Before examining the structural and modal uses of the three markers, I would like to focus on the propositional uses of *alors* and *quoi.* All meanings are illustrated with corpus examples and I point out how each of these meanings was distinguished in the data.

3. Propositional *alors* and *donc*

3.1 Temporal *alors*

Alors can be temporal, and this is its original meaning (Degand & Fagard 2011, p. 31). The following parameters were used to uncover the temporal uses of *alors*: *alors* with an explicit or implicit reference to time together with the possibility to replace *alors* by *à ce moment-là* 'at that time', *ensuite* 'then'. There are only rare occurrences of this use of *alors* in my texting corpus. Example (4) shows the temporal use of *alors* in contrast with *maintenant* 'now'.

(4) Je t'ai fais dn mal hier et ce n'était pas mon intention,moi-meme j'avais mal et je voulais te dire par ce message que je ne t'en voulais pas.Effectivement je n'avais pas compris **alors** et maintenant je m'en veux. [SmsFBF]
   'I hurt you yesterday and it wasn't my intention. I was hurt myself and I want to tell you by this message that I'm not angry against you. Yes, I didn't understand **at that time** and now I hold it against me.'

3.2 Consequential *alors* and *donc*

According to the literature, *alors* and donc can also be used to mark consequential or resultative relations with an argumentative meaning.

In its consequential use, *donc* is in line with the idea (common to most discourse theories) that the basic work of a connector consists of linking two discourse segments

by means of a semantic (causal) relation. For my corpus analysis, I used the following parameter for the identification of consequential *donc*: *donc* can be glossed by *par conséquent* 'consequently' (deduction) (Bolly & Degand 2009, p. 11). In this use, *donc* marks a conclusion or a result. In (5), from the fact that the sender has received calls from the recipient and that his battery has almost run down, the sender provides the reason to talk by SMS, stressed by the use of *donc*.

(5) je viens 2 voir T 2 appels ms G presk + 2 batterie **dc** on va devoir se parler en sms. [SmsFBF]

'I have just seen your two calls but my battery has almost run down **so** we'll have to talk by sms'

Alors can also be consequential. For this consequential *alors* as for *donc,* I used the following parameters in my corpus analysis: *alors* can be paraphrased by *par conséquent* 'consequently' and/or *si bien que* 'so that'. In (6) as in (5), the sender's SMS provides a reason to be understood by her husband. In (7), the sender explains that he is getting on so well that it will be easier for him to win.

(6) on est marie pour la vie **alors**s'il y a bien qq'un qu'on doit ecouter et comprendre c'est l'autre! [SmsFBF]

'We are married for life **so** if there is someone to listen to and to understand, it's the other one!'

(7) je fricote avec des responsable **alors** c'est plus facile de gagner! [SmsFBF]

'I am cooking things up with the people in charge **so** it is easier to win!'

Degand and Fagard (2011, p. 35) distinguish a further use close to causal *alors*: conditional use. In this use, *alors* can be glossed by *dans ce cas* 'in that case'. In (8), the possibility of seeing the sender the day after sending the SMS is linked to the suggestion of texting before the meeting.

(8) déso pr tanto ms javè tp é pui sui alé a la biblio.si t'veu paC sui la jusq 22h.ou dm1,ms **alor** c ptètr mieu qtu m'sms avt pr voir si jsui la. [SmsFBF]

'Sorry for just now but I had exercises and then I went to the library. If you want to see me, I am here until 10 pm or tomorrow, but **in that case** it may be better to text me before to see if I'm there.'

Following Degand and Fagard (2011, p. 35), this conditional use contains a special case: the construction *ou alors* 'or else', that can be glossed by *si...alors* 'if...then' as in (9). The sender wonders if the recipient is working during the year. And *if* the answer is no *then,* the sender wonders if it is a sabbatical year.

(9) tu fais quelques chose cette année **ou alors** c'est une année sabatique [SmsFBF]

'Are you doing anything this year **or** is it a sabbatical year?'

3.3 Structural *alors*, *donc* and *quoi*

In their structural uses, *alors*, *donc* and *quoi* present both similarities and specificities.

To begin with the similarities, the three DMs share a punctuating use. This punctuation use occurs to close off the message. In (10), (11), and (12), *quoi*, *alors*, and *donc* are accompanied by the presentative *voilà* 'that's it', and followed by texting endings.

(10) et en math je suis petée! Ct super dur! Enfin voilà **quoi**! A lundi bisous [SmsFBF]

'and in maths I've bombed! It's very hard! Well **there we are**!' See you on Monday! Kisses'

(11) juste un petit coucou,pour te dire aussi que je n'ai plus de pour non plus **alors** voilà... Bisous à bientot [SmsFBF]

'Just a little hello to tell you that I have no more [missing] for [missing] either **so** that's that... Kisses. See you soon!'

(12) Coucou daphné je te souhaite un super bon anniversaire je crois que ces aujourd8 **donc** voilà lol bizzousssss [SmsFBF]

'Hello Daphné, I wish you a very happy birthday. I think it's today **so** here you are lol kisses'

Quoi is known to be a punctuating marker (Vincent 1993). It can for instance punctuate the last term in an enumeration, but also sum up this list (Beeching 2006, p. 154) as in (13).

(13) G 1sinusite, antibiotik dpuis lundi. C ps cool pcq G les oreilles compltmt bouchées &dla fièvre, chui ds ma bulle **koi**! [SmsFBF]

'I have sinusitis, antibiotics since Monday. This isn't fun because my ears are completely bunged up and a temperature, **so** I'm just wrapped in a cocoon!'

Alors and *donc* can play a role in turn-taking, while this is not the case for *quoi*. Used as Fraser's (2006, p. 190) conversational management markers, *alors* and *donc* can signal a turn change (Schiffrin 1987). In my text messages corpus, the parameter I used for the *alors* and *donc* turn change use was their location at the beginning, as in (14, 15), or at the end of the text message, as in (16, 17).

(14) **Alors** tu as bien étudié? [SmsFBF]

'**So** have you studied carefully?'

(15) **Donc** tu avais raté celui de 17h05' ? Et tu arrives à 19h05' à Tournai ? [SmsFBF]

'**So** you missed the 17:05? And you arrive at Tournai at 19:05?'

(16) OKi, j attend de tes nouvelles **alors**

'Ok, I'm waiting news from you **so**'

(17) wesh djo je me fais trop trop chier!x) et toi que fais tu **donc**? [SmsFBF]

'hey *djo* I am really bored! x) and what are you doing **then**?'

Specific structural use of *alors* is as follows: according to Bouacha (1981), *alors* can have a "fonction d'attaque du discours". This is a function that forces the priming of a topic. I counted *alors* as expressing this function when it could be glossed by topic shifters, such as *bon* 'well'. In (18), after the beginning of the text, *alors* introduces the topic of the sender's grandfather.

(18) Coucou, **alors** comment va papy? [SmsFBF]

'Hello**, so** how is grandpa?'

Quoi may be used to stress part of the given message. In (19), the focus is on the ease of getting home with a friend who is a neighbour.

(19) Je suis rentrée avec 1 cop qui a pris le mm train que moi et qui kot ds ma rue tranquil **quoi**! [SmsFBF]

'I came home with a friend who took the same train and who lives in my street, **which was nice**!'

Quoi is regularly used to hedge a statement, such as saying that someone is always pessimistic in (20).

(20) Toi, tu es"pessimiste" comme d'hab **quoi**... [SmsFBF]
    'You're your usual "pessimistic" self, **you are**...'

To mark the progression from the topic to the focus, *donc* can be used. For this type of use, *donc* can be glossed by *pour en revenir à ce que je disais* 'to get back to what I said' (Bolly & Degand 2009, p. 11). In (21), after explaining that there was a lack of credit until the present time, the sender uses *donc* in order to get back to thanking the recipient.

(21) Marinou jtenvoi mon 1er sms depuis que g d'l'argent!=D **donc** pr encor te remercié d'm avoir appelé tt à l'er ca ma fai plaisir[SmsFBF]
    'Marinou I am sending my first sms since I've got credit!=D **so I can** thank you again for just calling me. I was very pleased.'

Donc can also reactualise the preceding discourse (Ferrari & Rossari 1994, p. 40), by repeating it in a synthetic form, by reformulating and clarifying it in an equivalent form. For *donc*'s repetitive use, the following parameters were used: *donc* can be glossed by *en bref* 'briefly' (*recapitulation*), *en d'autres termes* 'in other terms' (*reformulation*), *pour être plus explicite* 'to be more specific' (*explicitation* 'clarification').

With the *recapitulation* use of *donc*, the sender repeats the proposal to have a meeting in (22).

(22) je vais la semaine prochaine à liège voir ma cousine,est cke ca te dirai kon svoi,istoir de se parlé1peu. normalemen je v ou mardi ou jeudi(ca revien au mm pr ma cousine) **dc** au cas où tu veu bien kon svoi di moi qd ca t'arrange le mieu. [SmsFBF]
    'I'm going to Liège next week to see my cousin. Would you like to see me, in order to have a chat? Usually I go on Tuesday or Thursday (it doesn't matter to my cousin) **so** if you want to see me, tell me when is more convenient for you.'

With the *reformulation* use of *donc*, the sender explains that he cannot be there for the journey back because he has been in town (Louvain-La-Neuve) all weekend in (23).

> (23) Chui resté a lln pr le we **dc** ne compte pa sur mwa pr le retour! [SmsFBF]
> 'I've been in Louvain-La-Neuve the whole weekend **so** don't expect me for the journey back!'

With the *explicitation* use of *donc* in (24), the sender apologises for not having answered the recipient earlier.

> (24) Je viens de lire mes mess vocaux et oui, en effet il y en avait bien un de toi. **Donc** Déso de pas avoir répondu avt. [SmsFBF]
> 'I've just read my voicemail and yes, actually there was one of yours. **So** I'm sorry to not have answered before.'

To sum up the uses of *quoi*, *alors* and *donc* as structural markers, there is a punctuating use for the three DMs, and *quoi* is more specifically a punctuation marker. *Alors* and *donc* have a role in turn changing while *alors* has a specific function that forces the priming of a topic. *Quoi* can reinforce the preceding topic but also hedge a statement. *Donc* can mark the progression from the topic to the focus. *Donc* can also reactualize the preceding discourse by repeating it with *recapitulation*, *reformulation* and *explicitation*.

3.4 Modal *alors*, *donc* and *quoi*

These three DMs share also pragmatic meanings. The notion they all share is "mutual manifestness" (for *alors* and *donc* Hansen 1997, p. 165; for *quoi*, Beeching 2006, p. 160). According to Sperber and Wilson, something is manifest to an individual if it should be either perceptible or inferable (Sperber & Wilson 1989, p. 65).

In line with this definition, in (25), the sender knows that the recipient understands how boring 15 minutes of an oral examination in Dutch is, and he expresses it with *quoi*. In (26), the sender knows that the recipient did have dinner (perhaps the sender got information during his visit to the recipient, as indicated by the following question about the possible trouble) and expresses it with *alors*. In (27), the sender explains the timetable for Friday before using *donc*, moving on to a request and assuming that the recipient knows the reasons.

(25) Dm1 Nld-oral,15min,lpié **kwa**! [SmsFBF]

'Tomorrow, Dutch oral, 15 minutes. Fun, **or what**!'

(26) Ta bien mangé **alor**?pa faché kjsoi pasé? [SmsFBF]

'Did you eat well **then**? Not angry that I saw you?'

(27) Flo vendredi on va o marché g rdv ac benja à1h àla gare **donc** di à brayan ki vienne... [SmsFBF]

'Flo this Friday we are going to the market. I have an appointment with Benja at 1 pm at the station. **So** tell Brayan to come...'

In its complex form, *ou quoi* 'or what' expresses impatience, surprise and irritation, the same goes for *alors*. These uses link to a strong emotion. Concerning impatience, *ou quoi* is used after a suggestion following the question about an appointment of the sender with her father in (28) and *et alors* before a question indicating the anxiety of the sender in (29).

(28) Tu m'attend ou tu n'as pas le temps? Bizz papounet... Je te di quand je sors **ou quoi**? [SmsFBF]

'Are you waiting for me or don't you have the time? Kiss daddy… I'll let you know when I'm leaving **shall I**?'

(29) **Et alors** puce? Tjs pas rentré? [SmsFBF]

'**So** darling? Not home yet?'

Surprise is indicated by *ou quoi* after the sender is wondering whether the recipient is angry because the latter does not pick up the phone in (30). In (31), *alors* emphasises the exclamation before claiming that the guy known by the recipient is crazy.

(30) Pourquoi tu ne décrochés plus pour ta petite maman adorée?? T'es fâché **ou quoi**? [SmsFBF]

'Why you do not pick up anymore for your adored mum?? Are you angry **or what**?'

(31) Merde **alors**!Ms enfin il est fou ton mec! [SmsFBF]

'Shit **then**! But this guy of yours is crazy!'

To indicate indignation, *ou quoi* is used after the sender asks the recipient whether he is crazy to use the private number, in (32). In (33), the sender accuses the recipient of not answering the phone by using *et alors.*

(32) Ca va **ou quoi** d faire ton numéro privé!?? Moi je réponds pas. [SmsFBF]

'Is it **really** OK to use your private number!?? Personally, I don't answer.'

(33) **et alors** on ne répond pas et on fait croire que ... [SmsFBF]

'**So** you just don't answer and make people think that...'

3.5 Position of *alors*, *donc* and *quoi* in the sentence

In this work, I have tried to show that there is a relation between the DM (*alors*, *donc* and *quoi*) right peripheral position and their meaning, although this relation is neither univocal nor deterministic. In my corpus analysis, the right periphery is defined as the position after the non-finite verb, if present.

In this position, *alors* and *donc* can work within the three DMs basic functions, namely propositional, structural and modal functions, while *quoi* only works with structural and modal functions. There are two other positions in my analysis, the left periphery, that is, outside the argument structure of the verb, and the internal to the argument structure one, mostly after the finite verb and before the non-finite verb, if present. *Alors*, *donc* and *quoi* can also be found in internal position. These positions may include compound constructions, such as *et alors, mais donc* or *putain quoi* 'bloody hell'. The three positions are illustrated in the examples (14), (15), (16), (17), (20), (32) repeated in Fig. 1 below with two new examples (34) and (35).

	Left periphery	**Internal position**	**Right periphery**
Alors	(14) **Alors** tu as bien étudié?	(34) et toi **alors**,tas encore oublié de me dire cmt ca se pa[36]	(16) OKi, j attend de tes nouvelles **alors**
Donc	(15) **Donc** tu avais raté celui de 17h05' ?	(35) Tu savai **dc** tt ossi pq es ce ke vs n'avez tt	(17) et toi que fais tu **donc**?

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[36] 'and **as for you**, you've still forgot to tell me how it *pa* [missing]'

		cache![37]	
Quoi	ø[38]	(32) Ca va **ou quoi** d faire ton numéro privé!??	(20) Toi, tu es"pessimiste" comme d'hab **quoi**...

Figure. 1 Positions of DM alors, donc and quoi with examples 14-17, 20, 32, 34, 35

4. Data and methods

The text message corpus I used is a sample from a corpus of 26,588 French text messages gathered in Belgium (Fairon, Klein & Paumier 2006). This corpus is unique because of its size, its accuracy, "the number of contributions and the amount of meta-data provided" (Fairon & Paumier 2006, p. 4). I selected only texts messages written by French native speakers to prevent the influence of important language variations on my results. I therefore started with a sample of 25,894 text messages by French native speakers.

The objective was to select the most frequent DMs in the right peripheral position in my corpus. First, I created a database with 1,000 messages chosen at random. In order to find DMs in the right periphery more easily, I took into account the three final words of each text message and extracted every DM found. This resulted in a top 3 of the most frequent DMs occurring at the end of the messages.

Taking into account the whole sample of 25,894 text messages, I looked for all *alors*, *donc* and *quoi* occurrences regardless of their positions. This resulted in 1,476 occurrences of *quoi* (cleaned in order to not count *pourquoi*, *n'importe quoi*, *comme quoi* and *quoique/quoi que*), 1,279 *alors* (cleaned in order to not count *alors que/ alors qu'*) and 815 *donc* (cleaned in order to not count *dis donc/ dites donc*).

After this cleaning process, I manually selected all the messages containing *alors*, *donc* and *quoi* in the right periphery. This resulted in 318 messages containing right peripheral *alors*, 139 right peripheral *quoi* and 44 right peripheral *donc*. For each

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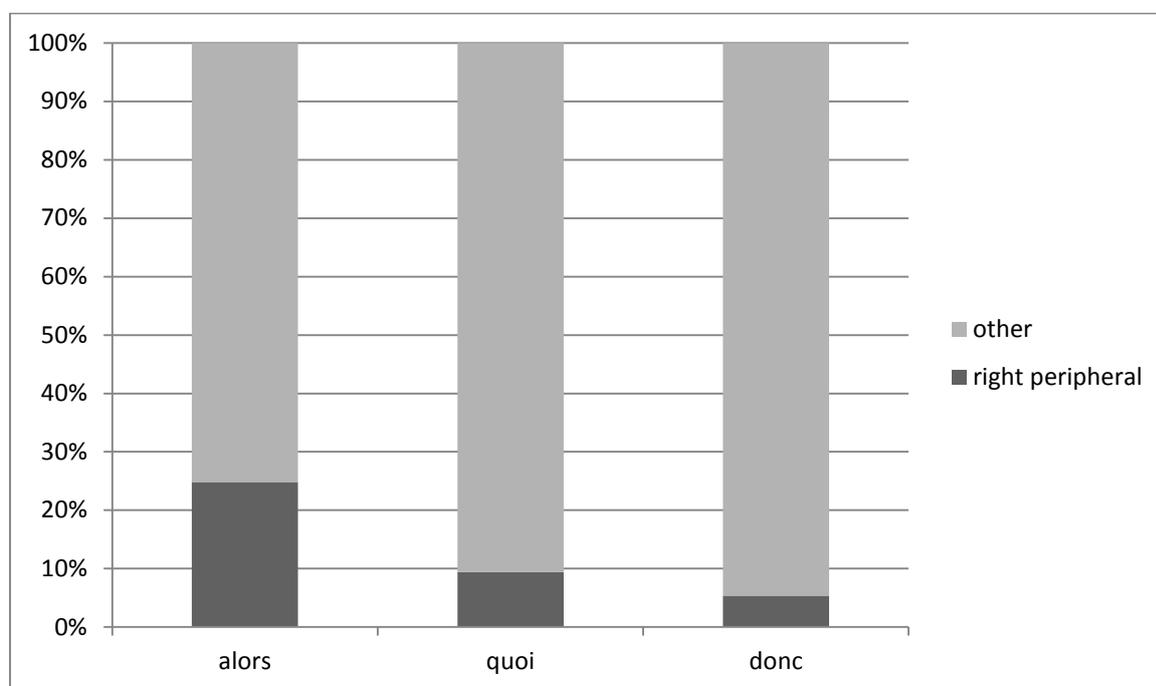[37] '**So** you also knew everything. Why did you hide everything from me?'
[38] No occurrence of *quoi* as DM in left periphery was found in my corpus.

collection of messages containing right peripheral *alors*, *donc* and *quoi*, I manually analysed their semantic distributions.

5. Results

Before proceeding to right peripheral *alors*, *donc* and *quoi* functions, a word should be said on the highly diverging frequencies of the markers under investigation: 318 occurrences of *alors* out of 1,279 (24.86%), 139 of *quoi* out of 1,476 (9.42%) and 44 of *donc* out of 815 (5.4%) are found in right periphery. The right peripheral-global ratios of *alors*, *quoi* and *donc* are illustrated in Table 1.

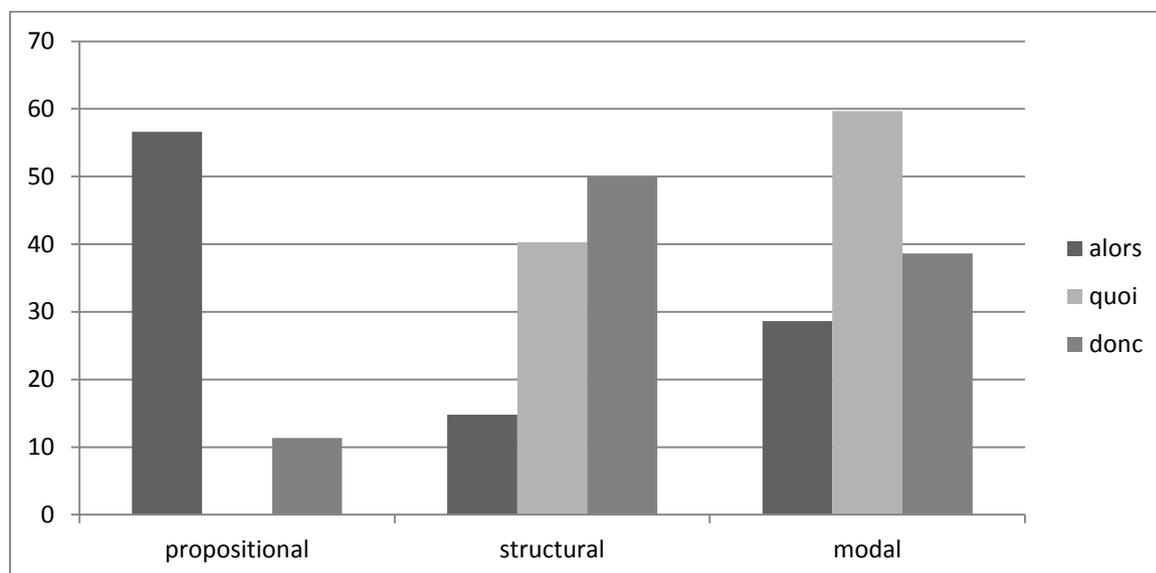**Table 1: The right peripheral-global ratios of *alors*, *quoi* and *donc***

Following the semantic distributions presented in section 2, and considering the right peripheral occurrences only, the results are as follows: *alors* shows 56.60% (180/318) propositional uses, 28.62% (91/318) modal uses and 14.78% (47/318) structural uses. *Quoi* appears with 59.71% (83/139) modal uses, 40.29% (56/139) structural uses and no propositional uses. *Donc* has 50% (22/44) structural uses, 38.64% (17/44) modal uses and 11.36% (5/44) propositional uses. Table 2 gives an overview of the semantic distribution in the three DMs.

It clearly appears that most of the right peripheral DMs have modal functions. These modally functioning DMs can be defined following Cuenca (submitted) as markers that indicate (inter)subjective features between the SMS sender and the recipient.

In comparison, quoi has more modal uses than donc and alors. This result may be explained by the distribution restricted to two functions: structural and modal. Alors has the smallest frequency of modal functions while the number of its propositional occurrences is quite considerable and the number of its structural ones is not negligible. Donc has a medium frequency of modal functions while most of its occurrences are structural and a few are propositional. The number of modal uses of right peripheral alors and donc is probably an underestimation, since no access is given through the corpus to the complete exchange of SMS between sender and recipient. This might, in some cases, lead to erroneous categorization, such as categorizing for a giving turn (structural function) instead of mutual manifestness (modal function) or considering as a consequential use (propositional function) an expression of impatience (modal function).

Table 2: Semantic distributions of *alors*, *quoi* and *donc*

6. Conclusions

The corpus analysis has shown that right peripheral DMs *quoi*, *alors* and *donc* in a texting corpus have mostly modal functions, less structural functions and a few

propositional ones. These results confirm the assumption that DMs are essential for interaction and show that DMs do occur in right peripheral position in text messages.

Considering each right peripheral marker separately, *quoi* is restricted to structural and modal functions though *alors* and *donc* can have propositional, structural and modal functions. *Alors* is mostly propositional, less modal and least structural. Conversely, *donc* is mostly structural, less modal and least propositional. This raises the question of a function specificity of the three most frequent DMs in right periphery and the possibility that these functions are specific to text messaging communication.

In right periphery, the common interpersonal (modal) feature to *alors*, *donc* and *quoi* is mutual manifestness. It seems that SMS language is quite spontaneous, and has a conventionalized form, in which mutual manifestness could be expressed. A corollary question is whether there is a specialization of certain DMs to a type of communication. Unravelling this specific role must, however, remain the topic of ongoing and future research by comparing these results with results from written and oral corpora.

Acknowledgements

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