

*‘It was a bit stressy as well actually’*

## The pragmatic markers *actually* and *in fact* in spoken learner English

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### Abstract

*Actually* and *in fact* have been described as pragmatic markers of expectation that can be regarded as interchangeable. This study looks into how learners of English with a Dutch and a French mother tongue background make use of these markers in spoken English, and how this compares with native speaker practice. The functional scope of these markers is indeed found to be almost identical, but *actually* is extremely more frequent among the native speakers and Dutch-speaking learners than *in fact*. The latter, on the other hand, is extremely more frequent among the French-speaking learners than among the other two groups. These findings to a large extent betray an influence from cognates in the learners’ L1s.

### Keywords

pragmatic markers, *actually*, *in fact*, EFL, learner English

### 1. Introduction

The adverbials *actually* and *in fact* have generally been regarded as interchangeable (Oh, 2000: 243) or at least as pragmatic markers that are closely related to each other (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg, 2004: 1793; Aijmer, 2013: 74). They belong to the semantic field of expectation, which signifies that by using these markers “speakers, for various rhetorical

reasons, explicitly position their utterances vis-à-vis expectations” (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg, 2004: 1791). As such, *actually* and *in fact* harbour semantic components of ‘factuality’ and ‘adversativity’. Interestingly, both markers have highly frequent functional equivalents in other languages such as *eigenlijk* (‘actually’) and *in feite* (‘in fact’) in Dutch (cf. Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg, 2004; Mortier and Degand, 2009; Van Bergen *et al.*, 2011) and *en fait* (‘in fact’) in French (cf. Mortier and Degand, 2009; Defour *et al.*, 2010a,b). This begs the question how learners of English whose mother tongue is Dutch or French use *actually* and *in fact* in the target language, which is the focus of this article.

## **2. Previous studies on *actually* and *in fact***

Broadly speaking two types of functions can be discerned in prior accounts of both markers: adversative functions and elaborative or discourse functions. In the adversative domain *actually* can indicate “an incompatibility between the proposition it is associated with and some proposition in the context” (Taglicht, 2001: 13), the latter of which may be explicit or implied. The opposition may hold with a co-participant’s prior proposition (in which case *actually* serves as a pragmatic softener, cf. Oh, 2000: 257; Aijmer, 2013: 109), but may just as well revise the speaker’s own prior assertion with *actually* as a “change-of-mind token” (Clift, 2001: 286; Aijmer, 2013: 114). Many authors emphasise the possibility for the marker to undercut an expectation that has been raised in the prior discourse or that might be assumed by the speaker (see e.g. Oh, 2000: 254; Smith and Jucker, 2000: 222; Cheng and Warren, 2001: 264; Aijmer, 2013: 110). Smith and Jucker (2000: 222-224) demonstrate that the contradiction indexed by *actually* can be even subtler, as it can pertain to e.g. a contrasting

affective evaluation of a fact or changes in the intensity of a speaker's commitment to a claim. Given the pragmatic marker's semantic origin, the adversativity indexed by *actually* often stems from the speaker's desire to "emphasise reality" (Aijmer, 2013: 207) or be "truth-insistent" (Taglicht, 2001: 2).

The elaborative or discourse functions of *actually* have typically been described in vaguer terms. Taglicht (2001), for example, simply dubs *actually* a "discourse modifier, which points to a change in discourse topic" (2001: 13; cf. also Clift, 2001: 286; Cheng and Warren, 2001: 265; Aijmer, 2013: 113). Some more specific discourse functions are to clarify a prior utterance by making it more precise (Aijmer, 2013: 112), or indicate self-repair or restarts (Oh, 2000: 259; Clift, 2001: 286; Cheng and Warren, 2001: 265; Aijmer, 2013: 114). As Clift (2001) observes, in elaborative contexts "the *actually*-marked turn is hearable as proposing something more noteworthy than what has preceded it" (2001: 283).

When used in an adversative context, *in fact* may equally point at a contradiction to a prior proposition or at a contrast with an expectation or assumption (Oh, 2000: 254; Aijmer, 2013: 84). According to Schwenter and Traugott (2000), *in fact* "indexes the speaker's strong commitment to the proposition, and is higher on a scale than *probably* and *possibly*" (2000: 12). In other words, it offers the speaker a firm way of positing that a proposition is closer to reality than one previously uttered.

As an elaborative marker *in fact* can signal that the proposition it relates to contains a stronger argument than what precedes (Oh, 2000: 257; Schwenter and Traugott, 2000: 12). It can, however, also mark an utterance as parenthetical (Oh, 2000: 252), as an elaboration or precision of a prior utterance (Aijmer, 2013: 85-88), as a restart (Oh, 2000: 257; Mortier and Degand, 2009: 362), or as constituting a topic shift (Aijmer, 2013: 90).

The two pragmatic markers clearly have much in common, but there is a subtle division of labour between them. *Actually* is considerably more frequent in spoken than in written English, whereas frequencies of *in fact* differ much less between these modes although it is also more prevalent in speech (Oh, 2000; Aijmer, 2013), but then again is more typical of formal registers (Aijmer, 2013). Moreover, *actually* is mainly a feature of British English whereas there is no difference between British and American English for *in fact* (Aijmer, 2013). *Actually* can also be positioned flexibly in a clause, whereas *in fact* is more restricted in its movements (Oh, 2000; Clift, 2001; Taglicht, 2001; Aijmer, 2013; Defour *et al.*, 2010a). Oh (2000: 250-251), finally, notices a functional distinction: even though both markers can be adversative, *in fact* can on the contrary be used to reinforce an assertion as well.

### 3. Equivalents in Dutch and French

Dutch and French have markers – viz. *eigenlijk* and *in feite* in Dutch and *en fait* in French – that occur with similarly high frequencies in these languages and that have similar functional scopes. Van Bergen *et al.* (2011) compare the use of Dutch *eigenlijk* (‘actually’) to previous analyses of German *eigentlich* (yet do not rely on corpus data to do so). They posit that, at its core, the marker surfaces “in a sentence that contrasts with the assumed expectation of a hearer, and indicates that this expectation is a reasonable inference drawn from the information available to the hearer (as judged by the speaker)” (Van Bergen *et al.*, 2011: 3882). This account of *eigenlijk* closely resembles descriptions of *actually*, particularly when it comes to its adversative and counterexpectational nature.

Mortier and Degand's (2009) functional analysis of Dutch *eigenlijk* and French *en fait*, based on translation corpora, yields results that are highly reminiscent of the functions identified for *actually* and *in fact* (Section 2), even though they did not examine the English equivalents in their study. They consider 'deviation' the core meaning component of *eigenlijk* and *en fait*, which is present both in the functional domain of 'opposition' and in that of 'reformulation'. In the former Mortier and Degand (2009: 356) distinguish functions such as enhancement of an explicit opposition, and in the latter these markers can, for example, add precision to a prior utterance. Interestingly, both *eigenlijk* and *en fait* can express reinforcement of the prior utterance, which in English is limited to *in fact*. This suggests that *eigenlijk* and *en fait* have a broader functional scope than *actually* and *in fact* in English as they combine the two. It is also important to note that Dutch *in feite* (a perfect formal cognate of *in fact* and *en fait*) was found to be rather infrequent in writing and even highly infrequent in speech. *Eigenlijk*, on the other hand, was highly frequent in writing and extremely frequent in speech. A similar difference between modes holds for *en fait*, but the discrepancy identified between *en fait* and *eigenlijk* is remarkable: the latter is over 2.5 times as frequent in writing as the former, and over 3 times in speech (2009: 349).

Defour *et al.* (2010b) find that French *en fait* "shows many resemblances to the various meanings of *in fact*, and occurs in similar contexts of use" (2010b: 437), but that it also shares the pragmatic functions of *actually*, given the strong similarity between the two English markers. Their analysis of a translation corpus shows that *in fact* and *en fait* are each other's preferred translation correspondents (yet with *actually* as the second most preferred correspondent when *en fait* is translated into English), and that *actually* is most frequently translated by *en fait*. They conclude that in its present-day use "*en fait* seems to have become

even more pragmatic than its English counterpart [*in fact*]” (2010b: 461). D’Hondt (2014: 249) goes so far as to claim that the meaning of *en fait* is often undeterminable because it has become a stop gag for many people.

The high frequencies in Dutch of – functionally and formally – similar forms to English *actually* and *in fact*, and in French of similar forms to *in fact*, spark the question whether native speakers of Dutch and French make use of *actually* and *in fact* in learner English, and if so to what extent and to what end. The studies available on Dutch and French equivalents do not systematically or comprehensively map the functions of these markers in spoken corpora. This unfortunately does not facilitate an in-depth study of (positive and negative) L1 transfer on a functional level in learner data in English, but the use of *actually* and *in fact* by Dutch- and French-speaking learners of English surely deserves attention in its own right, and is also interesting in the light of the dissimilarity between Dutch (with a formal equivalent for both English markers) and French (with just a formal equivalent for *in fact* and not for *actually*).

*Actually* and *in fact* have so far not been in focus in the study of pragmatic markers in learner discourse. Previous analyses of other pragmatic markers in the speech of Dutch- and French-speaking learners of English has yielded a mixed picture. Both types of learners have been shown to make significantly less use of *you know* than native speakers (Buysse, 2017) but significantly greater use of *well* (Buysse, 2015). French learners have been attested to using a whole group of pragmatic markers, such as *I mean*, *like* and *sort of*, significantly less often than native speakers (Gilquin, 2008), whereas Dutch learners appear to use *so* more often than native speakers (Buysse, 2012).

## 4. Data

The learner corpus for the present study consists of the Dutch and French components of the Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (LINDSEI; Gilquin et al., 2010). Each sub-corpus consists of 50 informal interviews with second- or third-year university students majoring in English. In the interviews the participants are asked to talk about a book they have read, a film they have seen or a life-changing experience for about two minutes, which then sparks a conversation with the interviewer. At the end the interviewee recounts a brief picture-based story.

The two learner sub-corpora are juxtaposed with the Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation (LOCNEC), a native speaker reference corpus that was compiled along the same format as the learner data. The native speakers are second- or third-year British students majoring in the Humanities. Table 1 offers an overview of the sizes of the sub-corpora.

*Table 1 Overview of sub-corpora*

	LINDSEI		LOCNEC
	Dutch	French	
Interviews	50	50	50
total tokens	92,865	134,844	170,533
tokens interviewee turns	79,652	91,402	125,666
av. tokens interviewees	1,492	1,666	2,513

Observed differences in frequency between the sub-corpora were tested by performing an independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test, which was corrected for tied ranks, on the absolute frequencies in the statistical software programme SPSS 24. If statistically significant differences were detected within the population, SPSS automatically selected post-hoc tests for a pairwise comparison of the sub-corpora. This test accounts for individual variation within each sub-corpus, but does not take heed of differences in corpus size. For want of a foolproof statistical test that factors both in, the results of a loglikelihood test (which does take corpus sizes into account) will additionally be reported whenever it yields a divergent outcome. The loglikelihood tests were performed with Marco Baroni and Stefan Evert's Corpus Frequency Test Wizard at <http://sigil.collocations.de/wizard.html>.

## **5. Overall frequencies of *actually* and *in fact***

If all tokens of the two markers are counted, a clear divide opens up between, on the one hand, the markers themselves and, on the other hand, the French learner corpus and the other two groups involved in the study (Table 2). The incidence of *actually* by far outnumbers that of *in fact* in the Dutch learner corpus (29.88 per 10,000 tokens versus 1.51) and in the native speaker corpus (17.51 versus 0.48), to the extent that *in fact* is only marginally present in these. The opposite holds in the French learner corpus, where *in fact* is about as frequent as *actually* is in the other two sub-corpora (21.99 per 10,000 tokens), while the latter is considerably less common (only 6.13).



Table 2 Frequencies of *actually* and *in fact* in each sub-corpus in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)

	LINDSEI-DU		LINDSEI-FR		LOCNEC	
	<i>N</i>	‰	<i>N</i>	‰	<i>N</i>	‰
<i>actually</i>	238	29.88	56	6.13	220	17.51
<i>in fact</i>	12	1.51	201	21.99	6	0.48

The observed differences were tested for statistical significance. For *actually* the independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was highly significant:  $X^2(2, N = 150) = 36.10, p = .000$ . The post-hoc tests indicate that statistically significant differences hold at  $p < .001$  between the French learner sub-corpus and both the Dutch learner sub-corpus ( $H=42.65$ ) and LOCNEC ( $H=45.55$ ). The difference between the latter two is not statistically significant for *actually*. If, however, a loglikelihood test is performed, this also achieves statistical significance ( $p < .001, G^2=32.59$ ).

For *in fact* the independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was highly significant:  $X^2(2, N = 150) = 59.44, p = .000$ . Statistically significant differences hold at  $p < .001$  between the French learner sub-corpus and both the Dutch learner sub-corpus ( $H=46.30$ ) and LOCNEC ( $H=46.97$ ). The difference between the latter two is not statistically significant for *in fact*.

The same tendencies apply if we look at the distribution across each sub-corpus. In the native speaker group 44 interviewees use *actually* at least once; in the Dutch learner group this number is only slightly lower (39), while the French learners follow at a distance (16). Only 5 native speakers and 5 Dutch-speaking learners use *in fact*, compared with 34 French-speaking learners.

## 6. Functional analysis

All tokens of *actually* and *in fact* were analysed manually to determine their function. The functional taxonomy was arrived at through a corpus-driven approach aimed at finding patterns in these specific data while also taking insights on board from analyses in prior research (cf. Section 2) that could be applied to the uses attested in the present data.<sup>1</sup> Broadly speaking, these functions can be categorised as either more adversative or more elaborative, in line with the two main components of the markers' core meanings. Table 3 lists their functions, each of which will be discussed in this section. The functions are almost identical between the two markers – as was to be expected on the basis of prior accounts of these markers – except that *in fact* has the additional elaborative function of reinforcement.

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<sup>1</sup> A referee noted that no difficulties in the classification are mentioned, which may ignore the potential multifunctionality of the markers. The functional analysis as it was carried out in this study, however, did not yield any problems of overlap between functions. Although the issue of how taxonomies can sufficiently capture a marker's multifunctionality is pertinent in the study of pragmatic markers, it does not appear to have an acute value in this paper and therefore falls beyond its scope.

Table 3 Overview of the functions of *actually* and *in fact*

Function	<i>Actually</i>	<i>In fact</i>
<i>Adversative</i>		
Emphasise reality	✓	✓
Counterexpectation	✓	✓
Contradiction	✓	✓
<i>Elaboration</i>		
Reinforcement		✓
Mark a noteworthy comment	✓	✓
Topic shift	✓	✓
Reformulation or restart	✓	✓
<i>Learner-specific uses</i>	✓	✓

Some tokens could not be assigned to a category because a part of the surrounding discourse was unintelligible or because the utterance to which it belongs is unfinished. This was the case for 4 tokens of *actually* in the Dutch learner sub-corpus (0.50 per 10,000 tokens), 5 in the native speaker sub-corpus (0.40) and none in the French, yet 7 tokens of *in fact* could not be classified in the French learner sub-corpus (0.77) and none in the other sub-corpora.

As was done for the overall numbers of the markers (Section 5), observed differences in frequency for each function between the sub-corpora will be tested for statistical significance for *actually*. This is not deemed meaningful for *in fact* given its overall extremely small incidence in two of the three sub-corpora.

### 6.1 Adversative: *Emphasise reality*

When *actually* emphasises that something is really the case, it comes closest to its original meaning of ‘actuality’ (cf. Aijmer, 2013: 107), just like *in fact* does with ‘factuality’ (cf. Mortier and Degand, 2009: 351; Aijmer, 2013: 82-83). This is an adversative function insofar as the reality presented in the utterance marked by *actually* or *in fact* contrasts with an alternative situation, which is often merely conceivable. In excerpt (1) the interviewee compares the true richness of Belgium with the ideas he believes many people have about this, and in (2) the situation in Lithuania in communist times is described, with a contrast between the funds the regime pretended to have and what it had in reality.

- (1) **Iee:** there are a lot of people who don't know how rich (em) . Belgium **actually** is (er) . but it's just it's all . underneath so yeah you can't really . really see it (DU13)<sup>2</sup>
- (2) **Iee:** (...) they tried to: to do as if they had money to: to restore: cultural buildings and cultural (er) . things but **in fact** they had no money and it was . ugly really (FR13)

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<sup>2</sup> In each example *Ir* indicates an interviewer turn and *Iee* an interviewee turn. The interview code follows the excerpt, with letters indicating the sub-corpus (DU for Dutch, FR for French and NS for LOCNEC). The transcription conventions can be consulted at <https://uclouvain.be/en/research-institutes/ilc/cecl/transcription-guidelines.html>.

As Table 4 demonstrates, for *actually* this function is common among the Dutch-speaking interviewees as well as the native speakers, both in terms of its relative frequencies (7.16 and 5.89 per 10,000 tokens) and the number of interviewees that use the marker with this function at least once. The function even accounts for one third of all tokens of *actually* in the native corpus, yet only for 24% in the Dutch sub-corpus. A mere 9 French-speaking learners turn to *actually* to fulfil this function, resulting in just 10 tokens, which nevertheless amount to almost 18% of all tokens of *actually* in this sub-corpus. The independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was highly significant:  $X^2(2, N = 150) = 27.33, p = .000$ . Statistically significant differences hold at  $p < .001$  between the French learner sub-corpus and LOCNEC ( $H=39.49$ ) as well as the Dutch learner sub-corpus ( $H=30.02$ ). No statistical significance is achieved for the difference between the Dutch and native sub-corpora.

Although this function has been attested for *in fact* in native speaker discourse in prior research, the native speakers in the present study do not use it to emphasise reality. It is, however, used by 12 French-speaking and 4 Dutch-speaking learners. Among the latter this function accounts for almost 42% of tokens of *in fact*, but overall numbers for this marker are extremely small.

Table 4 Frequencies for *actually* and *in fact* ‘emphasising reality’ in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)

	<i>actually</i>				<i>in fact</i>			
	<i>N</i>	‰	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>	<i>N</i>	‰	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>
<b>LINDSEI-DU</b>	57	7.16	23.95	28	5	0.63	41.67	4
<b>LINDSEI-FR</b>	10	1.09	17.86	9	23	2.52	11.44	12
<b>LOCNEC</b>	74	5.89	33.64	32	0	0.00	0.00	0

## 6.2 Adversative: Counterexpectation

Previous research has recognised that a speaker can use *actually* (Oh, 2000; Smith and Jucker, 2000; Taglicht, 2001; Clift, 2001; Aijmer, 2013) or *in fact* (Oh, 2000) to index a proposition as running against expectations that they feel may exist among co-participants or in a broader context. In (3) it has just become clear that the interviewee went to the US through a system of “home exchange”. The interviewee adds that this was a very nice experience, marked with *actually*, indicating that she is aware that this may go against common expectations about swapping houses, the grounds for which are explained in the following utterance. In excerpt (4) the interviewee explains that a play in La Plante, a neighbourhood in the Belgian city of Namur, is not necessarily – and hence contrary to expectations – performed in an actual theatre, which is marked with *in fact*.

(3) **Ir:** so did . (er) (er) people from the US came and stayed in your house

**Iee:** yes yes yes

**Ir:** yeah

**Iee:** it was was very . very nice **actually** pff we pff (er) some people would have a problem with with trusting strangers in in their house of course

(DU44)

(4) **Iee:** (er) there is (er) <foreign> le théâ= . théâtre royal </foreign> in Namur and then . another one in (er) La Plante but (er) .. ah yes oh but what they: . do is that (er) for example . I'm going to see a play and (er) **in fact** it is in a in a old (er) cinema

**Ir:** oh

**Iee:** and they have arranged I I don't know (eh) how it is because (er) .. I've not seen it yet but (er) . it's (er) just (eh) a room (...)

(FR10)

The frequencies for *actually* indexing counterexpectation are highly similar across the board to those for emphasising reality, with each of the numbers just slightly lower in the former (Table 5). This function's share ranges from 16% in the French learner sub-corpus, over 22% in the Dutch to almost 27% in the native speaker sub-corpus. The independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was highly significant:  $X^2(2, N = 150) = 26.09, p = .000$ . Statistically significant differences hold at  $p < .001$  between the French learner sub-corpus and LOCNEC ( $H=37.85$ ) and between the French and Dutch learners ( $H=27.34$ ). No

statistical significance is achieved for the differences between the Dutch and the native speakers.

As was the case for *in fact* emphasising reality, the function of the marker signalling counterexpectation witnessed in native speaker data in previous studies, cannot be attested in the present data. It does surface in the learner corpus albeit to a modest extent.

*Table 5 Frequencies for counterexpectational actually and in fact in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)*

	<i>actually</i>				<i>in fact</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>
<b>LINDSEI-DU</b>	53	6.65	22.27	23	2	0.25	16.67	2
<b>LINDSEI-FR</b>	9	0.98	16.07	6	9	0.98	4.48	9
<b>LOCNEC</b>	59	4.70	26.82	31	0	0.00	0.00	0

### 6.3 Adversative: Contradiction

Closely related to the first two functions is the situation where *actually* (cf. Oh, 2000; Smith and Jucker, 2000; Taglicht, 2001; Clift, 2001; Aijmer, 2013) and *in fact* (cf. Aijmer, 2013: 83-85) indicate that the proposition they relate to overtly contradicts a prior utterance. By using either marker the speaker stresses that the prior utterance was “wrong” due to misconceptions (cf. counterexpectation) and that the alternative assertion is “right” because it is grounded in reality or facts (cf. emphasise reality). The main difference between the contradicting function and the previous two is that here a clear contrast between two explicit propositions is marked.



When the speaker contradicts a co-participant's proposition (instead of one of their own), *actually* has a hedging effect (Taglicht, 2001; Aijmer, 2013).

Prior to the excerpt in (5) the interviewee has explained that she has been to the UK seven times. Now the interviewer has lost count of the number of trips that have already come to pass, so the interviewee corrects her, softening the contradiction with *actually* (joined by turn-initial *well*). In excerpt (6), too, the interviewer's claim that the interviewee had stayed in London is denied, hedged with the combination of *well* and *in fact*.

(5) **Ir:** so what about the[i:] other five years

**Iee:** well four **actually** . as I as I it's not it's seven . (eh) seven times . (er) .. yes then there wa= . I went one year so it's about ...

(FR21)

(6) **Ir:** so you've stayed in London as well I mean how did you find London as a city

**Iee:** well **in fact** it was (em) (em) fifty no well thirty miles far from (er) London in Oxford

(FR07)

This is the least common adversative function of *actually* in the corpus, representing about 1 in 10 of its tokens among the Dutch-speaking and native speaker participants (Table 6). Again these two groups are closely aligned, whereas the frequencies in the French sub-corpus are lower, even though this function takes up a considerably higher share (almost one fifth of all tokens of *actually*). The independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was significant:

$X^2(2, N = 150) = 8.44, p = .015$ . A statistically significant difference holds at  $p < .05$  between the French and the Dutch learner sub-corpus ( $H=17.92$ ) but not between LOCNEC and the French ( $H=14.93$ ) or the Dutch ( $H=2.99$ ).

Also *in fact* indexes an explicit contradiction rather infrequently, with relative numbers of 1.42 and 0.16 per 10,000 tokens in the French and native sub-corpora and none in the Dutch sub-corpus.

*Table 6 Frequencies for contradicting actually and in fact in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)*

	<i>actually</i>				<i>in fact</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>
<b>LINDSEI-DU</b>	23	2.89	9.66	18	0	0.00	0.00	0
<b>LINDSEI-FR</b>	11	1.20	19.64	5	13	1.42	6.47	9
<b>LOCNEC</b>	24	1.91	10.91	15	2	0.16	33.33	2

#### *6.4 Elaboration: Reinforcement*

*In fact* can index the speaker's "strong commitment to the proposition" (Schwenter and Traugott, 2000: 12), which means that at a metatextual level the marker can indicate that the proposition it relates to is a stronger argument than the preceding one, or put differently, that it signals a heightened strength of an assertion made in the previous proposition (Oh, 2000: 251). This is the only function *in fact* does not have in common with *actually*.

The assertions expressed in (7) go crescendo: the interviewee confirms an interest in classical music, indicates it is her preferred genre before claiming – marked with *in fact* – it is

almost the only genre she ever listens to. Similarly, in (8) the interviewee is recounting that the model in the picture-based story is very pleased with her picture, a claim which is subsequently intensified.

(7) **Ir:** and are you interested in classical music <overlap/> in general

**Iee:** <overlap/> yes .. that's the music I prefer . **in fact** I . well I won't say I only listen to classical music but mainly yes (...)

(FR27)

(8) **Iee:** (...) and the woman is very impressed with this picture . she really likes it and . she's very pleased with it **in fact** she's so pleased with it she actually shows all her friends . (...)

(NS31)

The reinforcing function of *in fact* can be found in all three sub-corpora (Table 7). It achieves a relative frequency of 2.41 per 10,000 tokens, representing almost 11% of all tokens of *in fact* in the French learner sub-corpus, but again considerably less in the other two sub-corpora. This function accounts for half of native speaker tokens of the marker, but this observation cannot be awarded much significance given the extremely restricted overall incidence of *in fact* in this sub-corpus.

Table 7 Frequencies for reinforcing in fact in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)

	<i>N</i>	‰	Proportion	<i>N int.</i>
<b>LINDSEI-DU</b>	2	0.25	16.67	2
<b>LINDSEI-FR</b>	22	2.41	10.95	14
<b>LOCNEC</b>	3	0.24	50.00	3

### 6.5 Elaborative: Noteworthy comment

As elaborative markers *actually* (Aijmer, 2013: 113) and *in fact* (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg, 2004; Defour *et al.*, 2010b; Aijmer, 2013) can flag a noteworthy comment that is relevant to the prior co-text but serves as a specification of the preceding utterance. This is illustrated in (9), where the interviewee explains what is meant by “role-playing servers” in the context of gaming. The interviewee in (10) is asked in what context she had been to the UK on other occasions than the one just mentioned. The second visit requires further context (initiated with *well in fact*) before she can talk about this trip itself: before coming to university she had already done another programme, which at one point took her to London.

- (9) **Iee:** you've got role-playing servers role-playing servers which is **actually** a server .  
 (em) . it has like . certain rules . (er) . you have to speak in character so you actually  
 make your character . and you pretend that you are actually in the game  
 (DU25)

(10) **Ir:** and previously have you been on your own . or: with families or

**Iee:** (er) . with the school .. the first time I was well about fifteen or sixteen .

secondary school .. (er) the second time . well **in fact** .. (er) I've been studying in a:

teachers training college before I was here (er) . so that (...) I can teach to: (er) ..

pupils . between <overlap/> twelve and fifteen . in yeah not

**Ir:** <overlap/> yeah but not . higher

**Iee:** yes

**Ir:** yeah

**Iee:** and in the last year .. of those studies in the college I went with (er) two

teachers and the[i:] oth= o= other friends (er) from the school too but . to: to London

(FR41)

Other comments can be viewed as parenthetical or as an aside that helps to complete the context, marked with *actually* (Taglicht, 2001: 3) or *in fact* (Oh, 2000). In (11) the topic is a poetry performing project the interviewee participated in but which also involved music; as the interviewee points out in a parenthetical aside, more attention was paid to the music than to the poetry. In excerpt (12) the interviewee clarifies that the noun *trip* does not aptly describe her experience of going to Auschwitz; *in fact* indicates that *pilgrimage* is more precise a term.

(11) **Iee:** but you have to do that because it's it was a project with also people who played music

**Ir:** (mhm)

**Iee:** and **actually** there was more attention to people who played the music parts

**Ir:** yeah yeah

**Iee:** but we had to stand there an= and sometimes say a poem that had to do with it  
(DU22)

(12) **Iee:** I'm going to talk about an experience I had (eh) three years ago . (eh) when I went to Auschwitz

**Ir:** oh

**Iee:** yeah . well **in fact** it wasn't a trip for me it was a pilgrimage ..

(FR22)

This functional category of *actually* reaches shares between 20 and 24% in the three sub-corpora (Table 8). The relative frequencies are, however, again less similar, in that the Dutch learners make greater use of it than the native speakers and much greater use than their French-speaking peers. The independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was significant:  $X^2(2, N = 150) = 10.14, p = .006$ . A statistically significant difference holds at  $p < .01$  between the French and the native sub-corpus ( $H=21.95$ ) and at  $p < .05$  between the Dutch and the French ( $H=17.41$ ), yet not between the Dutch and the native ( $H=4.54$ ). The log-likelihood test, however, indicates a statistical significance for the latter difference at  $p < .001$  ( $X^2=13.21$ ).

*In fact* marks a noteworthy comment in over 28% of cases in the French learner sub-corpus, making this the most popular function of the marker among these learners. More than half of this participant group used it at least once, totaling 6.24 tokens per 10,000 words. In the other groups, however, *in fact* was used to this end not more than once each.

*Table 8 Frequencies for actually and in fact marking a noteworthy comment in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)*

	<i>actually</i>				<i>in fact</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>
<b>LINDSEI-DU</b>	57	7.16	23.95	18	1	0.13	8.33	1
<b>LINDSEI-FR</b>	12	1.31	21.43	9	57	6.24	28.36	26
<b>LOCNEC</b>	43	3.42	19.55	24	1	0.08	16.67	1

#### *6.6 Elaboration: Topic shift*

If a noteworthy (parenthetical) comment is still strongly linked to the prior utterance, a topic shift is one step further removed from it, in that it does not necessarily constitute an elucidation of what precedes but adds a new yet related track in the speaker's discourse, which can be marked with *actually* (cf. Clift, 2001:286; Taglicht, 2001:8; Aijmer, 2013:113) or *in fact* (Aijmer, 2013:87).

In (13) the interviewee has just explained at length how she went to New Zealand, and now starts a follow-up to the story about someone she met there and will be visiting again. The interviewee in (14) has been discussing the film *A Clockwork Orange* and now delves into one specific aspect of the psychological treatment of the characters in the film.

(13) **Iee:** they've got a name for it too: so alright anyway in those and on sheep farms and stuff like that it was really funny . and I **actually** made a really good friend there a New Zealander . called <X> which I'm going to visit this summer  
(DU27)

(14) **Iee:** (...) in the beginning he finds it's (er) . (er) h= he he find fun in this yes violence good thing (er) and but (er) .. at the[i:] end he begin he he begins really to: . to fee= to feel (eh) sick

**Ir:** yes

**Iee:** to feel (er) . yes very unwell o= because of this violence . and **in fact** there is a little (er) mistake I think (er) in the psychological (er) treatment he's they are associ= associating (er) this violence with the music of (er) Beethoven (...)  
(FR24)

The incidence of the topic-shifting function of *actually* is low in all three sub-corpora (Table 9). The only remarkable difference between them is the clearly higher share of the function in the French learner sub-corpus. This can be explained by the small overall number of tokens of the marker in this sub-corpus, which makes it more vulnerable to strong shifts in proportions. The independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was not significant:  $X^2(2, N=150) = .907, p = .635$ .

*In fact* marks a topic shift in over 16% of tokens in the French learner sub-corpus, which amounts to 3.61 per 10,000 tokens, making this the second most common function in



this sub-corpus. It only occurs once in the Dutch learner sub-corpus and – in spite of reports of its native use in previous investigations – not at all in LOCNEC.

*Table 9 Frequencies for actually and in fact marking a topic shift in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)*

	<i>actually</i>				<i>in fact</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>
<b>LINDSEI-DU</b>	15	1.88	6.30	10	1	0.13	8.33	1
<b>LINDSEI-FR</b>	9	0.98	16.07	7	33	3.61	16.42	17
<b>LOCNEC</b>	13	1.03	5.91	10	0	0.00	0.00	0

### *6.7 Elaboration: Reformulation and restart*

When *actually* (cf. Oh, 2000; Clift, 2001; Aijmer, 2013) and *in fact* (cf. Oh, 2000) signal a reformulation or a restart, they are situated on the crossroads between a discourse management function – as they are instrumental in overcoming a disruption in the discourse – and an adversative function – as they set themselves off against the preceding proposition. This function is, nonetheless, subsumed under the elaborative and not the adversative type because *actually* and *in fact* tend to add nuance to the previous proposition rather than introduce a clean break between propositions.

The assertion in (15) that professional gamers “don’t have jobs” is toned down to “most of them don’t have jobs”, and in (16) the interviewee changes direction briefly after starting the clause.

(15) **Iee:** they don't work . I think . they don't have jobs . o= or **actually** most of them  
 don't have jobs but they get paid . to . play the game  
 (DU25)

(16) **Iee:** we were (er) five minutes far from the: beach and it was **in fact** the= these were  
 people from (er) .. (er) well (eh) the man was (er) . (eh) Belgian from origin (...)  
 (FR07)

*Actually* is not the most popular reformulation marker in the corpus, with only marginal numbers in each sub-corpus (Table 10). The independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis test was significant:  $X^2(2, N = 150) = 6.37, p = .41$ . The post-hoc tests did not yield statistically significant differences in the pairwise comparisons, but the log-likelihood test indicates one at  $p < .01$  between the Dutch and native sub-corpora ( $X^2=6.86$ ).

With only 6 instances, all of which in the French learner-subcorpus, frequencies are similarly marginal for *in fact*.

*Table 10 Frequencies for actually and in fact marking a reformulation or restart in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)*

	<i>actually</i>				<i>in fact</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>
<b>LINDSEI-DU</b>	9	1.13	3.78	8	0	0.00	0.00	0
<b>LINDSEI-FR</b>	4	0.44	7.14	2	6	0.66	2.99	4
<b>LOCNEC</b>	2	0.16	0.91	2	0	0.00	0.00	0

### 6.8 Learner-specific uses

Some instances of *actually* and *in fact* in the learner sub-corpora do not fit any of the categories, because they do not correspond to any functions attested in the native speaker data nor in prior research.

The most common case is when *actually* or *in fact* marks an utterance as an approximation, i.e. the interviewee has had difficulties retrieving the most appropriate term and marks the one ultimately selected as that which in the end describes the referent concept best. Interestingly, *actually* takes on this role in the Dutch sub-corpus (and not in the French) and *in fact* in the French sub-corpus (and not in the Dutch). The interviewee in (17), for example, describes a game in the Scottish Highlands, involving tossing a caber as far as possible. Hesitating before the two constituent parts of the phrasal verb *throw around*, he is looking for the right words to describe the swiftness with which contestants do this. Note that had *actually* been positioned between the Subject and Verb, it would have expressed counterexpectation. In (18) *in fact* signals that *gross* is an approximative term.

- (17) **Iee:** (...) they take a caber of about . at least three or four metres and they . throw it .  
around **actually** which is . (er) very strange to see  
(DU08)

- (18) **Iee:** well a painter is (er) painting a picture of a of a lady and she doesn't seem to: to  
like it cos it's quite . gross <laughs> **in fact** and (erm) .. he tries and .. make it up and  
(erm) ..

(FR04)

Another interesting case is when *actually* is related to an utterance that merely marks the end of a story, as in (19), although the marker is typically associated with new or noteworthy information or with a fresh storyline.

- (19) **Iee:** (...) I will never ever leave a window open when little little chil= (er) children are around (em) . that that's the story **actually**

(DU28)

On occasion, French-speaking learners use *in fact* in the context of a summarising conclusion. Take excerpt (20). The interviewer enquires whether the interviewee has travelled much, presuming a negative answer. The response is indeed negative, followed by an enumeration of some European countries the interviewee has visited. A subsequent question about a favourite country is met with a brief response, and ultimately the interviewee closes this topic by reiterating the initial response that he has not travelled much. The clause-final *in fact* seems vaguely awkward, since it defies the main properties of the marker, viz. indicating that the proposition it relates to is more forceful than the previous or at least adds a new element to the discourse.

- (20) **Ir:** have you travelled mu= I mean obviously you haven't travelled much in fact if that was the first time you've taken a plane

**Iee:** yeah (er) we stayed in: in Europe in fact

**Ir:** yeah

**Iee:** France Italy and Spain and England but (er) that's all . yes <overlap/> it was the first time

**Ir:** <overlap/> and which of th= which of those has been your favourite (er) .. do you have a favourite country

**Iee:** oh no I don't think so Italy perhaps because we went in Rome and (er) .. oh yes

**Ir:** you thought Rome was beautiful

**Iee:** yeah ... but (er) no I didn't travel (er) very much **in fact**

(FR23)

Other tokens of *in fact* without a match in native speaker discourse equally ignore the marker's basic properties. In (21), for example, the interviewee is asked about future plans and starts a response with *in fact*, even though there is nothing unexpected or out of the ordinary about the career choice, because teaching is a common career path for language students. In (22), on the other hand, the interviewee recounts a fresh anecdote: on the morning of the interview he read in the newspaper about an acquaintance who had died of a heart attack while driving his car. The proposition prefaced by *in fact* is one of a series of facts relevant to the anecdote, but it cannot be analysed as, for example, an instance of precision or a parenthetical comment.

(21) **Ir:** have you got any plans for what you're going to do after your studies

**Iee: in fact** (er) . I I'd like to: .. to to teach normally

(FR28)

(22) **Iee:** (...) read in the: . the newspaper this morning and it's a close friend of ours and  
 . her father was dead and **in fact** he was he was driving and he had an . heart attack  
 and he was o= he was only fifty  
 (FR06)

In 8 cases in the French learner sub-corpus *in fact* was instrumental in word-searching. The interviewee in (23) confirms he has selected a topic, then marks the upcoming stretch of speech as a noteworthy comment relevant to build the context (introduced by a first token of *in fact*), followed by another token of *in fact* and a filled and unfilled pause. The latter token of *in fact* does not appear to have a function other than that of a filler in a word-searching context.

(23) **Ir:** so have you chosen something to talk about  
**Iee:** yeah I've chosen . in fact I was **in fact** (eh) .. between two topics because I I  
 would like to: to speak of an experience about (eh) my visiting a: a country  
 (FR28)

There is only one learner-specific use of *actually* in the French sub-corpus. In (24) the interviewee confirms that she would not like to teach, which is followed by a clause prefaced by *actually*. One would expect this clause to qualify the blunt initial response (e.g. “actually I’ve thought about it”) but instead it provides the reason for the negative answer. *Actually* probably occurs here as a “false friend” of French *actuellement* (‘currently’), as suggested by

the subsequent hesitation followed by “today”, which could be seen as a correction to *actually* if the latter indeed has the intended meaning of ‘currently’.

(24) **Ir:** you don't want to teach

**Iee:** no <laughs> **actually** (er) today (er) there are too mu= too much troubles

(FR39)

There is also only one learner-specific token of *in fact* in the Dutch learner corpus. In (25) the interviewee first states that the animation film *Happy Feet* can be enjoyed by anyone, which he subsequently adjusts to people who like animation films, only to add that you also have to be “into penguins”. The latter proposition is marked with an utterance-final token of *in fact*, whereas other options would seem more suitable, such as *that is* or *of course*.

(25) **Iee:** (...) it's . a movie for everyone I think if you like animation movies and . if you are into penguins **in fact**

(DU32)

Table 11 gives the numbers for the learner-specific uses of both markers, indicating that they are each other's mirror images in this category, in line with the overall differences in frequencies between the two learner groups.

*Table 11 Frequencies for learner-specific uses of actually and in fact in absolute terms (N) and in relative frequency (per 10,000 tokens)*

	<i>actually</i>				<i>in fact</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>‰</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>N int.</i>
<b>LINDSEI-DU</b>	20	2.51	8.10	12	1	0.13	8.33	1
<b>LINDSEI-FR</b>	1	0.11	1.79	1	31	3.39	15.42	16

## 7. Discussion

The quantitative results for both markers have been summarised in Table 12, which lists all relative frequencies per marker, function and sub-corpus.



Table 12 Summary of quantitative results for *actually* and *in fact* (per 10,000 tokens)<sup>3</sup>

	<i>actually</i>			<i>in fact</i>		
	DU	FR	NS	DU	FR	NS
Emphasise reality	7.16	1.09	5.89	0.63	2.52	0.00
Counterexpectation	6.65	0.98	4.70	0.25	0.98	0.00
Contradiction	2.89	1.20	1.91	0.00	1.42	0.16
<b>Subtotal adversative</b>	<b>16.70</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>12.50</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>4.92</b>	<b>0.16</b>
Reinforcement				0.25	2.41	0.24
Comment	7.16	1.31	3.42	0.13	6.24	0.08
Topic shift	1.88	0.98	1.03	0.13	3.61	0.00
Reformulation	1.13	0.44	0.16	0.00	0.66	0.00
<b>Subtotal elaboration</b>	<b>10.17</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>4.61</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>12.91</b>	<b>0.32</b>
Learner-specific	2.51	0.11		0.13	3.39	
Unclassified	0.50	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.77	0.00
<b>Overall</b>	<b>29.88</b>	<b>6.13</b>	<b>17.51</b>	<b>1.51</b>	<b>21.99</b>	<b>0.48</b>

The present study confirms previous findings that *actually* has a higher incidence in speech than *in fact*, as 514 tokens of the former were found as compared to 219 of the latter. The distinction in the native and Dutch learner groups between the two markers is even more outspoken: 220 tokens of *actually* versus 6 of *in fact* in the former and 238 versus 12 in the

<sup>3</sup> The subtotals and overall numbers may differ slightly from the sums of the individual categories because of round-off effects.

latter. The opposite holds, however, for the French learners, who use *in fact* considerably more often than *actually* (201 and 56 tokens, respectively).

This immediately lays bare the demarcation line in our analysis, which markedly runs between the French learners on the one hand and the Dutch learners and native speakers on the other hand. In other words, the Dutch-speaking learners more closely align with their native peers than with their fellow learners of English for both markers. The incidence of *actually* is even higher among the Dutch-speaking learners than among their native peers, while that of *in fact* is negligible in both these groups. The Dutch learners' mother tongue can provide an insight into these results. *Eigenlijk*, the Dutch cognate of *actually*, achieves extremely high frequencies in spoken contexts whereas *in feite*, the Dutch cognate of *in fact*, is highly infrequent in speech. Indeed, Mortier and Degand (2009: 349) cite relative figures from a spoken corpus for *eigenlijk* that are 324 times higher than for *in feite* and 3 times higher than for French *en fait*.

How could the mirror image that emerges in the French learner sub-corpus be explained? Learners with French L1 cannot rely on a cognate of *actually* in their mother tongue, rendering this marker a less obvious choice to fulfil the functions it is associated with. *In fact*, on the other hand, has a similar functional scope as *actually* and does have a cognate in French (*en fait*), which has in its turn been reported to be strongly prevalent in speech (Mortier and Degand, 2009; Defour *et al.*, 2010b; D'Hondt, 2014). It, therefore, stands to reason that learners will select a marker in English that formally resembles one they are intensely familiar with in their mother tongue, especially when it is functionally similar. They, however, appear unaware of (i) a difference in stylistic appropriateness, in that *in fact* has been noted to be more characteristic of formal speech contexts (Aijmer, 2013), and (ii) the

strong preference for *actually* among native speakers. This division of labour between *actually* and *in fact* in the target language is one the Dutch learners are acquainted with in their mother tongue and that can thus lead to positive L1 transfer, whereas the opposite effect arises for the French learners who cannot fall back on such a benefit, leading to negative L1 transfer in terms of the English markers' frequencies.

All functions of *actually* attested for native speakers have also been retrieved in both learner sub-corpora, which indicates that – as a group – the learners use this marker with a similar functional scope as their native peers. The three most popular functions in LOCNEC and the Dutch learner sub-corpus are to emphasise reality (34 and 24%, respectively), express a counterexpectation (27 and 22%, respectively) and to mark a noteworthy comment (20 and 24%, respectively). In the French learner sub-corpus marking a noteworthy comment (21%) and emphasising reality (18%) are also important categories, but the function of contradiction (20%) is, proportionally, more important than that of counterexpectation (16%), which in this sub-corpus is just as frequent as indicating a topic shift (16%). It should be borne in mind, though, that the numbers for each category are small for this sub-corpus. If the numbers for learner-specific and unclassified instances are ignored, the adversative functions are responsible for the vast majority of tokens of *actually*, ranging from 55% in the French learner sub-corpus over 62% in the Dutch to even 73% in the native sub-corpus. This is in line with Aijmer's (2013:116) finding in her analysis of 200 samples of *actually* in ICE-GB that 63.5% of tokens of the marker indeed appear in an adversative context. For *in fact* no meaningful comparison can be made given the extremely low frequencies for two of the three sub-corpora. It should be noted, though, that in the French sub-corpus 72% of tokens of *in fact* are elaborative, which clearly diverts from our observations for *actually* but is in check with

Aijmer's (2013: 90) on *in fact* in ICE-GB, reporting 69.1% of instances as elaborative. The most important functional categories for *in fact* in the French learner sub-corpus are marking a noteworthy comment (28%), indicating a topic shift (16%) and the learner-specific uses (15%). The preference of the French-speaking learners for *in fact* over *actually* holds for each functional category shared by these markers, except for counterexpectation, for which the same relative frequency can be noted for both markers.

There are a few functions that cannot be attested in native data, neither within the present corpus nor in previous analyses. Although some of these learner-specific uses may be idiosyncratic, there are two that stand out. First, there is the approximative use, whereby *actually* or *in fact* flags a word or phrase as the most appropriate term to convey the intended message. There is some ambiguity to the signal the markers transmit here: while the very use of the marker indicates that the flagged item is a better alternative than other conceivable options (*actually* and *in fact* tend to relate to a proposition the speaker believes is more apt a representation of reality), the context of pauses and hesitations betrays that this choice of words was hard to arrive at. Although this function has not been pointed out in prior research on *eigenlijk* and *in fact*, anecdotal evidence supported by a scanty corpus search suggests that these Dutch and French markers can assume this role. For example, in (26) the speaker marks the term *nevenactiviteiten* (non-core activities, or sidelines) as an approximation using *eigenlijk*, and in (27) *en fait* receives the same function when the speaker is looking for the

best way to label what she is referring to, an effort that is in the end abandoned by merely providing a description.<sup>4</sup>

(26) nou het tweede thema die d\*a dus dat is 't IST-programma is opgebouwd uit uh vier uh kernactiviteiten en twee **eigenlijk** nevenactiviteiten

well the second theme that th\* so that is the IST programme is composed of er four er core activities and two *eigenlijk* sidelines

(27) est-ce que vous voyez dans votre tête hein comment dire une une enceinte **en fait** une une une étendue du quartier enfin au-delà de telle rue c'est plus votre quartier ou quelque chose comme ça

can you picture in your head how shall I put it an an enclosure *en fait* well an an an area in the neighbourhood beyond this street it's no longer your neighbourhood or something like that

Second, *in fact* is used by French-speaking learners in a context of word-searching. As the elaborative functions of *in fact* are many, the marker is probably a suitable candidate for a floor-holding strategy, signalling to co-participants that more is to come without pinpointing the nature of the relation. Mortier and Degand (2009) suggest that French *en fait* has a “stalling” function, i.e. tries to “slow down the pace of conversation to allow the speaker to express himself in a coherent way” (2009: 361). If this observation is paired with D'Hondt's

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<sup>4</sup> The Dutch example was extracted from the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* (<http://lands.let.ru.nl/cgn/ehome.htm>) and the French from *Discours sur la ville. Corpus de Français Parlé Parisien des années 2000* (<http://cfpp2000.univ-paris3.fr/>; cf. Branca-Rosoff et al., 2012).

(2014) that *en fait* appears as a stop gag, it stands to reason that learners may turn to its English equivalent when they are pressed for processing time.

## 8. Conclusion

This study has confirmed that (i) the functional scope of *actually* and *in fact* is almost identical (with the exception of the latter's capacity to mark reinforcement), (ii) *actually* prefers adversative and *in fact* elaborative contexts, (iii) *actually* is considerably more prominent in informal speech than *in fact*, and (iv) EFL learners with a Dutch- or French-speaking background make use of such markers of expectation albeit to widely differing degrees. *Actually* is by far the preferred choice of those with Dutch L1, whereas *in fact* is much more common among their French-speaking peers. These findings can be related to the learners' mother tongues insofar as they appear to largely reflect the statuses of *actually*'s Dutch cognate *eigenlijk* and *in fact*'s French cognate *en fait*. The Dutch-speaking learners, however, hold an advantage here, because they are thoroughly familiar with a linguistic context in their L1 which closely approximates the situation in English. Indeed, apart from *eigenlijk*, Dutch also possesses a cognate form of *in fact* (viz. *in feite*), the prevalence of which is also considerably more restricted than that of *eigenlijk*. The latter has been reported with very high frequencies in Dutch spoken corpora, which may explain why the incidence of *actually* in the Dutch learner sub-corpus exceeds that in the native sub-corpus. Since the learners in this study have progressed far in their language learning process, L1 transfer is unlikely to be solely accountable for the Dutch learners' use of these markers (just think of thorough exposure to the target language e.g. through omnipresent non-dubbed English TV

series and films as another reason), but it has certainly not been an impediment to reach close alignment with native discourse. If French-speaking learners, on the other hand, take their cue from the existence of a formal – and to a large extent functional – equivalent of *en fait* in English, their discourse does not become ungrammatical or unacceptable *per se*, but the strikingly high frequency of *in fact* is unlikely to go unnoticed. The marker's ability to express the speaker's strong commitment to a proposition as well as of signalling reinforcement may have the discourse of learners who make greater use of it come across as overly emphatic.

This analysis demonstrates the added value generated by scrutinising several pragmatic markers that belong to the same field rather than singling one out. Had, for example, only *actually* been in focus, the picture would have looked completely different for the French-speaking participants. In a similar vein, it has proved worthwhile to take on board contrastive analyses between learners' L1s as well as between these L1s and the target language. Even if this Integrated Contrastive Model approach (as advocated by Gilquin, 2000/2001) has to rely on contrastive analyses performed in previous studies using diverging functional models, the insights these provide can be invaluable. Unfortunately, such contrastive studies tend to be rare when it comes to pragmatic markers, making this a challenging yet undoubtedly promising avenue for further investigations.

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