Discourse Markers in English spoken Language

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Introduction

English, like any other language, has a number of such discourse markers including **well, yes, surely, on the contrary**, **so** and **nevertheless**. They are lexical items or grammatical forms typically serve to relate one utterance to another in discourse.

Discourse markers are considered as cues or signals for the reader or the hearer that make cohesion and coherence, In fact, these markers are found in various grammatical forms such as interjections, linking adverbials, greetings and farewells….etc. Discourse markers. Play a very important role, not only in conversation, but in written text as well.

Terminology

Several terms are proposed by different Scholars to describe discourse markers which is the problem of this piece of research 'hedges' lakoff (1975); 'Particles' Svartvik (1980); 'connectives' chalker (1984); 'discourse particles' Schourup(1985); 'conjuncts and disjuncts' Quirk et al. (1985); linking words and phrases' Eastwood (1999). But the term 'discourse markers' is labeIled by Labove and Fanshel (1977); Todd and Hancock (1986); Schiffrin (1992); Grammley and patzold (1992).

However, this research adopts the term "discourse markers' since it is a generic one. It covers all the above mentioned

phenomena like Linking words; connectors and conjunctions. Another criterion is that the multifunction of these marker's performance do not restrict only to the sentence level, these markers have also many semantic, discoursal and pragmatic functions.

Finally, these markers serve as signals or cues for the hearer or the reader to understand what has been said or read, or what is going to be said or read.

Types of Discourse Markers

Various Suggestions have been made for classifying discourse markers, However, different classifications are possible because each study focuses on certain aspects of these markers. Biber et al.s' (1999:1095) classification is adopted as it proves to be typical and comprehensive. They (ibid) offer the following types of discourse markers .

1- Interjections

This type of discourse markers has been described in most books of grammars. Interjections are words or set of sounds used as a sudden remark to express feelings (Thomas and Martinet 2002: 19).

Leech and Svartvik (1994: 152), offer a Survey of common English interjections which are used to express emotions:

Oh [   ] Surprise:

1- oh what a beautiful present!

Ah [   ] satisfaction, recognition

2- <u>Ah</u> that's just what I want.

Aha [   ] Jubilant satisfaction, recognition.

3- <u>Aha</u> these books are exactly what I was looking for.

Wow [   ] great Surprise.

4- <u>wow</u> what a fantastic goal!

Yippee [   ] excitement, delight

5- <u>yippee</u> this is fun!

Ouch [   ]

6- <u>Ouch</u>, my foot.

Ow [   ] pain

7- <u>Ow</u> what hurt!

2- Greeting and Farewells Expressions.

Greetings and Farewells occur in special discourse situations and constitute conventionalized responses to these situations, despite their phatic use (Schourup, 1985:11) argues, these markers can be used as an instrument to maintain a link among people.

In general, greeting can very in formality, <u>hi</u> and <u>hello</u> are used in informal situations. They are less formal than "good" forms**: <u>**good morning,**</u> <u>**good afternoon**</u> and <u>**good evening**</u> (Biber et at, 1999: 1088).

8- **Good morning**, Gary Tones speaking, can I help you ?

9- **A- Goodbye**.

   B- Goodbye. (ibid: 93)

3- Linking Adverbials.

Levinson (1983:87) indicates that there are words and phrases in English, and in most languages, are used to indicate the relationship between an utterance and the prior discourse shch as the initial position of **therefore, in conclusion**, **to the contrary, still, however, well, besides and after all**.

10- A- Layla has gone home.

   B- **After all**, she was sick . (Fraser, 1990: 187)

4- Stance Adverbials

This type of discourse markers is defined as a lexical item that behaves semantically as an operator upon the entire sentence, to express modality, illocutionary force and evaluation. (Trask, 1993: 251)

Stance adverbials are called sentence adverbials by Leech and Svartvik (1994), Celce – Murcia and Larsen – Freeman (1999), disjuncts by Quirk et al. (1985).

In this respect, Halliday (1985: 82) Suggests four- Categories for Sentence –initial adverbs:

Probability: **maybe**, **perhaps**, **certainly**, **surely**.

Presumption**: of course,   obviously, clearly, evidently**.

Usuality**: usually, typically, occasionally.**

Desirability: **un(fortunately), luckily,hopefully, regrettably**.

Stance adverbials; appear in different grammatical structures single adverb like **honestly,** or **fortunately,** or prepositional phrase like **of course** or noun like **the fact is**, adjective such as **it is likely to** or model verbs such as **maybe** and **perhaps** and the large number of these adverbials are comment clauses like **you know**, **you see** etc. to express the speakers attitude, opinion and even feelings.

Stubbs (1983:70) explains that if the adverb occurs in initial position possibly separated by a pause and / or uttered a separate tone, group, for example:

11- **Admittedly / frankly / fortunately**, I can't see anything.

5- Vocatives

Generally speaking, Vocatives are viewed by Levinson (1983:71) as noun phrases that refer to the addressee, but are not syntactically or semantically incorporated as the argument of prosodically, they are separated from the body of a sentence pro-stoically.

Vocatives can be divided into two types.

a- calls or summons.

b- Addresses.

12- **Hey you**, you just scratched my car with your Frisbee.

(calls or summons)

13- The truth is, **Madam**, nothing is as good nowadays.

(addresses)(ibid)

6- Response Elicitors

These markers are characterized as generalized question tags, such as **huh**? ,(eh? Which is usually pronounced [ei], **alright**? and **okay**? (Biber et al, 1999: 1080)

These markers are called "appealers" by Gramley and patzold (1992: 227) that are used by the speaker to get or elicit agreement from the hearer. They serve important communicative functions.

7- Response Forms

Biber et al. (1999: 1089) comment that these markers are brief and routinized responses to a previous remark. They (ibid) classify these markers in to:

i-   response to questions as **yes, no** and their Variants.

ii-   Response to directives as **ok.**

iii-   Response to assertions as backchannels **yes**, **yah, I see** this type is called "uptakers" by Gramley and patzold (1992: 227) That are used on the part of the hearer to indicate the active listening in communication.

Accordingly, Coulthard and Montgomery (1981: 25) use the terms 'acknowledge' 'accept' and 'endorse' to describe these markers.

8- Hesitators

Er, **erm** and uh are discourse markers that are used to fill hesitation pauses in speech. Such markers tend to be condemned by people who do not understand why they are used, but they are very important. they allow the addressee to catch up, and they help the speaker to plan what to say next (Knowles, 1987:185).

Stubbs (1983:) supports Knowles' statement that these markers are normal non-fluency phenomenon occurs in unplanned discourse

like repetition, false start and the like.

9- Various Polite Speech- Act formulae.

Biber et al. (1999: 1093) refer to discourse markers like **sorry, pardon, thank you** and **please** that are used in respectful language, they add that these markers have speech act function in thanking, apologizing and regretting. And they have, in fact, a respective role in the interactive nature of speaker's conversation.

10- Expletives

These markers are words or phrases that does not contribute any meaning to the text. Some of them are taboo expressions like swearwords or "semi- taboo expression" that are used as exclamations especially in strong negative experience (Biber et al, 1999: 1095)

A- Taboo expletives: these markers are used to express something bad and not in polite use, such as:

Blast!

Damn!

Oh hell!!

Bloody hell !!!

B- moderated expletives : these markers are socially acceptable in many situations, such as:

my goodness !

My God!

Good heavens !

Good God!   Biber et al (ibid) (Leech. 1989: 14)

Conclusion

Discourse markers are signals used in communication whereby the hearer expects the speaker's intention. They are commonly used in conversation. They often have initial-position or responding function as adjacency pairs: e.g. Greeting **hi,** farewell, **bye**, response forms **yes, no** … etc.

These markers do not form an apart in a syntactic structure but they are inserted freely in discourse. And they marked off by intonation pauses, and punctuation. They typically have multifunction in discourse, semantics and pragmatics.

There is no unified agreement in classifying these markers, because of the large number of discourse markers, their functionality and diversity. Hence, they appear under different terms and labels.

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