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## **The Impact of Discourse Markers on the Analysis of Texts**

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**Abstract:** Discourse can be looked upon in different ways, and this article is an attempt to shed light upon discourse markers specifically and some related issues that could flourish the communicational environment. Many aspects are interrelated with discourse like: culture, organization, formality, interest...etc.

This is a good opportunity to know to what extent discourse markers are beneficial in the daily life connection and helping have mutual understanding and experiences, and they are used for analyzing the competence or the intentions behind using spoken or written forms of language. In addition, it is related to both forms; i.e., spoken and written forms and they vary in regard to clarity and acceptability according to different conditions might be required and / or available.

This research handles different issues and reflections because of using discourse markers for different purposes, especially communication.

**Key Words:** discourse markers, communication, culture, discourse analysis.





### **1-1 Definitions of Discourse Markers:**

This term has been defined in different ways for they are strictly related to conceptualizing themes, according to Schiffrin et al (2003,p.146) discourse markers "are used in conversation to signal the speaker's intention to mark a boundary", they tell the hearers or readers not only about the linguistic properties {like, semantic and pragmatic meanings} (ibid, 134) of some used expressions, of course taking into consideration the social environment & interactions of their occurrence, but also they tell about the textual competence and relations of users, background and knowledge of the related items of the topic.

Discourse Markers help indicating the different roles in discourse and that even the smallest parts could affect the longer structures. They are also illustrated to be defined as terms "which signal a sequential relationship between the current basic message and the previous discourse." (Fraser, 1990, p.383)

There is what is known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is used by a large number of scholars in reference to different disciplines. It is basically defined as "the reproduction of sexism and racism through discourse; the legitimation of power, the manufacture of consent, the role of politics, education and the media...the relation between groups, the imbalances in international communication and information" (Kress, 2008). And this is so related to the majors of pragmatics and sociolinguistics; i.e., these markers are related to those two categories applied through grammatical structures. Hence, they are related to "sociocognitive process" as expressed by Pan & Kosicki (2010, p.55) for they involve three major elements: topic, participants (and their personal attitudes, readiness for communication), culture (along with what this term involves like: education, and shared knowledge of specific topics).

Most practitioners and linguists agree on the idea that discourse analysis is not a method for teaching languages; "it is a way of describing and understanding how language is used". But this is so also because there are many ways of "adopting new developments in description" to the everyday ways of teaching as there are language teachers. (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000).

### **1-2 Problem:**

Since the use of these markers is contributed in different situational environment, an overlap or confusion may be created because of no clear distinction to be made between them and the commentary markers. Another thing is that to what extent they help clarify the communicative action. As an example, when using request sentences many elements are involved such as conceptual knowledge, speaker's (or even participants') interest, the competence, and shared knowledge.

### **1-3 Approach:**





In this study, Gneva Model has been undertaken for it investigates a set of hypotheses developed in 1980s involving discourse organization which lead to many articles written in this aspect.

The strategy of this model has been applied in this study for it exclusively focuses on analyzing dialogical and some monological discourses. Such extracts highlight the interaction, cooperation, and provides reflections in a verbal way.

This is significant to be carried out for the main way of communication among individuals is language. This approach shows different trends like variety, complexity, and negotiation of communication. It works on the internal relations of language segments, and the external relations among users.

Form this standpoint, it is worth mentioning that sometimes such communication involves what is called 'action turns' explained by Vernant (1997) in which speech is described not as merely abstract components, but also as social activities involved because of some cultural communities.

In this sense, this model conceptualizes discourse as communicative action along with assumptions shared and hypotheses undertaken by participants. Charaudeau (1995, p.97) has shown the same opinion regarding this model, for it covers cognitive, social, and psychological considerations.

#### **1-4 Discourse Markers and Clarity:**

Sometimes different techniques are used to help the listener understand and/or respond by adding, changing, or reporting what is said. In other words, they help clarifying for the listeners, for example:

I just had to leave, what I mean is that I hated the show. It just wasn't enjoyable.  
(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar>)

When listening to someone speaking, the response could be reflected either through gestures (nodding the head), or using short utterances (yeah, really, oh). Such matters indicate the interest from the side of the listener. Short expressions of these kinds are called 'response tokens'.

The most common tokens are: exactly, wow, amazing, that's great...etc. the functions for which response tokens are used are:

##### **1- Showing interest and a desire the speaker to continue.**

**A:** So he was angry.

**B:** Yeah.

**A:** And he quarreled with her.

**B:** Mm.

**A:** He warned her not to .....

##### **2-Showing surprise**

**A:** We have decided to make a birthday part to our brother.

**B:** Oh really!

##### **3-Showing sympathy**





**A:** He can't practice sport for at least one year.

**B:** That's terrible.

#### **4- Introducing a topic**

Um, could I ask you something personally?

It is worth mentioning that (erm) can't be used when making a pause before mentioning anything, especially when being not sure about what to say.

Her last novel was called-erm what was it? I can't remember the name.

**5- Interjections:** they are words used for exclamation like (Oh!, Gosh!) to show a positive or negative emotional response.

**A:** The match has been cancelled.

**B:** Oh.

**A:** I don't think the team will be happy.

**B:** Yuck.

#### **1-5 Discourse Markers and Attitudes**

Some expressions are used to highlight or reflect a viewpoint whether in speaking or writing. Common uses in this aspect are (ask me, if you, I mean, frankly speaking, bitterly), examples of this type are:

We will bitterly attend the ceremony and discuss the how to treat the damage.

If you ask me, she should never talk to her boss in this way.

#### **Section Two:**

#### **2-1 Deviation and Norm**

In communication stimulation and excitement occur and their investigation could help much in facilitating the intentions or /and speech processes. The reason behind communication, sometime, is to convince and change the listener's way of thinking. That can be achieved successfully in the case of coincidence between mental states, and choosing the most suitable expressions that are relevant to the situation, environment, and the interest of language users- especially the listener.

Communities differ as far as culture is concerned. Different social considerations are focused on when dealing with details that might vary from one society to another.

In some occasions, failure in understanding might happen. This is so because of misunderstanding or lacking the social knowledge that enables them have smooth trends





when having mutual understanding and sharing further details regarding issues under consideration.

On the other hand, success in communication is conditioned by –especially with speakers of different language- the native speaker rather than the foreigner. (Candun and Widdowson, 1991, p.74), and using the most suitable elements, like: the choice of users of the language, topic, expressions used, and the way of speaking).

### **2-2 Discourse, Culture and Translation:**

As it has been referred to previously, the production of discourse depends highly on the culture, education, and interest of users. In addition, it should not be taken for granted that each term has an equivalent in translation. There may be very important differences even in those relatively close cultures.

The simplest example to be mentioned in such occasion is in the classroom environment, where the teacher belongs to a culture different from that of the students. Obvious discourse can be achieved by different styles or showing different relevant stories, moral lessons, or jokes. Students would even be motivated and the differences among cultures could be solved, and the successful discourse and communication could be achieved.

What is said about cultural emphasis could be said about the linguistic one; i.e., the universality of typology is focused on, and consequently, multicultural foreign language classroom provides excellent material." (Candun and Widdowson, 1991, p.98). In this way, variations in discourse could be beneficial in the educational environment, and widen the knowledge of students as well as teachers and giving opportunities to communicate using different and more 'colorful' styles.

### **2-3 Sentence and Text:**

There are two different kinds of language when dealt with as potential objects study: firstly, abstracted to teach literacy, or to study how the language rules work. Secondly, it is used to communicate something and to be coherent in use. This may (or may not) happen with a single sentence or texts. The second kind is called 'discourse' and methods for providing coherence are called 'discourse analysis'.

A distinction between those two types of language is much related to the way of thinking about using texts in language. For instance, and to make it clearer, when working on such texts and translating them, there would be an opportunity to analyze them grammatically.

Sometimes, it is found that some discourses have grammatical mistakes and others might be well-formed grammatically.

### **2-4 Subjectivity and Analysis:**

What is significant is not its conformity to the grammatical rules, but it is the coherence received through its organization when communication occurs.

Significantly, there is a degree of subjectivity in identifying and analyzing a stretch of discourse. It might be meaningful to somebody, and at the same time it could be of no sense to another person because of not finding the necessary knowledge because of which communication occurs. And through practice, it is said that perception could be achieved by groups rather than individuals.

### **2-5 Spoken and Written Discourse:**





Discourse Markers indicate the connection of related pieces and giving the whole picture of the language structured. That is, they highlight the relation between what has been previously mentioned or written and what is going to be said or written. For example there might be informality in spoken rather than in writing because of the enough time or opportunities to be more prepared.

Such markers are:

#### **1-mind you/still**

These are informal kinds of linking used in spoken forms to prepare for what one wants to say.

The questions are very difficult and not expected. Mind you, they are challenging and differentiate the active from less active students.

Workers have to work for many efforts doing many jobs. Still, they have very good salaries and promotions.

#### **2-By the way/ incidentally:**

These two markers are not used with contradiction, but they can be used to introduce thoughts and they might indicate a change in the direction of communication. Both are used in informally and semi informally spoken. It is said that (incidentally) is a little bit more formal.

They did well. They practiced for a long time, prepared their plans and strategies. Incidentally, unexpected heart attack happened to the leader of the team.

#### **3-However /Nevertheless:**

Like the first pair, they are used for constructing and presenting contradiction with what has been mentioned before.

She is rich and from a very famous family studying medicine. However, she always feels unhappy and thinks that she is unlucky!

#### **4- You know/Like/ let's see:**

'You know & let's see' are special kinds of discourse markers used in conversation and they are called "fillers". They provide an opportunity to the speaker to think about what he/she wants to say.

'Like' is also a filler but it is used at the moment of speech especially by young people. And for some of them it becomes a speech habit.

I don't ever interrupt our professors when they are talking. I –like you- think of keeping politeness.

That is a very important topic to write about- like/let's see the second chapter.

### **2-6 Relations among Ideas:**

Discourse Markers provides opportunities to express different relationships among ideas. The most and commonly used relations are illustrated through the table below. And in most cases, they are used initially. Moreover, punctuation marks and how to be used appropriately are very important, and they even add to the meaning.





Type of Relation	Sentence Connectors	Position within Sentences
Adding something	More, in addition, further, further to, this,	Initial position
Making a contrast between two separate things, people, ideas, etc.	However, on the other hand, in contrast, yet.	Initial position
Making an unexpected contrast (concession)	Although, even though, in spite of the fact that.	Initial position starts a second/subordinate clause.
Saying why something is the case	Because, since, as, in so far as.	Initial position starts a second/subordinate clause.
Saying what is the result of something	Therefore, as a result, this reason, because of this.	Initial position
Expressing a condition	If, in the event of, as long as, provided that.	Initial position starts a second/subordinate clause.
Making what you say stronger	On the contrary, in fact, as a matter of fact, in deed.	Initial position

<http://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/learningenglish>





## 2-7 Conclusion:

In spite that this study does not cover all the related issue comprehensively, it could be regarded as an attempt to highlight the most crucial matters involved in discourse analysis and what it leads to. And through treating the topics of this study, the following remarks have been concluded:

- The contribution of Geneva model for interaction, and its treatment which covers not only dialogues but even monologues.
- Each marker has a specific use, and thus, an indication that adds to the total frame of real structures as a way to pass specific messages.
- Imagining conversations to continue without discourse markers, the interaction would take different moves and might lead to ambiguity or lacking the mutual understanding among participants.
- Many challenges are there when applying analyses and trying the best efforts to reach a very close point of mutual understanding among language users.
- The more explicit segments used, the most fruitful interaction achieved.
- In the field of discourse analysis, many tools are involved and considered like: culture, shared knowledge, interest, kinds of terms and items used, conceptualization, derived or normal structures...etc.
- All in all, taking all the above mentioned issues help achieving powerful interaction, and consequently, language transfer the real and pivot purpose behind its use.

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