DISCOURSE MARKERS IN ENGLISH

Fatemeh Zarei
Beiza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Beiza, Iran

Corresponding Author email: fatemahzarei_82@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: This study examined what discourse markers (DM) and their characteristics are in English. It described the range of uses of English discourse markers in conversations included in Interchange books. It also determined the most frequently used discourse markers. It was found that "oh" and "well" were the most frequently used discourse markers in the conversations, and then the functions of them were explored to find the reason why the spoken discourse of the speakers was replete with forms such as "oh" and "well". The study implies that there is a need to make learners aware of these markers and their pragmatic functions. Teachers’ use of discourse markers as a model for students is also really crucial in teaching language in classroom settings.

Key words: Discourse marker

INTRODUCTION

Semantic connectives have long been a focus of research in cognitive and language development. Such connectives as so, because, and but encode causal and adversative relations among events and create textual cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Recently, however, researchers have been examining other types of relations that need to be encoded in discourse. Deborah Schiffrin (1987), for example, has focused on 'discourse markers (DMs)', a broader category of connective or relational forms than semantic connectives. Discourse markers are "linguistic, paralinguistic, or nonverbal elements that signal relations between units of talk by virtue of their syntactic and semantic properties and by virtue of their sequential relations as initial or terminal brackets demarcating discourse units" (Schiffrin, 1987: 40). During everyday communication, speakers use discourse markers a lot.

Since the 1970s interest in DMs has increased with growing interest in the production and comprehension of extended discourse and, more generally, in pragmatic and contextual aspects of utterance interpretation. During the past ten years, the study of DMs has explored in linguistics, with dozens of articles appearing yearly. This broadening of interest brought about increased attention to those elements of linguistic structure that appear to be most directly involved in the relation of separate utterances. Within this new perspective many elements in sentence-based linguistic research have been paid more attention, including many expressions, such as well, and y’know, etc. which had previously been regarded as unworthy of close attention. Research on DMs has expanded continually throughout the 1980s and 1990s because it was found that they have prominent role, not only in pragmatic and discourse analytic research but also in studies of language acquisition and language pedagogy, and in research on sociolinguistic topics. Within the past ten years or so there has been an increasing interest in the theoretical status of DMs, focusing on what they are, what they mean, and what functions they have.

The analysis of discourse markers is part of the more general analysis of discourse coherence—how speakers and hearers jointly integrate forms, meaning, and actions to make overall sense out of what is said. (Schiffrin, 1987: 49)

Innovation in language affects all areas of society. A case in point is a number of discourse/pragmatic markers in the English language which have gained considerable attention in recent years, from the media, educationalists and linguists alike.

Similar Terminologies

There are different terminologies including discourse connectives (Blakemore, 1987, 1992), discourse operators (Redeker, 1990, 1991), discourse particles (Schorup, 1985), discourse signaling devices (Polanyi and Scha, 1983), phatic connectives (Bazanella, 1990), pragmatic connectives (van Dijk, 1979; Stubbs, 1983), pragmatic expressions (Erman, 1992), pragmatic formatives (Fraser, 1987), pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1988, 1990; Schiffrin, 1987), pragmatic operators (Ariel, 1994), pragmatic particles (Ostman, 1995), semantic conjuncts (Quirk et al., 1985), sentence connectives (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). (As cited in Fraser, 1999)
Despite the quantity of research in this area, however, no consensus has emerged regarding fundamental issues of terminology and classification. The term DM used in this paper is merely the most popular of all those terms used. Brinton (1996) lists more than twenty such terms. A close second in frequency of occurrence is the term discourse particle (DP) which predominated until the mid 1980s, but in this paper discourse marker is preferable.

**Discourse markers**

Many language learners’ primary goal of language learning experiences is ‘grammatical’ language, which is the accurate usage of syntax, phonology, morphology, and semantics. As Svartholm notes, language learners may be corrected for using non-standard morphology but will not be corrected for using a discourse marker in an inappropriate place, even if the lack of that marker taints the learner’s talk as somehow deficient (1980, in Müller, 2004; cf. Dailey-O’Cain, 2000). Discourse markers are words or phrases that function within the linguistic system to establish relationships between topics or grammatical units in discourse (as with the use of words like because, so, then). They also serve pragmatic functions (and have been termed pragmatic markers, Brinton, 1996), used by a speaker to comment on the state of understanding of information about to be expressed (with phrases such as like, you know); they may also be used to express a change of state (oh; Heritage, 1984) or for subtle commentary by the speaker suggesting that “what seems to be the most relevant context is not appropriate” (well; Jucker, 1993: 438). These lexical items used in this manner are devoid of semantic content in and of themselves (O’Sliamain, 1982; Schiffrin, 1986) and are dependent on the local context and sequence of talk for their interpretation.

According to Schiffrin (1987), discourse includes several different planes of coherence and structure. The ideational structure involves relationships such as topic relations and cohesive relations between ideas and propositions in the discourse. The action structure refers to the relations between speech acts. The exchange structure indicates the mechanics of turn-taking between participants. The information state involves the ever-changing organization and management of knowledge and meta-knowledge of participants in interaction throughout the discourse. Finally, the participation framework refers to the means by which speakers and hearers relate to each other (e.g. the relative stance of participants), as well as to the utterances in the discourse. DMs with ideational functions index mainly coherence between the ideas conveyed in the discourse such as cause–result or temporal sequence. On the other hand, DMs that function at the action, exchange, participation framework and informational state levels are interactional in nature.

DMs are often characterized through some common features. For example they can be stressed or separated from their surrounding context, by pauses and/or intonational breaks, just as parenthetical constructs, or they can be pronounced unstressed, without pauses and with possible phonological reduction. They can also be uttered with rising intonation. DMs usually derive from lexical categories (i.e., verbs, verbal constructs, prepositional phrases, adverbs). They are typically placed at the beginning of an utterance, but they can also be utterance-internal or even, on occasion, utterance-final. Regardless of their position, they are always syntactically separated from the rest of the sentence. Thus, they can be omitted without syntactic consequences. Semantically they do not add anything to the propositional content of the utterance nor do they affect its truth conditions. Thus, omitting them has normally no effect on the truth-conditional meaning of the utterance. In relation to their general function, DMs show the speaker’s estimate of the role of the current utterance within a larger discourse.

**Characteristics of DMs**

In the following section the features most commonly attributed to DMs are identified and briefly discussed beginning with those features most widely referred to.

**Connectivity**

One of the characteristics of DMs is their use to relate utterances or other discourse units. Hansen defines DMs as “linguistic items of variable scope, and whose primary function is connective” (1997: 160); and Schiffrin, defines DMs as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk”, specifies that “brackets look [...] forward and backward [...] that the beginning of one unit is the end of another” (1987: 31). The connectivity of DMs is most often taken to be a necessary characteristic (Schwenter, 1996). This connectivity is, however, conceived in different ways. There is, for example, disagreement about whether DM connectivity must involve more than one textual unit. Schiffrin and Fraser’s definitions, and most others, specify that DMs relate two textual units, thus contributing to inter-utterance coherence. Claims that DMs mark boundaries between verbal activities (e.g. Maschler, 1994: 325) also imply relations between two textual units.

Connectivity can be used to distinguish DMs from various other initial elements, such as illocutionary adverbials (frankly, confidentially), attitudinal adverbials (fortunately, sadly), and from primary interjections (yipes, oops); however, connectivity alone is insufficient to distinguish DMs from coordinators joining intrasentential elements.
Optionality
DMs are frequently claimed to be optional in two distinct senses. They are almost universally regarded as *syntactically optional* in the sense that removal of a DM does not alter the grammaticality of its host sentence (e.g. Fraser, 1988: 22). However, DMs are also widely claimed to be optional in the further sense that they do not enlarge the possibilities for semantic relationship between the elements they associate.

Therefore, if a DM is omitted, the relationship it signals is still available to the hearer, though no longer explicitly cued.

Non-truth-conditionality
DMs are generally thought to contribute nothing to the truth-conditions of the proposition expressed by an utterance (e.g. Blakemore, 1988). Some (e.g. Fraser, 1996: 167) take this to mean that DMs do not affect the truth-conditions of sentences, but support has grown for the view that truth-conditions pertain not to sentences but to mental representations (see Kempson, 1986: 102; Blakemore, 1987: 16).

Weak clause association
DMs are usually thought to occur “either outside the syntactic structure or loosely attached to it” (Brinton, 1996: 34). Quirk et al. classify many forms elsewhere included among DMs as conjunctions, which are considered to be clause elements but to have a detached role relative to closely interrelated clause elements such as subject, complement, and object (1985: 631).

Although putative DMs are at best weakly related to more central clause elements, some clearly have their own internal syntactic structure (e.g. on the other hand) and some potential DMs (e.g. y’know) are clearly clausal despite their apparent nontruth conditionality.

Weak clause association is frequently correlated with phonological independence.

DMs are often said to constitute independent tone units (Hansen, 1997: 156), or to be set off from the main clause by ‘comma intonation’. This is true of many DMs, as of conjunctions and disjunctions in general, regardless of whether they occur within the clause or at its extremes. Nevertheless, lack of intonational integration might not be a necessary characteristic of DMs. Hansen notes that forms that share the principal defining qualities of DMs described above, are intonationally integrated with the clause (1997: 156). Some initial elements frequently identified as DMs may also be intonationally integrated with a host clause (e.g. SO I refused).

Literality

The tendency toward initiality must be understood to refer to the position of DMs in relation to the central clause elements rather than to the position of the first word in an utterance since items supposed to be DMs frequently cluster at utterance onset and elsewhere.

Morality
Most forms claimed to be DMs occur primarily in speech (e.g. by the way, well, after all; see Brinton, 1996: 33), but no principled grounds exist on which to deny DM status to similar items that are largely found in written discourse (e.g. moreover, consequently, contrariwise). Association of a particular DM with the written or spoken channel is often tied only to the relative formality/informality of the DM (e.g. also versus moreover). Some DMs may be associated with speech because their meaning presupposes a familiarity with the addressee not typical of impersonally addressed writing. After all, for example, encodes that the speaker has grounds for believing that the premise introduced by after all is already accessible to the hearer (see Blakemore, 1987: 81).

Multi-categoriality
There is a view that DM status is independent of syntactic categorization: an item retains its non-DM syntactic categorization but does ‘extra duty’ as a non-truth-conditional connective loosely associated with clause structure.

Categories to which extrinsic DM function has been attributed include adverbs (e.g. now, actually, anyway), coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (e.g. and, but, because), interjections (e.g. oh, gosh, boy), verbs (e.g. say, look, see), and clauses (e.g. you see, I mean, you know). When DM status is seen, instead, as a matter of syntactic categorization, multi-categoriality is viewed diachronically and DMs are taken to arise from other categories through historical processes.
Review of Literature

Historical Perspective

The first and the most detailed effort regarding DMs is that reported in Schiffrin (1987), who is concerned with elements which mark "sequentially-dependent units of discourse". She labels them 'discourse markers' and analyzes in detail the expressions and, because, but, I mean, now, oh, or, so, then, well, and y'know as they occur in unstructured interview conversations. Examining only 11 expressions, she realized that her focus is somewhat narrow and suggests a number of other cases which bear consideration as DMs: perception verbs such as see, look, and listen; deictics such as here and there; interjections such as gosh and boy; meta-talk such as this is the point and what I mean is, and quantifier phrases such as anyway, anyhow, and whatever. (1987: 328)

Another early reference to DMs as a linguistic entity was made by Labov and Fanshel (1977: 156) in discussing a question by Rhoda that began with well. They wrote: "As a discourse marker, well refers backwards to some topic that is already shared knowledge among participants. When well is the first element in a discourse or a topic, this reference is necessarily to an unstated topic of joint concern." Only a few other comments were mentioned in passing about the topic.

In his 1983 book entitled Pragmatics, Levinson considered DMs as a class worthy of study on its own merits, although he did not give it a name. He suggested that "... there are many words and phrases in English, and no doubt most languages that indicate the relationship between an utterance and the prior discourse. Examples are utterance-initial usages of but, therefore, in conclusion, to the contrary, still, however, anyway, well, besides, actually, all in all, so, after all, and so on. It is generally conceded that such words have at least a component of meaning that resists truth-conditional treatment ... what they seem to do is indicate, often in very complex ways, just how the utterance that contains them is a response to, or a continuation of, some portion of the prior discourse." (Levinson, 1983: 87-88)

There are also four salient research efforts which, taken together, capture the issues surrounding DMs. Each research effort started in the mid-1980s, and apparently each researcher was unaware of the other efforts, at least in the initial stages.

Redeker (1991, but see also 1990) provides a critique of Schiffrin (1987) and proposes several significant revisions. She writes approvingly of the notion of core meaning for DMs (she calls DMs discourse operators), suggesting that "the core meaning should specify the marker's intrinsic contribution to the semantic representation that will constrain the contextual interpretation of the utterance" (Redeker, 1991: 1164). She is concerned that the definition of DMs has not been adequately addressed and suggests that "what is needed is a clearer definition of the component of discourse coherence and a broader framework that embraces all connective expressions and is not restricted to an arbitrary selected subset" (1991: 1167). She goes on to suggest that a discourse operator is "... a word or phrase ... that is uttered with the primary function of bringing to the listener's attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context. An utterance in this definition is an intonationally and structurally bounded, usually clausal unit." (1991: 1168) She then provides some examples of what are not DMs: clausal indicators of discourse structure (for example, let me tell you a story, as I said before, since this I so); deictic expressions as far as they are not used anaphorically (for example, now, here, today); anaphoric pronouns and noun phrases; and any expressions whose scope does not exhaust the utterance (1991, 88).

The second approach is that of Fraser, who approached DMs from solely a grammatical-pragmatic perspective. In Fraser (1987), he wrote about a group of expressions which he called "pragmatic formatives" (now called "pragmatic markers" - cf. Fraser, 1996). These pragmatic markers, usually lexical expressions, do not contribute to the propositional content of the sentence but signal different types of messages. His third type of pragmatic formative, described in the 1987 paper as "commentary pragmatic markers", includes what he calls DMs. In later works (Fraser, 1988, 1990, 1993) he focused on what DMs are and what their grammatical status is. Specifically, he characterized a DM as a linguistic expression only (in contrast to Schiffrin, who permits non-verbal DMs) which: (i) has a core meaning which can be enriched by the context; and (ii) signals the relationship that the speaker intends between the utterance the DM introduces and the foregoing utterance (rather than only illuminating the relationship, as Schiffrin suggests).

The third theoretical perspective is provided by Blakemore (1987, 1992), who works within the Relevance Theory framework (cf. Sperber and Wilson, 1986). She treats DMs as a type of Gricean conventional implicature, but rejects his analysis of a higher order speech act (Grice, 1989: 362; Blakemore, 1992: 148), and focuses on how DMs (she calls them "discourse connectives") impose constraints on implicatures. Blakemore proposes that DMs do not have a representational meaning the way lexical expressions like boy and hypothesis do, but have only a procedural meaning which consists of instructions about how to manipulate the conceptual representation of the utterance. (cf. Blakemore, 1987, 1992) Blakemore maintains that DMs should be analyzed as linguistically specified constraints on contexts and suggests that there are at least four ways in which information conveyed by an utterance can be relevant (1992: 138-141): "It may allow the derivation of a
contextual implication (e.g., so, therefore, too, also); It may strengthen an existing assumption, by providing better evidence for it (e.g., after all, moreover, furthermore); It may contradict as existing assumption (e.g., however, still nevertheless, but) It may specify the role of the utterance in the discourse (e.g., anyway, incidentally, by the way, finally).”

A fourth approach to the study of DMs is provided by researchers working in the field of discourse coherence. Beginning with Rhetorical Structure Theory proposed by Mann and Thompson (1987, 1988), and including work by Hobbs (1985), Sanders et al. (1992), Knott and Dale (1994), and Hovy (1994), among others, researchers have addressed the nature of relations between the sentences of a text such that “the content of one sentence might provide elaboration, circumstances, or explanation for the content of another” (Knott and Dale, 1994, p. 35). 5 The work of these researchers has resulted in various accounts of discourse coherence, where the discourse relations are sometimes made explicit by the use of discourse markers (they call them 'cue phrases'). This approach of developing the relationship as a tool for text analysis is, in a sense, opposite to the other three approaches, where a linguistic entity, discourse markers, was the primary unit of study, and their effect on the interpretation of discourse was secondary.

**Empirical Studies**

Fung and Carter (2007) examined and compared the production of discourse markers by native speakers and learners of English based on a pedagogic sub-corpus from CANCODE, a corpus of spoken British English, and a corpus of interactive classroom discourse of secondary pupils in Hong Kong. The results indicated that in both groups discourse markers served as useful interactional manoeuvres to structure and organize speech on interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive levels. The Hong Kong learners were found to display a liberal use of referentially functional discourse markers (and, but, because, OK, so, etc.) but a relatively restricted use of other markers (yeah, really, say, sort of, I see, you see, well, right, actually, cos, you know, etc.). Native speakers were found to use discourse markers for a wider variety of pragmatic functions and the study therefore also discussed some possible pedagogical implications involved in preparing learners to become more interactionally competent speakers.

Furman and O’zyu’rek (2007) in a study examined the development of three DMs (s_ey ‘uuhh’, yani ‘I mean’, is_te ‘y’know) that mark interactional levels of discourse in oral Turkish narratives in 60 Turkish children and 20 Turkish-speaking adults. The result showed that the frequency and functions of DMs change with age. Children also used DMs with different functions than adults. Overall, the results showed that learning to use interactional DMs in narratives is complex and goes beyond age 9, especially for multi-functional DMs that index an interplay of discourse coherence at different levels.

Tagliamonte (2005) collected the rich resources of a large corpus of conversational data from young Canadians between 10 and 19 in 2002–2003 by participant observers from the same community. The spoken discourse of these speakers was replete with forms such as like, just, so, etc. This pilot investigation revealed a concentration of these forms amongst the 15- to 16-year olds generally, and female speakers in particular. Their patterns of use were quite circumscribed and linguistically defined. Indeed, their contrasting linguistic profiles viewed across different age cohorts (tweens, teens, and young adults) suggest that they are undergoing different types of change. More generally, the findings highlighted the extent of linguistic innovation among young people in contemporary urban speech communities.

Fuller (2003) also examined the use of the discourse markers (DMs) you know, like, oh, well, yeah, and I mean in two speech contexts—interviews and casual conversations—to determine their role in marking and negotiating speaker roles. The DMs oh and well showed statistically significant differences in rates of use between contexts, with both of these DMs occurring more frequently in conversations. Despite the initial classification of well as a presentation marker, these data indicated that oh and well both function primarily as reception markers and were used in conversations to create coherence between speaker turns. The DMs you know, like, yeah and I mean were used at similar rates across contexts, indicating that the functions of these presentation markers are more universal.

Archakis (2001) in a paper tried to describe and account for the function of four Modern Greek expressions. After a brief theoretical introduction to the study of the category of Discourse Markers, two pragmatic approaches (Schiffrin’s, 1987 and Blakemore’s, 1987) were evaluated through their application to the analysis of the four expressions. An alternative approach was then developed which elaborated mainly on Schiffrin’s (1987) model and employed the tests for substitutability proposed by Knott and Sanders (1998), thus describing the relevant facts accurately.

Discourse markers are usually studied from the vantage point of corpora analyses. By looking at where they fall in spontaneous talk, hypotheses can be made about their possible functions. However, direct tests of listeners’ uses of these expressions are rare. In five experiments, Jean and Josef (1999) looked at the on-line spontaneous speech comprehension effects of one discourse marker, oh. They found that of words was faster after oh than when the oh was either excised and replaced by a pause or excised entirely. they also found that
Objective of the Study
The purpose of the study is, on the one hand to establish what the discourse markers (DM) are in English, and on the other hand, to establish their frequency in dialogues. This paper describes the range of uses of English discourse markers in conversations included in Interchange books. It seeks to determine the most frequently used discourse markers too. After finding the most frequently used discourse markers, their functions will be explored.

The conversations will be analyzed for determining discourse markers and the frequency of them. Such analysis would help make clear how they function in everyday interactions.

METHOD

Materials
This study considers conversation to be a social as well as a discursive interaction, that is, when two people start to talk, they interact socially thorough discourse, that is to say by using language (of Shiffrin, 1994). Discourse markers are rarely found in prepared or rehearsed speeches, but rarely absent in conversations. Many novelists make use of this distinction; their descriptions of the setting or plot have no you knows and so anyways, but the characters' dialogues do. The presence of these words creates a naturalistic conversational effect.

The data for this study were collected from Interchange, Third Edition, books. Since DMs appear in natural conversations and there was no access to English native speakers, the best way to use an authentic material was to choose a written text. The Interchange series were selected because as the author of the books, Jack C. Richards, claims "the dialogs in the books are authentic and natural." 63 conversations were selected from two books of these series as the materials of the study. They were Intro student's book and student's book1.

The Framework of the Study
The analysis of discourse markers is part of the more general analysis of discourse coherence—how speakers and hearers jointly integrate forms, meaning, and actions to make overall sense out of what is said. (Schiffrin, 1987: 49)

The framework used in this study followed the one proposed by Schiffrin (1987).

Schiffrin's Model of English Discourse Markers
Schiffrin (1987) introduces 'discourse markers' as the expressions such as "and, because, but, I mean, now, oh, or, so, then, well, and y'know "as they occur in unstructured interview conversations. She suggests that DMs do not easily fit into a linguistic class. In fact, she goes so far as to suggest that paralinguistic features and non-verbal gestures are possible DMs. She writes that we should "... try to find common characteristics of these items to delimit what linguistic conditions allow an expression to be used as a marker. But such an approach would require not only discovery of the shared characteristics of an extremely diversified set of expressions, in English: it would require analysis across a wide body of typologically diverse language to discover what other linguistic resources are drawn upon for use as markers." (Schiffrin, 1987: 328) Nevertheless, she then sets forth some tentative suggestions similar to those suggested by Zwicky as to what constitutes a marker:

- "It has to be syntactically detachable from a sentence.
- It has to be commonly used in initial position of an utterance.
- It has to have a range of prosodic contours.
- It has to be able to operate at both local and global levels of discourse.
- It has to be able to operate on different planes of discourse."

Schiffrin maintains that "except for oh and well ... all the markers I have described have meaning" (1987: 314) and she suggests in several places that each DM has a 'core meaning', although she doesn't expand on this
The results of the investigation which are presented below.

Here follows the presentation of the frequency of the use of the DMs in the conversations. They are actually seen easily. They are shown in the following section.

Attempting to apply Schiffrin's model, the number of DMs which were specified in these 63 series.

Now, oh, or, so, then, well, y'know, see, listen, here, there this is the point and what I mean is, anyway, anyhow, and whatever. (1987, p. 328)

Her primary interest is the ways in which DMs function to "add to discourse coherence" (1987: 326). She maintains that coherence is "constructed through relations between adjacent units in discourse" (1987: 24). She sees DMs as serving an integrative function in discourse and thus contributing to discourse coherence. Schiffrin pointed out that some discourse markers relate only the semantic reality (the 'facts') of the two sentences while others, including so, may relate sentences on a logical (epistemic) level and/or a speech act (pragmatic) level. She wrote (1987): "A fact-based causal relation between cause and result holds between idea units, more precisely, between the event, state, and so on, which they encode. A knowledge-based causal relation holds when a speaker uses some piece(s) of information as a warrant for an inference (a hearer-inference). An action-based causal relation holds when a speaker presents a motive for an action being performed through talk - either his/her own action or an interlocutor's action, "

Schiffrin's (1987) approach to DMs is based on, and elaborates on, both Levinson's (1983) and Halliday and Hasan's (1976) remarks. In line with Levinson, Schiffrin claims that all markers have indexical functions (1987: 322); i.e., they index adjacent utterances to the speaker, the hearer, or both and also to prior and/or subsequent discourse. Schiffrin (1987, p. 21), following Stubbs' (1983: 147) suggestion for a need for multiple theories of discourse coherence, also proposes a multi-planed model of discourse coherence containing five separate planes of analysis. DMs locate utterances on one or more planes of her discourse model. Briefly, the definitions of the planes are as follows: "Exchange Structure, which reflects the mechanics of the conversational interchange and shows the result of the participant turn-taking and how these alternations are related to each other; Action Structure, which reflects the sequence of speech acts which occur within the discourse; Ideational Structure, which reflects certain relationships between the ideas (propositions) found within the discourse, including cohesive relations, topic relations, and functional relations; Participation Framework, which reflects the ways in which the speakers and hearers can relate to one another as well as orientation toward utterances; and Information State, which reflects the ongoing organization and management of knowledge and metaknowledge as it evolves over the course of the discourse."

Schiffrin's five-plane model expands Halliday and Hasan's distinction between external and internal relations: External relations which are inherent in the phenomena that language is used to talk about, can be expressed on Schiffrin's ideational structure plane, which basically concerns the linguistic representation of the world, whereas internal relations, which are inherent in the communication process, can be expressed on some of the other planes that Schiffrin suggests, mainly that of action structure and that of information state (Schiffrin, 1987: 337).

In Schiffrin's view DMs contribute to coherence by establishing multiple contextual coordinates simultaneously, thus facilitating the integration of various components of talk. Coherence is seen as constructed through relations between adjacent discourse units (1987: 24). Each marker is said to be primarily associated with one of the five planes of talk; with either speaker or hearer; and with prior and/or upcoming text. DMs are distinguished from each other, Schiffrin claims, not only in being associated with particular discourse planes and deictic coordinates, but also by virtue of their conceptual semantic content, for markers claimed to have such content, and their syntactic properties. Particular DMs "select a meaning relation from whatever potential meanings are provided through the content of talk, and then display that relation" (Schiffrin, 1987: 318). (As cited in Archakis, 2001)

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

First, two books from Interchange Third Edition series were selected, it was found that there were 64 conversations in them. The whole conversations in the two books were chosen to be analyzed. Then, for each conversation, the actual occurrences of DMs, according to Schiffrin, were identified. Afterwards, the percentage of the occurrence of each of them was determined and the most frequently used discourse markers were verified.

Following Schiffrin's framework, the specific discourse markers under study are and, because, but, I mean, now, oh, or, so, then, well, y'know, see, look, listen, here, there this is the point and what I mean is, anyway, anyhow, whatever, gosh and boy. This study examined the use of these DMs in Interchange Third Edition series.

Attempting to apply Schiffrin's model, the number of DMs which were specified in these 63 conversations can be seen easily. They are shown in the following section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Here follows the presentation of the frequency of the use of the DMs in the conversations. They are actually the results of the investigation which are presented below.
The overall presence of DMs and the number of times the elements occurred in the conversations are shown in Table 1. The results indicate that the degree of the use of DMS in the dialogues is not the same.

The analysis of the collected data reveals that the total number of DMs used in the 63 conversations is 187 altogether, the absolute frequency of the DMs. In other words, Table 1 shows the variations in the use of discourse markers. This variation arranges the DMs in an order of frequency which puts *oh* in the first position,
in the second place well, then in the third position, the discourse marker and, in the fifth place but and the rest of the DMs have almost the same frequency.

Looking at Table 1 and the analysis shows that the overall use of discourse markers in the conversations of the books is 178.

It is worth mentioning that there are only 7 instances of the DMs "now, perception words, meta talk and quantifier phrases". (See Table 1).

**The Most Frequently Used DMs, Oh and well, functions**

It was found that several discourse markers in the study were used more frequently among conversation partners.

The most interesting element to comment on is “oh”. It was the most frequently used DM and the next frequently used one was "well". It was found that these two DMs are somehow distinct and this fact was an impetus to investigate these two DMs more and see what their functions in the conversations are.

**Oh Functions**

The function of oh can either be described as an exhaustive list of each environment in which oh occurs, with each use treated independently, or as a single underlying construct that in combination with different environments manifests itself somewhat differently. In this paper, the underlying construct path was chosen, partly because the exhaustive list yields some contradictory claims about oh’s use and partly because the exhaustive list makes it difficult to make predictions about which function applies to a particular example. Although there are hypotheses about what oh means for addressees, its actual effect on listeners’ comprehension has never been directly tested. Speakers’ productions of oh may correspond with changes of state, but this does not mean that listeners use this information.

When speaking spontaneously, people sometimes need to correct a previous statement, insert new information, or redirect their utterances. Oh may serve an important function for listeners in these self-initiated repairs (see also discussion in Schiffrin, 1987). In the following example, the speaker initially omitted information that she later realized was important to the story, which is about buying pet ants: (5) And for a really champion one, you can- it’s gonna be twenty cents. She says well okay how about ten cent range [sic]? So he tips out- oh no then he says um okay what size were you thinking of? And she said oh I guess medium size. He said okay, and he tips out a bunch of medium size- medium-sized ants on the counter.

Before discussing tipping out the ants, the appropriate box, ranged by size, had to be selected. Repairs usually consist of stopping the current flow of speech, inserting a pause or editing expression, and then providing new or modified information. By hypothesis, the speaker uses the editing expression to forewarn the upcoming repair. Furthermore, the selection of oh indicates that the repair will be a change of state or a disjuncture from the immediately preceding utterance. In our examples, the repair may be updating information in the prior utterance but it may also be updating information from much further back in the discourse.

**Testing How Listeners Use Oh**

There are at least three ways that oh could influence listeners’ comprehension. It could have no effect, a negative effect, or a beneficial effect. Discourse analysis research just reviewed supports the idea that oh benefits comprehension. There are two possible mechanisms by which oh might benefit comprehension, disjuncture mechanism and the expectation mechanism. The disjuncture mechanism is that oh informs listeners to halt integrative processes across adjacent utterances. By indicating a disjuncture between the immediately preceding and immediately following utterances, oh informs listeners that they should process the upcoming information independently from the immediately preceding information.

Without the oh, listeners would attempt ordinary integration across adjacent utterances that may not be integratable, leading to confusion. The expectation mechanism is that oh might cause listeners to expect a change of state in the upcoming speech. This expectation might benefit listeners’ ability to integrate upcoming information. Both mechanisms lead to the prediction that comprehension will be better when oh is present than when oh is absent. It is also possible that oh has no meaning for a listener, no matter what it might mean to a speaker. If oh is ignored by listeners, it should have no effect on comprehension.

It is also possible that oh has a negative effect on comprehension. Because it is not an ordinary word with a conventional grammatical role, it might create havoc in the listener’s attempt to figure out the syntactic relationship among words in an utterance. What node of a traditional syntactic tree would oh attach to? As an unconventional word that might not have a meaning stored in the lexicon, oh might also create problems with lexical access. Furthermore, the updating function of oh, marking the change from some prior state to a different state, could be viewed as a kind of a repair itself, as opposed to just an editing expression occurring between a reparandum and a repair. Some repairs are disruptive and can slow comprehension. Oh might be one of them.
Listeners must be using oh to help them integrate the discourse as a whole. With the disjuncture mechanism, if oh signals that listeners should process the upcoming information independently, then hearing oh puts listeners in a better position to reconnect the repair information after the oh with the reparandum preceding the oh. Without the oh, listeners may attempt to integrate two nonintegratable utterances, leading them to confusion which could prevent their being able to connect the repair and reparandum. With the expectation mechanism if oh focuses attention on an upcoming change of state, then hearing it will lead listeners to think about how upcoming information fits with prior information, activating earlier concepts. (as cited in)

**Well Functions**

In this study it was found that 41 out of 187 was the DM well. This DM is used to start a turn. The data also showed an interesting correlation, because “well” is significantly followed by the element “I”. This implies that interlocutors use this element to start a turn that is going to deal with their cognitive and social reality. There was more frequent use of “well!” to downgrade the personal opinion in the initiation of a turn. In general terms, the data confirms that “involvement markers” (e.g. well) are more frequent and appear mainly as pragmatic elements in natural speech. On the contrary, “operative markers” i.e.: “look, listen”, have a lower percentage of use as pragmatic elements.

One finding that was reported is the learners’ use of well as a marker of a second response. For example in one of the conversations a student, Elena responds to the teacher’s follow-up question, Elena prefaces her turn with well and a pause. The use of well in Elena’s turn can also be seen as marking the lack of an immediate response, a delay which may be necessary for her to formulate an answer the teacher would find adequate.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Thoughts are often unstructured. One idea can shift to another without any inherent order and sometimes without even any obvious connection. Sometimes thoughts are organized hierarchically, such as when a person has one main goal that has several subgoals. When people speak spontaneously, they face the problem of turning these hierarchically organized or even unorganized thoughts into a linear stream of speech. This linear speech has to somehow capture the relative organization of the thoughts. In addition, speaking spontaneously often precludes carefully planning speech in advance, so some ideas will be spoken out of turn, or will need to be corrected or elaborated.

Investigations of when discourse markers are used in conversation suggest that they might provide information about the overall structure of the discourse, about how one utterance is related to a subsequent utterance, about how a repair is related to pragmatic or social processes. This information might help listeners create coherency out of linearly presented complex ideas or even incoherently presented ideas.

Flowerdew and Tauroza (1995) provide some evidence for the general usefulness of discourse markers in the processing of spontaneous speech. They found that a spoken lecture with discourse markers present is comprehended better than the same lecture with the discourse markers edited out. That is that the explicit marking of discontinuity helps listeners avoid the confusion that would arise if they tried to connect two disjointed utterances (Flowerdew & Tauroza, 1995).

When listeners hear a DM, they can recognize a word in the upcoming speech faster than when they do not hear it. They can also verify that a word had occurred in the prior discourse faster after hearing a DM, as long as the test point is far enough after the DM for the benefit of it to manifest itself. DMs posit underlying change of state function. Upon hearing a DM, listeners know that they should focus attention on the upcoming utterance in anticipation of a change of state. They also know that the information immediately preceding the DM might be disjointed from the information following the DM, and so they should halt normal integrative processes and treat the upcoming information independently. This causes the upcoming utterance to be processed faster and thereby integrated with the prior information faster.

**CONCLUSION**

While teachers need not spend significant parts of their class time teaching these discourse markers, there is a need to make learners aware of these markers and their pragmatic functions. Language samples from everyday conversation between fluent speakers of the target language should be used to highlight their appropriate use and to show why they do not occur in some registers and why they may not occur in the students’ language textbooks. Also, giving students adequate time for pair and small-group interaction in class can foster time for unguided “spontaneous conversations” (Brillanceau, 2005) which are appropriate contexts for the use of discourse-pragmatic markers. Such increased awareness and classroom practice could allow
learners access to these markers in appropriate situations outside the classroom as part of their linguistic transition into US culture.

**Implications of the study**

In the student language associated with teacher-assigned tasks, we see that it is important on several levels for students to use the markers (e.g. well). In language learning tasks, students must negotiate both accurate meaning and interpersonal affiliations with the peers and the teacher with whom they engage in the tasks. This dual need for mitigation in the discourse of language learning tasks may mean that discourse markers are especially important for language learners to incorporate into their speech. The teachers’ use of discourse markers also suggests that while the register of teacher talk includes many discourse markers, these are markers of discourse organization to show relationships between activities within the class period.

Teachers’ use of discourse markers as a model for students is really crucial in teaching language in classroom settings. Even though the students’ classroom teachers may not directly teach discourse marker use, they should model the use of them in the classrooms.

**REFERENCE**

Insights from Turkish children’s and adults’ oral narratives. Journal of Pragmatics, 39, 1742–1757.
Montes RG. 1999. The development of discourse markers in Spanish”