

Analyse the Function of Discourse Markers Using in Naturally Occurring Discourses and Planned Speeches

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Abstract. This article delves into the multifaceted role of discourse markers in both naturally occurring conversations and planned speeches. Discourse markers, which are linguistic units that aid in establishing coherence and connectivity within discourse, are explored in their various functions and contexts. In the realm of spontaneous discourse, such as a talk show interview with the Avengers cast, the author highlights the strategic use of discourse markers like 'and.' These markers serve to build logical connections between sentences, maintain the flow of actions, de-escalate discourse processes, and reopen interactional agendas. The author exemplifies how 'and' is employed strategically to navigate interruptions, manage pauses, and sustain the coherence of the conversation. In planned discourses, like a TED speech by Cameron Russell, the focus shifts towards using discourse markers for enhancing coherence and clarity. Here, 'so' and 'but' are analyzed in their roles of signaling transitions, foreshadowing connections between sentences, and introducing elements of contrast or surprise. These discourse markers serve as indispensable tools for guiding the audience through the logical progression of the speaker's thoughts and ensuring a deeper understanding of the discourse. Overall, the article underscores the versatile and impactful nature of discourse markers, which can serve different functions in spontaneous and planned discourse contexts. Whether it's facilitating smooth transitions, managing interruptions, or enhancing coherence, discourse markers play a pivotal role in shaping effective communication.

1. Introduction

Discourse Markers are defined as intra-sentential and supra-sentential linguistic units which fulfil a largely non-propositional and connective function at the level of discourse [1]. Discourse Markers are also a linguistic strategy. When speakers use them in the discourse, it will add coherence to the discourse, enabling people better to understand the speech [2]. Therefore, Discourse Markers can be considered as a tool that can not only index the relation of an utterance to the preceding context and establish the relationship of phatic purposes between the speaker and listeners.

In daily life, people will naturally use the Discourse Markers in their conversation without even realizing them since they are just essential phrases and words that quite literally mark the direction of a conversation or discourse, for example, 'and', 'like', 'well', 'actually', 'first of all', and so on. In addition, Discourse Markers are important for fluency in English at an advanced level. They are important elements of speech and writing for a living and working in English-speaking countries. In a formal speech, proper use of Discourse Markers can help speakers to avoid a series of short unconnected statements. Speakers use them to connect, organize and manage what they think,

say or express a certain attitude. Therefore, when one delves into the analysis of the role played by Discourse Markers within discourse, a profound insight into the speaker's cognitive processes and the logical framework underpinning their speech emerges. By dissecting these linguistic signposts, one can unravel the intricate thought processes that govern the organization of a conversation or presentation. The strategic deployment of Discourse Markers unveils the intricate map of the speaker's mind as they navigate the seas of dialogue.

In the following sections of this article, we will embark on an exploration of Discourse Markers in action. Specifically, we will extract and scrutinize their usage in two distinct types of discourse: naturally occurring conversations in an American talk show and meticulously planned discourse in a TED speech. By examining these contexts, we aim to shed light on the versatility and impact of Discourse Markers in shaping communication across different communicative settings. The two divergent discourses are:

- (1) Discourse that occurs in everyday life
- (2) Discourse that is carefully designed.

The focus question of this article is: What are the functions of Discourse Markers in spontaneous and planned discourses?

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Discourse Markers

Discourse Markers are a critical element of communicative competence that can assist students in producing smooth and fluent sentences [3]. According to Tannen et al. (2015), Discourse Markers can be defined as a group of linguistic elements which function in social, expressive, textual and cognitive domains. They are the words and phrases that connect one conversation segment to another [4]. They are approaches utilized by the author or speaker that reflect the Selection of Management, Organization, and Monitoring [5]. In addition, Fraser in 1988 have suggested that verbal statements that are syntactically independent of the basic sentence structure and have a core meaning that indicates the link between the present and previous utterances [6]. A prior study by Karaata (2012) concludes that Discourse Markers create discourse coherent discourse [7]. This idea has also been confirmed by many other researchers, such as Martínez (2004), who has pointed out that Discourse Markers are a group of signals that ass Coherence and Cohesion to the discourse [2]. Therefore, based on this, Zhao (2013) suggests and finds that Discourse Markers provide unobstructed communication and coherence to the discourse [8].

Although much research elucidates positive findings about the contribution of Discourse Markers to the comprehension of the discourse, there are still some discourse analysts who give negative interpretations of Discourse Markers. First, Segal et al. (2009) said that Discourse Markers are “empty,” and fulfilling no semantic. The reason is that the appropriate choice of meanings of Discourse Markers depends on the context. Based on this argument, the marker itself does not add meaning since its meaning depends on the meaning of the surrounding context. Moreover, Discourse Markers are often redundant that deleting them from a discourse does not make any apparent sacrifice to the meaning of the text [9].

2.2. Discourse Markers Function

Discourse Markers' function is to increase the capacity to utilize the language flexibly and facilitate the ongoing text [4]. The use of Discourse Markers can contribute more to pragmatics than semantics. It can provide additional information that is outside the text itself for the production of the discourse. In addition, Discourse Markers can also add coherence to the discourse. Coherence provides the flow of ideas inside a text, allowing the receiver to comprehend the discourse without difficulty or interruption [10]. According to Yunus and Haris (2014), coherence facilitates the combination of sentences into paragraphs and ultimately into portions or sections that give a discourse its hierarchical structure. In other words, it improves discourse organization by grouping its numerous components and portions [11]. Moreover, one of the prominent theoreticians – Fraser, in this field of Discourse Markers, suggests that Discourse Markers are a

kind of verbal expression derived primarily from conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases [12]. Fraser's taxonomy splits Discourse Markers into three significant subclasses: 1) Contrastive Markers, which interpret a clear description of the following sentence's differences from the prior one; 2) Discourse Markers are Elaborative Markers that indicate a quasi-parallel relationship between the sentences. 3) The final ones are Inferential Markers, which indicate that the second sentence is an argument and consummation of the first [12].

3. Analysis & Discussion

Discourse Markers are words or expressions that connect, manage, and organize sentences. They link sentences without altering the overall sense of the expression. They can be inserted in any portion of a sentence (i.e. beginning, middle, ending). Speakers can employ different forms of Discourse Markers for various types of linkages. In the analysis part, the author will choose discourses happening from both naturally occurring in the conversation and planned speech and then analyze the function of Discourse Markers used in the discourse.

3.1. Spontaneous Discourses

In conversations like questions and answers, speakers want to ensure that the listeners can follow their interlocking logic and understand them. They will try their best to make their language logical and coherent. Therefore, they will consciously or unconsciously use Discourse Markers, like “and” to set up the interlocking logic between the sentences. However, for the same Discourse Markers, they do not function in the same way. For example, not all “and” are used to establish the interlocking logic between discourses.

Excerpt 1: Talk Show

((Mark said he didn't notice that the phone in his pocket was on Instagram live for close to 20 minutes.))

(People laugh)

01 Mark: (*Embarrassed simile*) **and** when I knew...

First my phone was 02 just blowing up, like I was getting these texts, **and** I was like: “Oh, I 03 hope my mom is OK.”

04 Host: (*Laugh and said*) Yeah.

05 Mark: **and... and... and...** but I cannot check my phone in the middle 06 of the theatre. That's rude! [.] Especially, in ly own movie.

(**People laugh**)

07 Mark: **And...** um... someone from Disney came up a woman. **And** 08 she poked me, **and** she said: “(Act angrily) Turn off your phone!” [.] 09 I said what, what, what, what? (Act angrily again) That phone is on! 10 Turn off your phone!” [.] **And** I was like, my phone is not on!” (Then 11 Mark acts out taking out his phone and then look at his phone in such 12 a big shock.)

In Excerpt 1, the discourse is taken from a talk show interviewing the Avengers cast, with Mark explaining to the host why he accidentally had the first 20 minutes of the new Thor Ragnarök Premiere movie broadcast out through Instagram live.

In lines 2, 7, 8, and 10, Mark uses ‘and’ between sentences. There is no interruption happen that the discourse goes smoothly. Since Mark is explaining what happens then, he wants to show the flow of a series of actions. Therefore, in this situation, one of the functions of Discourse Markers is to build up the close link logic between the sentences to make listeners follow the speaker.

In lines 5 and 7, Mark uses ‘and’ again, but it is not used to build sentence logic. There is a short silence when using ‘and’ in these two lines. Moreover, looking back at the co-text, there are no apparent relations of meaning between the two sentences. For this time, the unconscious using ‘and’ is used to de-escalate the discourse process, reorganize the language and open the next phase of the conversation. Since Mark does not follow the last phrase, he adds ‘and’ as a “buffer” to give himself more time to organize language to open the next phase of the topic. In line 1, Mark continues the previous topic speaking. Since a laugh interrupts the process of speaking, he uses the ‘and’ in front of his speaking to continue the topic. Therefore, Mark uses ‘and’ to reopen and implement pending interactional agendas, which is one of the functions of such types of Discourse Markers.

In conclusion, this talk show interview with the Avengers cast, where Mark explains why the first 20 minutes of the new Thor Ragnarök Premiere movie accidentally got broadcast on Instagram live. Mark uses the word ‘and’ strategically throughout the conversation. Firstly, he uses ‘and’ between sentences (lines 2, 7, 8, and 10) to smoothly convey a series of actions, ensuring the logical flow of his explanation. Secondly, in lines 5 and 7, Mark employs ‘and’ with short pauses, not for sentence logic but to briefly pause and reorganize his thoughts. This use of ‘and’ acts as a buffer, allowing him to regroup and transition to the next phase of the conversation. Additionally, in line 1, Mark uses ‘and’ to continue the previous topic after a laugh interruption, demonstrating its role in reopening and implementing pending interactional agendas. Overall, Mark’s use of ‘and’ serves various functions within the discourse, including maintaining coherence, managing pauses, and resuming interrupted discussions.

In Excerpt 2 (still from the same talk show), the host opens another topic to go on this talk show. However, there are many interruptions happen in his question. The author will analyze the functions of choosing Discourse Markers before the interruption.

Excerpt 2: Talk Show

((The host talks about the precious events.))

01 Host: At what point did you realize that your were... [...] **actually**, I 02 think committing a felony.

I mean, I think you were, when you were 03 showing that on Instagram libe. Did you realize that?

04 Mark: In... in all fairness [...]...

05 Host: Right?

06 Mark: It was in my pocket.

In line 1, the host uses ‘actually’ between the two sentences. The situation is that the previous sentence does not complete. Based on the co-text, we can find that the subject of the two sentences has a total change, from ‘you’ to ‘I’, and the tense of them also changes, from ‘past’ to ‘present’. The evidence shows that the two sentences belong to two different topics. However, we can find cohesion in the text based on the whole context if we remove the sentence following ‘actually’. Therefore, the function of Discourse Markers ‘actually’ is tentative segmented discourses with the insertion of additional information. The host uses ‘actually’ in this discourse to add his own thinking. Without the use of ‘actually’, listeners will be confused about the logic between the sentence, so he adds ‘actually’ to cut down the discourse and add some information that seems to have low relevance.

In line 2, the host uses the phrase ‘I mean’ to continue the previous question. Looking through the co-text, people cannot see the coherence in the sentences around them. For listeners, it will be strange to hear the host’s thinking when asking a question of other people. In order to make listeners clear about what he wants to convey, he adds these Discourse Markers. The function of it is to explain the speaker’s ambiguous words and connect two apparently unrelated topics. With the use of ‘I mean’, the discourse can come back to the origin focus and also can introduce the statement to justify what he said.

In short, in this passage, the host’s use of discourse markers is analyzed. In line 1, the host uses ‘actually’ between two sentences to insert additional information and connect two different topics. This use of ‘actually’ serves to clarify the transition between these topics and helps listeners follow the logic of the conversation. In line 2, the host employs the phrase ‘I mean’ to continue a previous question and explain his thoughts. This use of ‘I mean’ serves to eliminate ambiguity in the conversation and reconnect the discourse to the original topic, also justifying the host’s statement. Overall, these discourse markers, ‘actually’ and ‘I mean,’ are used to enhance the coherence and clarity of the host’s communication by bridging disparate topics and providing context for the listener.

3.2. Planned Discourses

In planned discourses, the choice of Discourse Markers will differ from the previous ones. It is vital to show rigorous thinking logically to the listeners in the planned discourse. Therefore, most of the Discourse Markers that the speaker uses are to set the logic of the ideas, for

example, cause-and-effect and order. In this part, the author will analyze the function of Discourse Markers used in planned speech.

Excerpt 3: TED Speech

01 This is the first outfit change on the TED stage, **so** you guys are pretty 02 luckl to witness it, I think. If some of the women were really horrified 03 when I camw out, you don't have to tell me now, **but** I'll find out later 04 in Twitter.

The discourse that the author chooses is for a TED speech – “*Looks aren't everything. Believe me, I'm a model. | Cameron Russell*”. In this speech, Cameron Russell admits she is a genetically lucky girl and a tall and beautiful lingerie model. However, she also says not to judge her by her looks alone. In this fearless presentation, she takes an alternative look at the industry that made her glamorous at the age of 16.

In line 1 of this part of the speech, the utilization of the word 'so' serves a crucial function in enhancing the coherence of the discourse. By examining the contextual meaning, we discern a clear relationship between the sentence that precedes 'so' and the one that follows it. This relationship becomes evident through the association between the words 'first' and 'luck,' as seen in the phrase, 'It is lucky to see the first outfit.' Consequently, the introduction of 'so' anticipates and signals this relationship between the two sentences, effectively aiding listeners in comprehending and seamlessly navigating the speaker's speech. In essence, 'so' acts as a linguistic bridge, paving the way for a smooth transition between related ideas and facilitating a more fluid exchange of information.

Moving on to line 3, the role of 'but' mirrors that of 'so' in line 1. Once again, it functions as a predictive tool, foreshadowing the connection between the sentences it joins. The use of 'but' in this context underscores a contrast or exception to what might be expected. The insert 'but' not only hints at this relationship between the sentences but also introduces an element of surprise or contradiction, enriching the discourse and prompting listeners to engage more actively with the speaker's message.

In both instances, 'so' and 'but' serve as indispensable discourse markers, guiding the audience through the logical flow of the speaker's thoughts and facilitating a deeper understanding of the connections between various elements of the discourse. These markers, by virtue of their predictive and relational functions, contribute significantly to the overall coherence and clarity of the speaker's communication.

Excerpt 4: TED Speech

((Russell has just finished answering the third question and come to answer the fourth question.))
01 **So**, the last question people ask me is, “What is it like to be a model?” 02 And I think the answer that they're looking for is, “if you are a little 03 bit skinnier and you have shinier hair, you will be so happy and 04 fabulous.” And when we're backstage, we give an answer that maybe 05 makes

In excerpt 4, the speaker passes to the last question that needs to be answered. She used the same 'so' as mentioned in excerpt 3, but with a different function of it.

In the initial sentence, the speaker strategically employs the word 'so' as an introductory element. However, the function of 'so' in this context extends beyond its conventional role in maintaining discourse continuity. Instead, it takes on a distinct purpose: that of initiating fresh conversational topics. With the use of 'so', the speaker marks upcoming matters as having been incipient to propose a particular interpretation of the action they are about to launch [13].

In essence, the deployment of 'so' in this specific manner is a dynamic tool for managing discourse. It not only facilitates smooth topic transitions but also sets the stage for engaging and coherent discussions. By initiating a new conversational thread with 'so,' the speaker signifies their readiness to explore uncharted subjects and invites the listener to join them in this exploration. This approach serves to invigorate the conversation and promote a deeper level of interaction and understanding.

4. Conclusion

Discourse Markers play a vital role in the conduct of discourses. Discourse Markers play their distinctive roles in both spontaneous and planned discourses. Based on what has been analyzed in spontaneous discourses happening in the talk show, the author concludes that Discourse Markers have the function of: (1) building up the logic of the closely linking sentence to help listeners to follow, (2) easing the discourse process, reorganizing the logic of language and opening the next phase of the conversation (3) reopening or implementing pending interactional agendas (4) making tentative segmented discourses with insertion of additional information (5) explaining the logic of speaker and connecting the apparently unrelated topic sentences. When Discourse Markers come to be used in planned speech, their function is more to contribute to coherence than spontaneous discourses. It can be: (1) helping listeners to predict the coming content and smooth their understanding of the speech, (2) marking impending items as preliminary to suggest a specific interpretation of the action the speaker is about to initiate.

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