

# A diachronic analysis of *visiblement/visiblemente*: contemporary false-friends\*

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to establish how the French adverb *visiblement* has evolved, and to find the most accurate translations of this adverb in Spanish. Dictionaries tend to give literal translations, whereby *visiblement* is translated as *visiblemente*. A diachronic analysis of this adverb will enable us to see whether they are indeed false-friends. In Old French and in Pre-classical French, it was used as a clause element adverb, before being used as a disjunct adverb from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Eventually, it goes on to appear by itself, or, accompanying an affirmative, like *oui*, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We will demonstrate that the adverb undergoes a process of pragmaticalisation as described by Dostie (2004), with the adverb becoming more subjective, going from a literal sense, to a disjunct or pragmatic adverb. Nevertheless, in Spanish, since Old Spanish until nowadays, there are almost no examples other than its use as a clause element adverb. That's the reason why we cannot propose a literal translation of the adverb.

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## 1 Introduction

*Visiblement* is an evidential adverb, concerned with the source of information. The question that will concern us here, is to establish how the adverb *visiblement* has evolved, and to establish the most accurate translations of this adverb in Spanish. Dictionaries tend to give literal translations, whereby *visiblement* is translated as *visiblemente*, in the same way that *justement* is translated as *justamente* and *décidément* as *decididamente*. A diachronic analysis of this adverb will enable us to see whether they are indeed false-friends. We will make use of corpora compiled mainly from Frantext databases, as well as databases from oral corpora such as CLAPI (French), and the Spanish language databases CORDE and CREA (RAE).

## 2 *Visiblement*: Diachronic Evolution: from the clause element adverb to the pragmatic adverb

Dictionaries, including historical ones, trace the adverb *visiblement* back to Old French. According to dictionary definitions, *visiblement* is given to mean both 'in a visible way' as

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\* Acknowledgements: Research for this article was supported by a research project on "Enunciation and Orality Marks in French Historical Linguistics" from the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad, Spain, (Research Project FFI2017-84404-P).

well as ‘in an obvious, manifest way’. Both of these meanings apply in Modern French. We will now analyse what kind of adverb *visiblement* corresponds to, and how its use and meaning have evolved throughout the centuries. We will look at the type of evidence and sources that prompt the speaker to utter *visiblement*, as well as studying the usage.

According to contextual and dictionary uses, in Old French and Middle French, as well as in Pre-classical French, throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the adverb *visiblement* is used as a clause element adverb with the meaning ‘in a visible way’. For example, the *Dictionnaire de moyen français* (DMLF) proposes this definition: *De manière visible, perceptible par la vue*. The *Dictionnaire de Richelet* (1680) shows this definition of the adverb: *D’une manière visible, clairement, manifestement*.

1. N’ouques ne fu, c’est chose voire,  
A veoir plus bel edefice,  
Car, tant fu par grant artefice  
Fondé et fait si soubtilment  
Qu’il sembloit **tout visiblement**  
A toutes gens grans et menues  
Que le sommet touchiait les nues  
Christine de Pizan, *Le livre de la Mutation de Fortune*, 1400, p.109  
‘It seemed visibly to everybody, large and small, that the summit touched the skies.’<sup>1</sup>
2. Bons et mauvais le verront **visiblement** en chair.  
Raoule de Presles, *Cité de Dieu*, éd.1486, (quoted in Godefroy)  
‘Both good and bad people will see it visibly in the flesh.’

In several instances the adverb is preceded by verbs such as *voir*, *paraître* or *apparaître*:

3. Et vraiment il a la vne grant merueille; car on voit **visiblement** maintes fois la terre de sa tombe croller et mouuoir par desseure et la pouldre, tout ainsi que il eust vn homme vif par dessoubz qui le remeust;  
Jean de Mandeville, *Voyages*, 1360, p. 240  
‘As he sees, visibly, several times, the earth tremble from its tomb.’
4. et apres il les metroit en vn plus bel paradis assez, la ou il verroient **visiblement** Dieu de nature en sa maieste et en sa gloire.  
Jean de Mandeville, *Voyages*, 1360, p. 389  
‘There where they will see God visibly, in his majesty and glory.’
5. où il le dit quant au corps que ces bestes ou ces esperis prennent quant ilz veulent apparoir **visiblement** à aucun, quar ilz espessissent l’air et le figurent comme il leur plaist.  
Presle Raoul de, *La Cité de Dieu de Saint Augustin*, vol.1, t 1, 1371-1375, p.141  
‘When they want to appear to someone visibly’

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<sup>1</sup> The adverb *visiblement/visiblemente* has been rendered literally as visibly in the English translations.

6. Il vit, ce disoit il, apparoir, presentement et **visiblement**, devant son lit une serpente, grande et grosse merueilleusement.  
Jean D'Arras, *Mélusine*, 1392, p. 308  
'He claims to have seen a snake appear in front of his bed in a present and visible manner (and visibly).'
7. Si n'oz pas la esté gramment, Quant j'apperceu **visiblement** La royne de tout mesureur, De qui le mouvement non seur Met tout le monde en grant racune.  
Christine De Pisan, *Le livre du chemin de long estude*, 1402-1403, p.96  
'When I visibly noticed the queen appear.'
8. Ma meschinete, saiches que, non obstant que tes yeulx foibles en me puissent clerement veoir pour leur groisseur, que je suis celle qui nuement et **visiblement** s'apparu ou temps de l'exil et de sa tribulacion a mon chier amé filz Bouece le tres souffisant philosophe,  
Christine De Pisan, *Le livre de l'advison christine*, 1405, p. 94  
'I am the one who has appeared without any addition and visibly.'
9. Et que ceste vie soit sur toutes autres agreable a Dieu est apparu maintes foiz au monde **visiblement**, si que il est escript de pluseurs saints et saintes contemplatifs qui ont esté veus quant ilz estoient en leur contemplacion eslevéz dessus terre tres hault...  
Christine De Pisan, *Le Livre des trois vertus*, 1405, p. 24  
'(...) has visibly appeared several times in the world.'
10. Milles personnes qui lors estoyent la, Tant de noz gens que ceulx de Genes virent **Visiblement** luy advenir cela.  
La Vigne André de, *Le voyage de Naples*, 1495, p. 177  
'Our people, as well as Genes', turned visibly when that happened to him.'
11. la feste du premier martir, lendemain de Noël, je viz **visiblement** de mes yeulx la tres sacrée majesté imperialle,  
Lamaire De Belges Jean, *La Concorde du genre humain*, 1509, p. 71  
'(...) I see visibly, with my own eyes, his sacred imperial majesty.'

By the time we reach Middle French, the term has already taken on the meaning of *manifestly*, as in:

12. Nous congnoissons **visiblement** Que ce n'est pas bien nostre cas.  
(*Myst. siège Orléans* H. c. 1480-1500. 335).  
'We know that it is visibly not our case.'

In both Old French and Middle French *visiblement* is a clause element adverb, which modifies the term it goes with. This is emphasized in several instances by degree markers as *tout*– il sembloit *tout visiblement*/or by pairing the adverb with another clause element adverb: *Il vit (...) apparoir, presentement et visiblement, devant son lit une serpent*.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, in Classical French, the adverb appears more and more frequently, still as a clause element adverb, and with the meaning of 'manifestement, clairement' as in:

13. On sçait **visiblement** qu'il veut faire donner à ses gens de guerre, on nous assure neantmoins de la paix.  
 Lucinge René de, *Les Occurrences de la paix de Lyon*, 1601, p. 35  
 'One knew visibly that he wanted to wage war on these people, while assuring us hewanted peace.'

Here, the verb is no longer a verb of perception such as *voir*, but rather a factual verb, *savoir*. The adverb could be substituted here by *manifestement*, *clairement*.

In 1660, we find the first instance in Frantext of the adverb in sentence-initial position<sup>2</sup>:

14. (...) après, seigneur, après tant de promesses qui nous avoient unis aveque toy, d'où vient que sans égard en un seul jour tu laisses ton fils, nostre sauveur, ton oint et nostre roy? **Visiblement** ta grace l'abandonne, il est battu du sort de toutes parts.  
 'Your grace visibly abandons him, he is beaten by fate on all sides.'  
 Racan Honorat de, *Les Psaumes*, 1660, p.236

It is no longer a clause element adverb. The order in the sentence is flexible:

*Ta grace l'abandonne, visiblement.*  
 'Your grace visibly abandons him.'

Unlike with clause element adverbs, it cannot be denied or questioned:

\**Est-ce visiblement que ta grace l'abandonne?* 'Does your grace visibly abandon him?'

Neither can it be used emphatically:

\**C'est visiblement que ta grace l'abandonne.* 'Visibly, your grace abandons him.'

Finally, the adverb cannot be used as an adverb of degree:

???*Très/ tout visiblement ta grace l'abandonne.* 'Very visibly your grace abandons him.'

We are dealing with a sentential adverb, meaning 'It is evident, it is clear that your grace abandons you'. Nevertheless, this use is still rare in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We will find more and more instances, especially from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards:

15. Ainsi lorsque nous lui disons: ne nous induisez pas en tentation: **visiblement** il faut entendre: en permettez pas que nous y entrions.  
 Bossuet Jacques-Bénigne, *Méditations sur l'Évangile*, 1704, p. 96  
 'Thus when we tell him: lead us not into temptation: we must visibly understand: do not allow us to enter into it.'
16. (...) de dire qu'il n'y ait pas un rapport manifeste dans ces paroles, que l'une n'est pas la préparation et la promesse de l'autre, et que la dernière n'est pas l'accomplissement de celle qui a précédé, c'est vouloir dire que Jésus-Christ qui est la sagesse éternelle parle et agit au hasard. **Visiblement** il a parlé en St Jean pour préparer l'institution de l'eucharistie  
 Bossuet Jacques-Bénigne, *Méditations sur l'Évangile*, 1704, p. 388  
 'Visibly, in Saint John, he is talking about preparing the institution of the eucharist.'

<sup>2</sup> There is no mention in the dictionaries about the adverb position.

17. Mais puisque manger et boire à la foy, c'est la mesme chose, Jésus-Christ ne se seroit pas arrêté jusqu'à quatre fois réitérées à distinguer le manger d'avec le boire, ni la viande d'avec le breuvage, s'il n'avoit pas regardé à autre chose.

**Visiblement** donc il a regardé aux paroles de l'institution où manger, c'est prendre par la bouche, où boire, c'est boire dans une coupe et en avaler la liqueur.

'So visibly, he is considering the word of the institution, where eating means taking something via the mouth and drinking means drinking from a cup while tasting the liquid.'

Bossuet Jacques-Bénigne, *Méditations sur l'Évangile*, 1704, p. 390

In all of these instances, we are dealing with a disjunct adverb rather than a clause element adverb. What this means is that right up to the present, the adverb is used both as a disjunct adverb, as well as a clause element adverb, although the second usage has been in decline in recent years. Therefore, from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, even though the clause element adverb is very widespread, we begin to see more and more instances of the disjunct adverb, both at the beginning and in the middle of the sentence.

18. *Nos animaux, visiblement, restaient inconsolables du départ de mon père.*

Michelet Jules, *L'Oiseau*, 1856, p. XXXIII

'Our animals are visibly inconsolable following my father's departure.'

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we find the adverb standing alone (in absolute position):

19. Maintenant il était trop tard. **Visiblement.**

- Vous avez toujours pu résister à vos désirs, dit-elle.

Vian Boris, *L'Herbe rouge*, 1950, p. 153

'Now it was too late. Visibly.'

We also find the adverb accompanying *oui*.

20. Être gaulliste, aimer de Gaulle comme nous l'aimons c'est **visiblement** pour lui le comble de l'inacceptable. Visiblement oui, puisque ses traits sont altérés.

Maurac Claude, *L'Oncle Marcel*, 1988, p. 273

'Being a De Gaulle supporter or loving De Gaulle as we loved him, was visibly totally unacceptable to him. This was visibly the case as his facial features changed.'

In oral corpora, we find instances of *visiblement oui*, where the *oui* could even be omitted without resulting in any loss in meaning:

21. - Elle rentrée chez elle là.

- Oui **visiblement** oui c'est ça hein Fabien elle est rentrée chez elle. CLAPI

'Yes, visibly that is the case Fabien.' (conversation in a cheese shop).

In the 15 examples in the CLAPI oral corpus, there is only one instance of *visiblement* as a clause element adverb.

### 3 Evidence, sources and usage

#### 3.1 Evidence

Up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most instances of *visiblement* are based exclusively on visual evidence of the speaker, allowing him to state *visiblement p*. In all instances where it is a clause element adverb, the evidence is visual.

22. Tu demandes a veoir celle Qui enfanta, vierge pucelle, En sa glorieuse biauté: Aroies tu la volenté Que l’ueil senestre on te crevast, Par si qu’elle a toy se monstrast **Visiblement**?  
Anonyme, *Miracle de l’empereur Julien*, 1351, p. 217  
‘Would you have someone poke out your eyes as she visibly showed herself to you?’
23. Mais combien quil soient saufs, pour ce en sont il mie senz paour, quant ilz voient **visiblement** les ennemis entour euls, qui leur font diuers assaus et de menaces en lair et en terre, des coups de tonnoirre et de tempestes.  
Jean De Mandeville, *Voyages*, 1360, p. 390  
‘When they see their enemies visibly all around them.’
24. la feste du premier martir, lendemain de Noël, je viz **visiblement** de mes yeulx la tres sacrée majesté imperialle,  
Lemaire De Belges, Jean, *La Concorde du genre humain*, 1509, p. 71  
‘on the day of the feast of the first martyr, the day after Christmas, I saw visibly, with my own eyes, his holy imperial majesty.’
25. Cependant sa santé continuant à s’altérer tous les jours, il parut **visiblement** sur son visage qu’elle souffroit quelque douleur dont elle ne se plaignoit point.  
Prévost L’Abbé, *Le Philosophe anglois ou Histoire de Monsieur Cleveland, fils naturel de Cromwell*: t. 1-3, 1731, p. 75  
‘Nevertheless his health continued to change every day. It showed visibly on his face.’
26. La tristesse étoit peinte si **visiblement** sur mon visage, que madame en prit occasion de le faire remarquer au roy...  
Prévost L’Abbé, *Le Philisophe anglois ou Histoire de Monsieur Cleveland, fils naturel de Cromwell*: t. 1-3, 1731, p. 227  
‘Sadness was so visibly etched on my face that madame took it upon herself to point this out to the king’
27. (...) deux indices pouvait me mettre sur la voie: la qualité du papier, **visiblement** de fabrique anglaise, et l’empreinte du cachet.  
Jouy Étienne de, *L’Hermitte de la Chaussée-d’Antin*, 1812, p. 105  
‘the quality of the paper, visibly manufactured in England’

28. Trois procédés quand une femme sort du piano: si l'on est loin, levez vos mains **visiblement** pour applaudir: c'est un moyen de montrer vos boutons de manche et la jolie façon dont vous êtes gantés.

Taine Hippolyte, *Notes sur Paris: Vie et opinions de M. Frédéric Thomas Graindorge*, 1867, p. 55

'Three procedures when a lady finishes playing the piano: if one is far away one should raise one's hands visibly to applaud'

Where the adverb has the meaning of 'manifestement', the speaker draws from visual evidence in order to be able to state *visiblement*. Therefore, in the following extract:

29. Nous estions cependant bien endemenez, nous n'avions pas un soldat, nous avions pris la guerre pour nostre part. Le Roy estoit porté à Lyon, il passe à Grenoble. On sçait **visiblement** qu'il veut faire donner à ses gens de guerre, on nous assure neantmoins de la paix.

Licinge René de, *Les Occurrences de la paix de Lyon*, 1601, p. 35

'We knew visibly that he wanted to wage war on these people while assuring them peace.'

The speaker bases his statement on visual evidence, which could be substituted by: *d'après ce que j'ai vu je peux affirmer qu'on sait qu'il veut faire donner à ses gens de guerre*.

In 1660 we find the first instance of *visiblement* in sentence-initial position, as a disjunct adverb. The evidence is still visual and it is the speaker, who, upon seeing evidence x can state *visiblement p*:

30. (...) après, siegneur, après tant de promesses qui nous avoient unis aveque toy, d'où vient que sans égard en un seul jour tu laisses ton fils, nostre sauveur, ton oint et roy? **Visiblement** ta grace l'abandonne, il est battu du sort de toutes parts.

Racan Honorat de, *Les Psaumes*, 1660, p. 236

'Visibly, your grace abandons him, he is defeated by fate on all sides.'

In this instance, the speaker has seen how a father has left his son in one day, evidence which allows him to state *ta grace l'abandonne*. *Visiblement* reinforces the segment p, *ta grace l'abandonne*, precisely because it is something which is supported by what the speaker has been able to see with his own eyes. *Visiblement* serves to reinforce, or, in the words of Ducrot (1995), it is a realising modifier (*modificateur réalisant*), in that it concedes greater argumentative strength to the segment claiming to have proof, in this case, visual proof. On a scale of certainty, *visiblement* would appear below *réellement* and above *probablement*, *apparemment* and *certainement*. The following example supports this scale of certainty.

31. Je n'en sais rien, mais toujours est-il que, dans le microcosme de notre avion, le sexe fort se distingue **visiblement** – sinon réellement – du sexe faible. Il y a bel et bien, d'un côté, les <<jupes>> déliquescentes et, de l'autre, les <<culottes>> résistantes...

Dorin Françoise, *Les jupes-culottes*, 1984, p. 238

'it still appears that in the microcosm of our plane, the stronger sex stands out visibly from the weaker sex.'

### From visual evidence to deduction:

However, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we see a process of semantic evolution. Beside instances where *visiblement* stems from exclusively visual evidence, it also starts to appear in response to evidence that is not purely visual. We start to see instances where there is an inductive process. The adverb effectively highlights the relationship between evidence X, presented as proof of a certain conclusion, and this conclusion. The speaker assumes this deduction to be evident and appeals to his interlocutor to accept it. Here are a few examples:

32. Toutes les facultés communes aux deux sexes en leur sont pas également partagées, mais prises en tout elles se compensent ; la femme vaut mieux comme femme et moins comme homme ; partout où elle veut usurper les nôtres elle reste au-dessous de nous. On en peut répondre à cette vérité générale que par des exceptions ; constante manière d'argumenter des galans partisans du beau-sexe. Cultiver dans les femmes les qualités de l'homme et négliger celles qui leur sont propres, c'est donc **visiblement** travailler à leur préjudice...

Rousseau J.J., *Émile ou De l'éducation*, 1762, p. 701

'If we cultivate in women those qualities which pertain to men, while neglecting their female traits, then we visibly do them a disservice.'

The speaker puts forward his arguments, everything he has stated, as evidence, as proof in support of a conclusion. In this case, the speaker presents *La femme vaut mieux comme femme et moins comme homme / partout où elle veut usurper les nôtres (nos facultés) elle reste au-dessous de nous*, as evidence, as proof, leading to a conclusion, such as *cultiver dans les femmes les qualités de l'homme et négliger celles qui leur sont propres, c'est donc travailler à leur préjudice*, the adverb *visiblement* could be omitted without any loss in meaning. Nonetheless it serves to highlight the deductive relationship between the evidence stated by the speaker, and the conclusion he draws from it. The adverb reinforces this conclusion, by saying something like, according to what I have just said, or, according to what I have just shown, it is visible, it is manifest that p. Thanks to the adverb *visiblement*, the speaker not only takes responsibility for the relation between evidence and conclusion, but he is also presenting it as something evident and as something that should be admitted by his interlocutor. It is as if the speaker were saying "you cannot deny this":

*Cultiver dans les femmes les qualités de l'homme et négliger celles qui leur sont propres, c'est donc?? probablement?? apparemment?? peut-être travailler à leur préjudice, vous en pouvez pas dire le contraire.*

Several instances juxtapose *donc* and *visiblement*. We can observe this in the following example:

33. César (...) ne lui objecte-t-il pas que (...) ce n'est point punir un criminel que de le faire mourir, que la mort n'est rien, que c'est seulement la fin de nos maux, que c'est un moment plus heureux que fatal? Cicéron et tout le sénat ne se rendent-ils pas à ces raisons? Les vainqueurs et législateurs de l'univers connu formaient **donc visiblement** une société d'hommes qui ne craignaient rien.

Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, 1764, p. 41



‘So the victors and legislators of the known universe visibly form a society of men that fear nothing.’

Here the speaker presents a series of arguments, which serve him as evidence enabling him to reach a certain conclusion: *César dit que la mort n’est rien, que c’est un moment plus heureux que fatal*. (‘César says that death is nothing, it is a happy rather than a fatal moment’.)

From this evidence, it is manifest that these men fear nothing, conclusion which is reinforced by the adverb *visiblement*. The relationship of deduction between the evidence and the conclusion is marked by the coordinating conjunction *donc*, and the adverb serves to emphasize that the speaker assumes the relationship between the evidence and the conclusion to be evident, and that they should be admitted as such by the interlocutor. The adverb can be omitted without any loss in meaning. It both highlights, and reinforces the deductive relationship between the evidence and the conclusion, and the speaker presents the interlocutors as being in agreement with him.

As we have pointed out, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in an oral context, *visiblement* can be found with pragmatic usage, occasionally accompanied by the adverb *oui*.

34. Être gaulliste, aimer de Gaulle comme nous l’aimons c’est visiblement pour lui le comble de l’inacceptable. **Visiblement oui**, puisque ses traits en sont altérés. [Commentaire de François Mitterand: « Je crois que vous exagérez. Je n’ai pas une telle passion »]

Mauriac Claude, *L’Oncle Marcel*, 1988, p. 273

‘Being a De Gaulle supporter or loving De Gaulle as we loved him, was visibly totally unacceptable to him. This was visibly the case as his facial features changed.’

The evidence is still visual, and the adverb reinforces the affirmation *oui*. According to what I have just seen, I can state that, yes, it is the height of what is considered unacceptable. The evidence here corresponds to « *ses traits en sont altérés* », which is as if the speaker were saying that, indeed, being a Gaulliste is the height of what is considered unacceptable.

## 3.2 The source of p and usage of *visiblement p*

### 3.2.1 The source of p

Mediative or evidential adverbs are adverbs which indicate an outside source. By using them, the speaker signals that the source of information stems from an enunciator or speaker x. This is the case with *apparemment*, as in the example *Apparemment, Air France est en grève* or *Selon x*, or *Selon Max, Léa est fâchée*. In both these cases we are dealing with a hearsay marker, whereby p is understood to come from a third party. In the case of *Visiblement p*, there may well be a source for p, but here, it does not signal an outside source. It is the speaker himself, who signals himself as the source of p, and p is presented as being so evident that the whole linguistic community is presented as being in acceptance of p.

Let’s refer to Molinier’s criterion (2009:12) regarding the usage of the adverb *Selon*. When we use *Selon N*, the speaker appears to be in agreement with the statement, although he can also explicitly agree with it, or reject it. With *apparemment* he can agree with it:

35. Apparemment, les rebelles ont été maîtrisés  
 ‘Visibly, the rebels have been overpowered.’

Is this undoubtedly true, or undoubtedly false?

In this case the presence of *apparemment* is perfectly appropriate and *les rebelles ont été maîtrisés* is presented as coming from a source outside the speaker. Perhaps he has read about it in the press, or he has heard it on the latest news broadcast. On the other hand, it is not possible to make the same statement with *visiblement*:

36. ?? Visiblement, les rebelles ont été maîtrisés,?? ce qui est sans doute vrai, ?? ce qui est sans doute faux.

In this case, the speaker assumes statement *p*, *les rebelles ont été maîtrisés*, thereby preventing him from stating his own position.

A second criterion serves to confirm that the speaker is indeed the source of *p*, in *visiblement p*. we could say:

37. Visiblement, selon Paul c’est une erreur.  
 ‘Visibly, according to Paul, it is a mistake.’

The adverb is attributed to the speaker and not to Paul.

But:

38. Selon Paul, visiblement c’est une erreur.  
 ‘According to Paul, visibly, it is a mistake.’

This statement is only acceptable if the adverb is attributable to Paul, where he shares the reported discourse. It is Paul who is stating *visiblement c’est une erreur*.

If the speaker looks through the window and sees a cloudy, grey sky, he could state: *Visiblement, il va pleuvoir aujourd’hui*. He is basing his statement on visual evidence, the cloudy, grey sky, in order to reach the conclusion that *il va pleuvoir*. The source of *p*, of *il va pleuvoir aujourd’hui*, is the speaker himself. He presents *p* as evident and equally accepted by his linguistic community. He could even follow up his initial statement with *On ne peut pas dire le contraire*, where the linguistic community would be included.

### 3.2.2 The usage of *Visiblement p*

The use of the adverb *visiblement* depends on a number of conditions, which will distinguish it from other similar adverbs such as *apparemment*.

#### a) Certainty

We have already mentioned a scale of certainty on which we find adverbs such as *peut-être*, *possiblement*, *probablement*, *apparemment*, *certainement* or *visiblement*. This last term will be at the top of the scale, as it expresses a high degree of certainty. We refer to Ducrot’s article (1975:68) regarding *je trouve que*, which allows for personal judgement. Ducrot (1975:68) shows that with the phrase *Je trouve que*, there is a possibility of doubt, for example in the phrase *Je trouve que tu as été bête et même j’en suis sûr*. “L’attitude intellectuelle marquée par trouver comporte une certaine possibilité d’hésitation, et il y a

*donc un degré supérieur de certitude-explicitable par même et par en être sûr.*” This sequence wouldn’t be possible with *visiblement*:

39. ?? Il est visiblement fâché et même j’en suis sûr.

‘He is visibly cross and I am sure about this.’

40. ?? Visiblement il va pleuvoir aujourd’hui, et même j’en suis sûr.

‘Visibly, it is going to rain today and I am sure about this.’

By using *visiblement*, the speaker has sufficient evidence to confirm that p is true, there is no room for doubt, and that we are at the top of the scale of certainty. It would therefore be redundant to follow this up with *et même j’en suis sûr*. On the other hand we could state:

41. Il me semble / on dirait qu’il est fâché, et même j’en suis sûr.

‘It seems to me / one would say that he is angry, and in fact I am sure of it.’

#### b) Personal judgement versus reported judgement

Here we will refer again to Ducrot (1975). In order to state *visiblement*, the speaker has to judge the evidence x for himself, and this evidence cannot be received indirectly, for instance via hearsay, (as is the case with *apparemment*).

The judgement has to be personal, even if the speaker does not need to have experienced the fact p directly. Therefore, in order to state *je trouve que le film est intéressant*, the speaker needs to have seen the film. On the other hand, with an adverb such as *visiblement*, the speaker only requires evidence regarding fact p, either visual evidence or arguments that he can put forward as proof, in order to draw a conclusion p, by a process of deduction. The speaker can see the queue outside a cinema and state:

42. Visiblement, c’est un bon film.

‘Visibly, it is a good film.’

The evidence must be perceived by the speaker himself and cannot be reported to him indirectly, for example via hearsay. If a salesman tells me that the iPad is a wonderful device, I can go and see my interlocutor and tell him:

43. **Apparemment**, les iPads sont des appareils formidables, c’est le vendeur qui me l’a dit.

‘Apparently, iPads are amazing, the sales assistant told me.’

But *visiblement* would be less appropriate:

44. ?**Visiblement**, les iPads sont des appareils formidables, c’est le vendeur qui me l’a dit.

‘Visibly, iPads are amazing, the sales assistant told me.’

The speaker needs direct perception of the evidence to draw conclusion p. This would usually be visual evidence or arguments that he takes up himself in order to draw a conclusion p, such as:

45. J’envoie toujours mon CV à cette entreprise et on ne me répond jamais. **Visiblement** je ne serai jamais pris chez eux.

‘I have always sent my CV to this company and they never reply. Visibly, they will never hire me.’

Where *envoyer le CV* and *ne pas recevoir de réponse* is evidence for reaching conclusion p *je ne serai jamais pris chez eux*, evidence for conclusion p, which the speaker takes it upon himself to reach.

c) Contemporaneity of the evidence and the conclusion:

Moreover, this evidence must be contemporaneous at the moment when the speaker reaches conclusion p. This is something that distinguishes *visiblement* from another marker such as *il paraît que*. If I have read a review of a film a month ago and I have a conversation about the film today, I could say:

46. Il paraît que c'est un bon film, j'ai lu une très bonne critique dans les Cahiers du cinéma le mois dernier.

'The film seemed good. I read a very good review in Cahiers du cinéma last month.'

On the other hand, it would be more difficult to say:

47. ?? **Visiblement** c'est un bon film, j'ai lu une très bonne critique dans les Cahiers du cinéma le mois dernier.

'Visibly, the film is good. I read a very good review in Cahiers du cinéma last month.'

It would be possible, however, if I am in the middle of lying on my sofa reading a review and I tell my interlocutor:

48. **Visiblement** *Juste la fin du monde* est un bon film, la critique des Cahiers est très élogieuse.

'Visibly, *Juste la fin du monde* is a good film. The review in Cahiers du cinéma is full of praise.'

The evidence is contemporaneous at the moment when the speaker draws conclusion p.

#### 4 What about Spanish?

We have access to a vast corpus with which to reference *visiblemente*, from medieval times starting from 1300, up until the present day, where the term only appears as a clause element adverb. From 1300 up until 1700, the adverb is often preceded by the verb *ver*, and from 1600 by the verbs *parecer* and *aparecer*.

49. E por ende, la verdad más acompañada fue siempre que la boz de la mentira, assí como lo podréis **ver** en este fecho **visiblemente**, con la ayuda de Dios, que en la hora que sean muertos estos falsos, todos los suyos y de su consejo se dividirán y se asconderán por los rincones con muy gran miedo por la falsedad que pensaron, assí como los ladrones,

*Libro del cavallero Cifar* (1300-1305)

'Finally, the most common truth has always been the voice of lies, as you can see from this fact visibly, with God's help...'

50. La septima es por **ver visiblemente** algunas figuras en el tiempo del ayuntamiento con la muger que estaran algunas figuras pintadas cerca dela cama:  
*Sevillana medicina de Juan de Aviñon*; Sevilla:Juan de Burgos, 1545. Madrid Nacional R/30652 (1381-1418)  
 ‘In the seventh picture we can visibly see some figures from the times of the town hall where they are accompanied by a woman. They are shown standing by the bed.’
51. Cinta de talle, que **parecía visiblemente** de plata.  
 Lópe de Úbeda, Francisco (1605), *La pícaro Justina*, Antonio Rey Hazas, Editorial Nacional (Madrid), 1977  
 ‘A waistband, that seemed to be visibly made of silver.’

As a clause element adverb, it is the equivalent of *de manera visible*, as we can verify directly by looking at several instances where it is either accompanied by a degree marker such as *tan*:

52. Después que Leriano acabó de fablarme, quando yo ya quería respondelle, sin aver de mi sueño recordado, soñava que veía a Laureola entrar por la cámara, **tan visiblemente** como si verdaderamente estoviera despierto, con dessimulada ropa y nueva compañía.  
 Nuñez Nicolas, *Tratado que hizo Nicolás Nuñez sobre el que Sant Pedro compuso de Leriano y Laureola llamado Cárcel ...* (1416)  
 ‘I dreamt that I could see Laureola entering the room, so visibly that it was as if I were awake.’

Or it is paired with another clause element adverb:

53. Rojo tembló súbita y **visiblemente**, y respondió, siempre temblando, en voz apenas perceptible...  
 Pardo Bazán, Emilia, (1891) *La piedra angular*, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Universidad de Alicante (Alicante), 2002  
 ‘Rojo shook suddenly and visibly and answered, shaking, in a barely audible voice.’

Moreover, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, it frequently accompanies subjective adjectives such as *agitado*, *conmovido*, *disgustado*, *enojado*, etc.

54. El portugués, **visiblemente disgustado** por aquel sentimentalismo, dejó caer el cuerpo del gato.  
 Fernández Flórez, Wenceslao (1917-1945), *Volvoreta*, José-Carlos Mainer, Cátedra (Madrid), 1989  
 ‘The Portuguese man, visibly upset by such sentimentality, dropped the body of the cat.’
55. ¡Mentira!- gritó Juanta, **visiblemente agitada**.  
 Alarcón, Pedro Antonio de (1852), *Relatos*, María Dolores Royo Latorre, Unversidad de Extremadura (Salamanca), 1994  
 ‘“Lies!”, shouted Juanta, visibly agitated.’

As is the case in French, the speaker draws on contemporary visual evidence to reach conclusion p:

56. Paula, por el contrario, enflaquecía **visiblemente** y perdía por horas el sano color de su cara; pero también aumentaba sus raciones de bizcochos y agua azucarada.

Pereda, José María de, (1871) *Tipo y Paisajes*, Salvador García Castañada, Ediciones Tantín (Santander), 1989

‘Paula, on the other hand, grew visibly thinner, and lost the healthy colour of her face;...’

Nevertheless, in Spanish, in the roughly 1000 instances of the term found on the CORDE database and CREA, there are almost no examples other than its use as a clause element adverb. Up until 1900 there is hardly any doubt that the adverb functions as a clause element adverb. From the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we can find a few rare examples where *visiblemente* could be considered as a disjunct adverb:

57. Dicho esto, volvió a reanudarse la partida de tenis, pero resultaba que **visiblemente** era el criado el mejor de los jugadores, por lo que temiendo tal vez Jehoel y el joven Hugo De Charlotteville quedar humillados delante de nosotros, ofrecieron una raqueta a Saturnino, mientras ordenaban al criado que se retirase.

Herrera Petere, José, (1940), *Niebla de cuernos*, Jesús Gálvez; José Esteban, Edicós do Castro (La Coruña), 2002

‘Having said this, he went back to his tennis match, but the servant was visibly the best player’

Luis Santos Ríos, in his *Diccionario de partículas* (2003), pays special attention to the use of the term as a clause element adverb, as in the example *Ha mejorado visiblemente*, (Trad. He is visibly better) but he also includes its usage as a disjunct adverb, as in the example, *Visiblemente, se encontraba muy cansado*.(Trad. He was visibly tired).

The role of *visiblement* as a clause element adverb is very similar in both French and Spanish. However, we have seen how in French, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards and especially from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it gains strength as a disjunct adverb. Finally, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century its tendency towards being used as a disjunct adverb is complete, as we can see in the oral corpora. Yet in Spanish, the adverb is almost always a clause element adverb. This is why we do not translate *visiblement* from contemporary French as *visiblemente* in Spanish. So which adverbs could be the Spanish equivalents?

*Por lo visto* is not possible for two main reasons. Firstly, it is an adverbial phrase that implies a third person. In other words, when the speaker states *por lo visto*, he is signalling that the source of the information does not come from him, but from someone else, (stated or otherwise).

58. **Por lo visto**, Pedro se va a vivir a Suiza (me lo ha dicho su hermana).

‘Apparently, Pedro is going to live in Switzerland (his sister told me).’

Moreover, the past participle *visto* here suggests that the evidence is in the past, as opposed to *visiblement* in French, which requires that the evidence be contemporaneous with conclusion p.

In the phrase *por lo visto Pedro se va a vivir a Suiza*, the evidence, here the word of the other speaker, is previous to the conclusion *Pedro se va a vivir a Suiza*. *Por lo visto* could be the

equivalent of *apparemment* in French as a hearsay marker. In addition, the speaker distances himself from what he is stating, and as Elisa Gonzalez Ramos (2005) shows, it can be used ironically or when the speaker clearly wishes to distance himself from p. In contrast, we have seen that *visiblement*, rather than attenuating p, serves to reinforce it.

Another possibility could be *Al parecer*, but here again, the source of information comes from another speaker and the speaker detaches himself. It is also a hearsay marker with an element of distancing. The French equivalent would be *apparemment* or *il semblerait que, il paraît que*.

The best translations of *visiblement* would usually be *por lo que se ve, es evidente* or *está claro*. *Por lo que se ve*, as with *visiblement*, implies that there is some contemporary evidence of conclusion p. Moreover, the source of the information comes from a speaker who would be able to deduce p from visual evidence.

59. Para la boda de doña Elena, **por lo que se ve**, no ha hecho falta acudir a la socorrida lista de bodas. Alquilados un par de locales, desde hace ya varias semanas, todo está dispuesto para continuar almacenando regalos. Hasta el momento, cinco Ecus de la Fábrica Nacional de moneda y timbre; una vajilla que la Diputación de Sevilla ha encargado a Victorio y Luchino; una réplica de la diosa Atenea; un reloj marino de mesa del Ayuntamiento de Cádiz; una reproducción de las “Tablas Alfonsinas” del arzobispo de Sevilla; una cristalería del Centro Nacional del Vidrio;  
*El Mundo*, 15/03/1995: Previa. Boda Infanta Elena y Jaime Marchalar. Sin cursillos prematrimoniales  
 ‘For Doña Elena’s wedding, as far as one can see, it was necessary to have a wedding list’

## 5 Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that *visiblement* is an inferential marker, whose source is the speaker himself, including the linguistic community. The adverb stems from direct perception of evidence which allows the deduction of a conclusion p. It reinforces the inductive relationship linking the evidence to the conclusion, allowing the adjoining conclusion to be reinforced. Like several adverbs, it has undergone a process of evolution, not only semantic evolution – it is used to highlight visual evidence in order to support conclusion p, allowing the presentation of arguments as evidence from which one can draw a conclusion p by an inductive process – but a categorical evolution too. At first it was used as a clause element adverb, before being used as a disjunct adverb from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Eventually, it goes on to appear by itself, or, accompanying an affirmative, like *oui*, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The adverb undergoes a process of grammaticalization, as described by Traugott (1982, 1989), or of pragmaticalization as described by Dostie (2004), with the adverb becoming more subjective, going from a literal sense, whereby the evidence can only be visual, to a disjunct or pragmatic adverb, where the visual evidence, though still present, loses strength, giving way to a more semantic, deductive meaning. In addition, the adverb becomes more flexible, no longer necessarily in clause-medial position, it can shift to the beginning of the sentence (sentence-initial), or indeed stand lone (absolute position).

Regarding translation into Spanish, we have established that a modern translation of *visiblement* would not be *visiblemente* when the word is used as a disjunct adverb. A much better translation would be *por lo que se ve*. We have noted that Spanish has a tendency to use an adverbial phrase where there is a pragmatic adverb in French, often in a detached position: *Apparemment/Por lo que parece, por lo visto, Visiblement/por lo que se ve*, and also *Décidément!/;Desde luego!; Justement!/;Por eso mismo!*. The French adverbs have taken on a pragmatic-enunciative quality, which can be seen in their more subjective meaning, as well as in their syntactic position. On the other hand, their Spanish equivalents are at an earlier stage both semantically as well as syntactically. We are reminded that *visiblemente* in Spanish is used mainly as a clause element adverb. The evolution of these evidential adverbs has taken place at different speed in both languages, which can be a source of confusion for translators. Through a detailed linguistic and diachronic study of these discourse markers, and by comparing them, we have shed new light on their semantic and syntactic role.

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*Dictionnaires des XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, Champion électronique (1998).

*L'Atelier historique de la langue française. L'histoire des mots du haut Moyen âge au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1999), Marsane, éd. Redon.

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www.frantext.fr, développé par le CNRS-ATILF (Analyse et traitement informatique de la langue française) et l'Université de Nancy2.

*La base du Moyen Français*: <http://zeus.atilf.fr/dmf.htm>

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