
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Functions and Meaning Potentials of Discourse Markers in the TV Talk Show Discourse

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| ABSTRACT

Discourse markers used to be thought of as redundant and useless in discourse, especially in verbal discourse. However, linguists realize that the function of discourse markers is important in displaying communicators' intentions and construing their stories. And the exploring of discourse markers should be testified across genres according to the necessity of linguistics development. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the function of discourse markers in the TV talk show genre and figure out the meaning potentials of discourse markers in a specific discourse. The functions of discourse markers are divided into two parts: interpersonal function and textual function, according to Briton's theory, but discourse markers mainly work in textual function. This paper could help us know better about the significance of discourse markers in our language life and also provide an empirical vision to the exploring of linguistics.

| KEYWORDS

Discourse Markers; TV Talk Show Discourse; verbal discourse; Briton's theory; textual function

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Discourse marker (hereafter DM) is the presentation of metalinguistically reflexive activity in interaction. Reflexivity is manifested as the speaker's awareness of the linguistic choices made both with regard to what to say and how to say it (Verschuere 1999: 187). Although the speaker's cognitive process is hidden from observation, DMs can emerge as overt indicators of (or windows on) ongoing metalinguistic activity in the speaker's mind (Aijmer, 2013: 4). DMs could be words, sentences, propositions, speech acts and tone units (Schiffrin, 1987: 31) as the cognitive devices could be illustrated through multiple forms, including emojis and punctuations in some way. In a discourse, DMs are typically defined as contextualization cues, which mark off segments in the discourse, thus helping the hearer to understand how the stream of talk is organized. However, the definitions actually come from the functions. Brinton (1996, 38) divides the function of pragmatic markers (the term of markers used in her studies) into two categories: textual and interpersonal, which actually explains why discourse markers are defined as contextualization cues and reflexivity talked about above. Aijmer (2002, 39) also claims that "textual and interpersonal function should be seen as the potential meaning of the particles, which can co-occur in the same discourse." Therefore, it can be claimed that discourse markers do not have a fixed meaning but a meaning potential. The theory of meaning potentials assumes that parts of a word's meaning are evoked, activated or materialised, foregrounded or backgrounded in different ways in the different contexts in which it is exploited (Norén, Linell 2007: 390). The theory is compatible with the polysemy of discourse markers, that is, the idea that discourse markers have one or several core meanings from which new functions can be created in the interaction. Therefore, the meaning potentials of DMs are the subject of this study based on the empirical survey of the functions of discourse markers.

However, the study of meaning potentials should be across genres, as the same word in different texts has different meanings. The text-type could be various, from unplanned conversations, planned speeches and writing texts to half-planned interviews, talk shows etc. Studies related to analyzing the function and distribution of discourse markers across genres are numerous. For example, the identification and classification of discourse markers in telephone conversations (Schiffrrin, 1987), the study of variation of conjunctive discourse markers in the genres of textbooks and scientific research articles (Verikaitė, 2005), discourse markers in essays (Feng, 2010), use of discourse markers in telephone conversations and television interviews (Verdonik et al., 2008), causal markers across genres of newspaper articles, blogs and research papers (Mulkar Mehta et al., 2011), forms and functions of discourse markers in President Obama's political speeches (Ismail, 2012). Although discourse markers have been examined in different genres, still relatively little attention has been given to the media discourse of the interview or talk show genre. Therefore, this study will focus on the TV talk show (Ellen Show) text to figure out the meaning, potential and function of discourse markers.

2. Literature review

2.1 Literature Review of Approaches to DMs

The approaches and views to discourse markers have been expanded widely in the past few decades. In the 1990s, the theory of discourse markers was systemically proposed by Schiffrrin (1987). She identified 11 DMs through the phone call conversation and created the Five-plane Model to study the definition and function of discourse markers. Fraser (1999) concluded the characterization of discourse markers and categorized them into four different types. And mentioned that discourse markers have a core meaning, and their specific meaning is negotiated by the context. Brinton (1996) proposed the dichotomy of discourse marker's function; she believed that discourse markers are phonologically short items that have no or little referential meaning but serve a pragmatic or procedural purpose (2008). The first twenty years is the process of shaping discourse markers through the terminology, classification, features and functions, which are considered as the qualitative study of discourse markers.

At present, the approach to discourse markers is much more accessible due to the development of corpus. First of all, the indigenous study of different languages comes into force, and the increase of specific words or items identified as discourse markers in different languages made a large contribution to the individual study of discourse markers. Secondly, the approach of discourse marker across genres is widely used based on the corpus. Barron and Schneider (2009) were inspired to study discourse markers in variable contexts, which is called variational pragmatics. Variational pragmatics has the goal of 'examining pragmatic variation across geographical and social varieties of language, and determining the impact of such factors as region, social class, gender, age and ethnicity on communicative language use.' Aijmer (2013) adopted the approach of variational pragmatics to study *actually, in fact, well* in the ICE-GB Corpus, which testified to the feasibility of discourse markers across genres.

2.2 literature review of Views to DMs

Owing to the understanding of the function of DMs, different views have been developed. The most influential proposals are from systemic functional grammar (SFG), founded by Halliday and Hasan (1973). They assumed that the function of DMs lies in the linguistic system forms of systemic relations between sentences. And most function domain theories developed by the latter scholars are based on Halliday's language functions (1973): ideational, interpersonal and textual. Schiffrrin (1987) studies DMs from the perspective of her coherence model and brings the most detailed effort regarding DMs. Discourse includes several different planes of coherence and structure. The grammatical, pragmatic perspective proposed by Fraser (1987) enriched the study of DMs in syntactic features. Alexander (2019) investigates the linearization order of English discourse markers (DMs) in two and multipart sequences at the beginning and the end of turns-at-talk in unplanned conversations; Christian Koops and Arne Lohmann (2022) study the reversibility of DMs linearization based on DMs sequencing theory, which proves that functional accounts of DM syntax must be sensitive to DM polyfunctionality. Blakemore's (1992) Relevance Theory is the most frequently-used perspective in interpreting DMs. For Blakemore (1987), discourse connectives are employed to signal how one discourse segment is relevant to another. Her analysis focuses on the procedural nature of discourse connectives in the sense that they constrain the process of utterance interpretation.

All the approaches and views to DMs should be verified in real-life language and real contexts. The empirical study across genres could conclude the specific use of a certain discourse marker, but to a specific text, for example, the TV talk in this study provides a use preference and epistemic stance of DMs, which is also worthy of being explored to gain a better interpretation of DMs.

3. Data base and methodology

3.1 Data base

The data were selected from a famous American TV talk show, Ellen Show. Unlike other interviews and talk shows, Ellen Show is an entertainment program which focuses on daily talks and celebrity news. It's easy to be accepted by most people, and it's much closer to natural-happened language. Although it still has a guideline and time control, the utterances in questions and answers

are not strictly organized. Therefore, it could be considered a half-planned conversation, and its special language features are worthy of being studied. The data base is a small specialized corpus built by the author and hereafter named the corpus as E-SEC(the Ellen Show of Spoken English Corpus). E-SEC is composed of 34 transcription texts that are selected randomly from Ellen Show. Each text is transcribed from a 3-10 minute video into 2000, or so tokens and the total token of this data base is 42830. All the videos are available in Bilibili, and the transcription is free of copyright problems.

3.2 Methodology

This study aims to figure out the use of preference, functions and meaning potentials of DMs based on the theory of Brinton's dichotomy of discourse marker functions. Brinton believes that DMs act mainly in the pragmatic or metadiscourse plane of talk and have little or no propositional contribution to the meaning of the discourse. Brinton proposes the textual function and interpersonal function of DMs based on Halliday's language function and the following functions that DMs have in fulfilling the textual function in discourse.

- (1). To mark various kinds of boundaries (to initiate or end a discourse or to effect a shift in topic).
- (2). To assist in turn taking in oral discourse or chunking in written discourse.

According to Brinton (1996), the need to initiate and close discourse, mark topic shifts, indicate new and old information and constrain the relevance of adjoining utterances are part of the textual functions of DMs. To signal topic change, constrain the relevance of adjacent utterances, elaborate or comment on a preceding utterance, and self-correction are among the functions of DMs in a textual domain (Yilmaz, 2004).

At the interpersonal level, they are used

- (1). Subjectively to express an attitude
- (2). Interactively to achieve intimacy between speaker and addressee.

From an interpersonal perspective, DMs are seen as vehicles contributing to the establishment and maintenance of relationships between the speaker and the hearer. Showing the relationship between the speaker and his/her orientation towards the produced discourse is considered an intrinsic feature of DMs. They are used as hedges to express uncertainty and as appeals to the hearer for confirmation. They could be used as a response or reaction to the preceding utterance as well as refers to politeness, face-saving and indirectness as the inherent characteristics of everyday conversations which are involved in the interpersonal functions of DMs.

The classification of DMs' function could be presented as the following figure according to Brinton's interpretation.

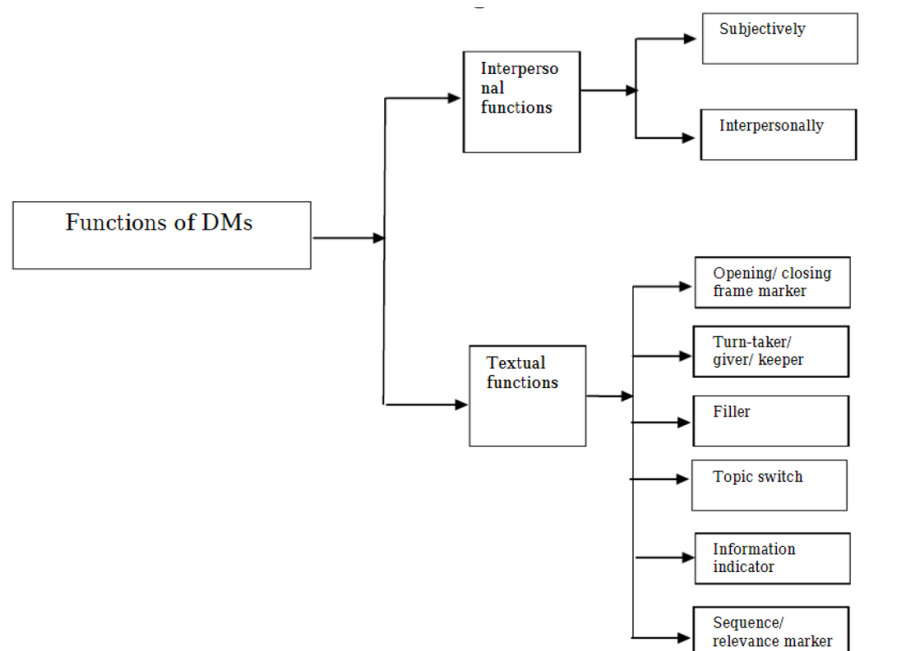


Figure 1 Brinton's classification of DMs functions

Based on the framework of Brinton's classification of DMs functions, there are three steps that need to be done in order to identify the DMs functions in the E-SEC corpus.

Step 1: To identify discourse markers in the E-SEC corpus according to the features and definitions of DMs that are commonly acknowledged. The following features are the identification standards in this study.

- They are syntactically independent (Schiffrin, 1987).
- They are optional (Schourup 1999, 231)
- They are syntactically flexible, i.e. They may appear at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of an utterance. This flexibility contributes to their enormous usefulness and high frequency in discourse (Futji, 2001).
- They have the property of connectivity (Schourup 1999, 231-232).
- They have the property of orality (Schourup 1999, 234)
- Multi-categoriality (Schourup 1999).
- They do not affect the propositional meaning of utterance (Brinton, 1996; Schiffrin, 1987).
- They deal with the pragmatic aspects of discourse (Andersen, 2001; Fraser, 1990; Yilmaz, 2004).
- They are meaningful but non-truth conditional (Lam, 2008, 29).
- They are multifunctional (Fraser, 1990; Schiffrin, 1987; Yilmaz, 2004).
- They are short, consisting of one to three syllables (Lenk, 1997)

After the identification work is done, the clear-up work starts with the exclusion of grammatical connectives like the juxtaposition function of "and".

Step 2: To make a manual annotation after each discourse marker according to Briton's DMs functions.

Step 3: To sort out the annotations in AntConc and conclude them in the following tables.

Table 1 The textual function of DMs in TV talk show

Functional domain	Explanation	DMs	Occurrence	Distribution(%)
opening frame marker	To initiate discourse, including claiming the attention of the hearer	And, but, now, so, let's talk about, Hey, I mean	982	57.7%
closing frame marker	To close discourse	Though, all right, well, okay, good then	63	3.6%
turn takers	To aid the speaker in acquiring or relinquishing the floor	And, because, but, now, so	151	8.9%
fillers	To serve as filler or delaying tactic used to sustain discourse or hold the floor	And, well, alright	69	4%
topic switchers	To indicate a new topic or a partial shift in topic	And, but, so, now, then, I mean	300	17.6%
information indicators	To denote either new or old information	and, but, so, then	12	0.7%
sequence/relevance markers	To mark sequential dependence	And then, so finally, first of all, then	62	3.6%
repair markers	To repair one's own or other's discourse	maybe, but no, I mean, like	64	3.7%
total			1703	100%

Table 2 The interpersonal functions of DMs in TV talk show

Functional domain	Explanation	DMs	Occurrence	Distribution(%)
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Response/reaction markers; back-channel signals	Subjectively, to express a response to the preceding discourse, including also back-channel signals of understanding and continued attention while another speaker is having his/her turn	Absolutely, mmm, my God, my goodness, no, of course, oh, really, thanks God, uh, well, yeah/ yes, yep/yup, but, wow, ohh, look that, uh-huh	454	45%
confirmation-seekers, face-savers cooperation or sharing marker	Interpersonally, to effect cooperation or sharing, including confirming shared assumptions, checking or expressing understanding, requesting confirmation, expressing difference or saving face	I would have to say, you know, well, yes Alright, like, yeah, let's say,	329	32.7%
Attitudinal makers	To express speakers' attitude	Actually, honestly, exactly, I think, just, well	64	6.3%
Cognitive hesitation Markers	To express speakers' hesitation	I think, maybe, perhaps, Well, I guess	7	0.7%
Cognitive certainty Markers	To express speakers' certainty	Absolutely, I bet; I'm sure, of course,	20	2.0%
Cognitive processing information markers	To processing information	uhh, er, um, erm, it's like, I mean	131	13%
Total			1005	100%

Table 3 General distribution of DMs in the TV talk show

Function domain	Occurrence	Distribution(%)
Textual functions	1703	63%
Interpersonal functions	1005	37%

4. Findings

4.1 Use preference of DMs in TV talk show

table 4 Use preference of DMs in different systems

System	DMs
Question system	so, let's talk about, and, but, now okay, etc.
Answer system	well, yeah, and, you know, I mean, but etc.
Response system	yeah, okay, all right, that's fantastic, uh-huh etc.

According to Table 4, we can know that the use preference of DMs in TV talk shows is quite obvious. The TV talk show acquires a question-answer system and a reaction gap from the audience. Therefore, the DMs employed by the host and the guest is anchored into a question system with *so, let's talk about, and, but, now, and so etc.*, an answer system with *well, yeah, and, you know, I mean etc.* and a response system with *yeah, okay, all right, that's fantastic etc.* Although the multifunctionality of DMs is well

acknowledged, there is a function preference for a discourse marker chosen by a specific role among other functions. For example, *so* prefers to be an open marker to initiate an utterance in the host's language choice, while in a guest's mind, *so* prefers to function to show continuity and take the turn in his/her answer organization. See the utterance in Example 1

Example 1

Interlocutor: Right, exactly, um... **so** what are you doing for Mother's Day for Bahadi? And what are you doing for her birthday cause her birthday is coming up too, right?

Speaker: I can't disclose what I'm cause it's her 30th birthday, **so**, like, I am not supposed to say that. Um...Ladies, on their birthdays, I just don't know like I'm not... that's like a so total secret like because I got...I'm planning it; it's elaborate, it's gonna be funny and a fun adventure for her. **So** I'm not gonna talk about that.

There are three *so* in Example 1. The first *so* is used by the host to initiate a question that was not mentioned before in their conversation. A "so" as an open marker makes the unmentioned information show itself more naturally and more acceptable. The other two "so" work to elaborate on the reason why the speaker cannot talk about it and expose the speaker's epistemic stance of unwillingness and uncertainty. Although the *so* has different functions in a question system, and in an answer system, they work together to enhance the coherence of this text.

Despite the preferred DMs in the question-answer system, the most frequently used DMs are *and*, *so*, *yeah*, *but*, *you know*, *I mean*, *well*, *all right*, *and then*, and *so* and some cognitive information processing makers like *uh*, *um*, *oh*, according to Table 5. The species of DMs used in TV talk shows is narrow, but the number of them is huge. There are two reasons that could be taken into consideration: 1) the multifunctionality of DMs enable them to meet all the need of communication between the host and the guest. 2) they are well acknowledged and understood by people as they have a core, primary meanings (Fraser, 1999). The core meaning deprived of literal meaning in the perspective of pragmatics is also quite understandable by people with common cultural backgrounds. The phenomena disclose the importance of the individual study of DMs across genres in different places and languages.

4.2 Dichotomy function of DMs in TV talk show

The textual function and interpersonal function of DMs categorized by Brinton(1996) could be interpreted through the coherence theory proposed by Schiffrin(1986) and the rapport management framework claimed by Spencer Oatey(2008). Schiffrin thought the ultimate goal of discourse markers is to make coherence through a text. Indeed, the common discourse markers like *and*, *so*, *then*, *but*, *well*, *you know*, *I mean*, naturally connect the text from segment to segment. The spoken English of conversation is able to transfer the turn smoothly, and the written text could be managed logically through these discourse markers. However, discourse markers play a more important part in spoken English. People's epistemic stance and affective stance are encoded at many levels of linguistics forms(Ochs 1996: 412), and discourse markers are the most handy forms. The expression of epistemic and affective stance behind people's minds is challenged by face sensitivity, interactional goals and behavioral expectations, according to Spencer(2008). Therefore, solidarity becomes the ultimate goal of language expression to achieve rapport in communication. Based on the interpretation above, Brinton's textual function of DMs is thought to burden the ultimate goal of achieving coherence, and the interpersonal function of DMs has the ultimate goal of achieving solidarity.

Now, we can make a comparison to figure out which function or goal is more important in a conversation. The following charts are the study result of Elena Piurko in his MA thesis. We have a similar methodology to sort out discourse markers based on the corpus. Therefore, the comparison between our works is reasonable. His work is to figure out the function of discourse markers in editorials and interviews. He also concludes the textual functions and interpersonal functions of DMs, which could be compared to my work in Figure 5.

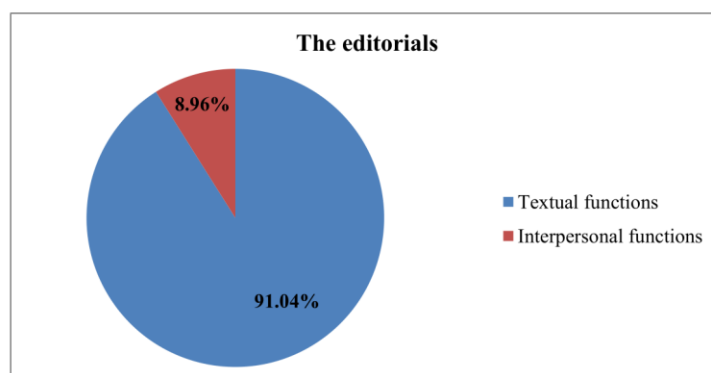


Figure 1. General distribution of DMs in the editorials

(source from Discourse markers: their function and distribution in the media and legal discourse: 30)

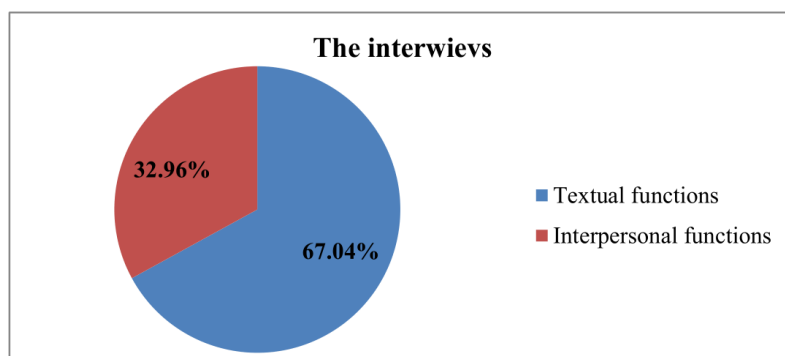


Figure 6. General distribution of DMs in the interview

(source from Discourse markers: their function and distribution in the media and legal discourse: 37)

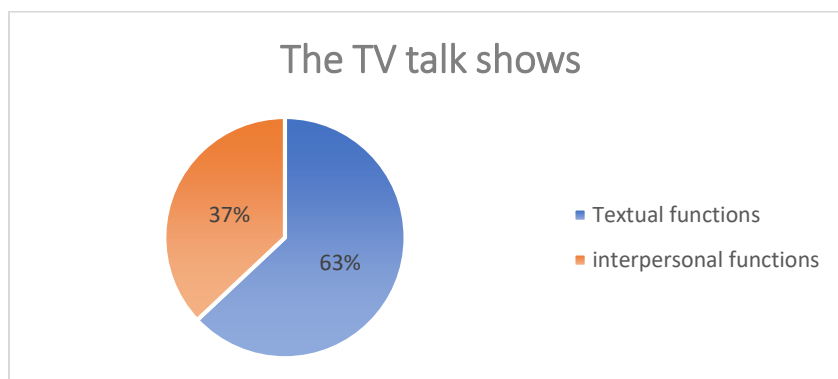


Figure 5 General distribution of DMs in the TV talk show

No matter in the editorials, interviews or in TV talk shows, the textual functions of DMs always exceed the interpersonal functions, although the proportion is different in different texts. The editorials are part of the written media discourse, which is highly persuasive and logical. Discourse markers, which bind together a piece of writing, can fulfill such functions as summarize, conclude or indicate an attitude which can be helpful in writing an editorial. The interviews are part of the spoken media discourse. The most evident characteristics of this genre, questioning and answering, are also present in any broadcast talks. But unlike talk shows, panel discussions or press conferences, interviews involve only two participants and the absence of an audience. In both genres, discourse markers are seen as helpful linguistic clues that text producers use in order to achieve a successful communicative act.

The TV talk show genre also shows the same trend, with textual functions working more than interpersonal functions. We can conclude that discourse markers in both spoken texts and written texts mainly work to achieve the coherence of the text. In the spoken text, the interpersonal function part is bigger than it is in the written text, which is reasonable to keep the solidarity between relationships. However, the textual function part is still bigger than the interpersonal part, which demonstrates that the coherence of a text or a conversation is primary and the solidarity of a conversation is secondary. Discourse markers firstly function to help the communication be cohesive, understandable and natural, and then work to meet the higher need to keep solidarity in a conversation.

4.3 meaning potentials of DMs in TV Talk Shows

Discourse markers have meaning potentials because they have no fixed meanings in different circumstances. And the meaning potential here is just like the interpretation of Halliday. He thought learning a language is 'building up a meaning potential', and what is built up is a system of choices that constitutes the 'reality' of culture and circumscribes what we can mean (1978: 30). The prominent characteristic of meaning potentials is that contexts determine the way in which the meaning potential is presented. When a language context is altered or reconstructed, its meaning potential goes with it and may be extended with richer meaning potentials deriving from the new context. Therefore, the meaning potentials of DMs interpreted in TV talk shows would serve to the accomplishment of the whole interview. The following chart concluded from the corpus could explain how the meaning potentials of a specific discourse marker come into being.

Table 5 Multifunctionality of serval DMs in the TV talk show

DMs	Function	Occurrence	Meaning potentials
and	Show continuity	368	structure boundary
	Open marker	257	forward-channel
	Topic shift	109	coherence
	Filler	54	continuity
	Turn-taker	52	initiator
			function convergence
well	Response marker	38	structure relationship
	Cooperation marker	38	backward-channel
	open marker	15	solidarity
	attitudinal marker	10	reflexivity
	topic shift	6	mitigator
	turn taker	5	answer lead-in
	face saver	2	function divergence
	Cognitive processing marker	2	
	hesitation Markers	1	
So	Open marker	196	structure boundary
	Turn taker	36	forward-channel
	Show continuity	27	coherence
	Topic shift	21	conversation prefacer
	Sequence marker	10	question lead-in
	Information indicator	2	function convergence
And so	Open marker	13	structure boundary
	Show continuity	6	forward-channel
	Turn taker	2	coherence
	Topic shift	1	result
			function convergence
And then	Open marker	18	structure boundary
	Show continuity	10	forward-channel
	Sequence marker	10	coherence
			sequence
			function convergence
But	Topic shift	118	structure boundary
	Turn taker	35	forward-channel
	Open marker	12	coherence

			contrast function convergence
You know	Confirmation seeker	104	structure relationship
	Cooperation marker	24	forward-channel
	Open marker	6	solidarity
	Turn taker	3	self-trust
	Response marker	1	function divergence
	Topic shift	1	
I mean	Repair marker	57	structure relationship
	Open marker	7	backward-channel
	Turn taker	4	solidarity
	Topic shift	3	self-explanation
	Cognitive processing marker	1	mitigator of repair
	Showing difference	1	function divergence
Yeah	Response marker	173	structure relationship
	Certainty marker	47	backward-channel
			solidarity
			response
			self-affirmation
			function convergence
All right	Close marker	31	structure relationship
	Response marker	20	forward-channel
	Open marker	6	solidarity
	Confirmation seeker	5	reflexivity
	Topic shift	5	function divergence
	Turn taker	4	
	Cognitive processing	1	
Oh, um, er, uh	Cognitive processing marker	131	structure relationship
			forward-channel
			reflexivity
			function convergence

The multifunctionality of discourse markers shown in Table 4 comes from Brinton's categorization. And could be an open marker, a topic shift, a turn taker or an elaborative marker at the same time. In Example 2, the first *and* in bold Italics works as a turn taker and also functions to show the continuity of the preceding information. *And so*, in the first position could also be a turn taker and an open marker to add new information into the utterance.

Example 2

Interlocuter: **And** you thought he was just coming to see you.

Speaker: yeah, yeah, I thought we were gonna have a happy couple weekend together

interlocuter: right.

Speaker: **And so** I was completely blindsided when he walked in, and the second he didn't have his luggage, I was like something's up here. (source from transcription 22 in E-SEC)

Although the distinction between the textual and interpersonal functions of DMs is clear, a discourse marker can work both in textual functions and interpersonal functions. Well, could be a response marker, a cooperation marker, an attitudinal marker, a cognitive information processing marker in the interpersonal function and also be an open marker, a topic shift marker in the textual function. Look at Example 3, *well* employed by the interlocuter works to preface an utterance as an open marker that belongs to the textual function domain while it also works as a response marker in the interpersonal function domain to make to express a response to the preceding discourse.

Example 3

Speaker: I'm so glad to be here, Ellen Degeneres.

Interlocuter: **Well**, we have mutual friends. I've I've known you for a long time. I've known you through someone named Oprah

Table 5 concludes the 11 frequently used discourse markers in Ellen's TV talk show, and their multifunctionality of them is presented through occurrence. After an exhaustive list of functions of a specific discourse marker, its meaning potentials are easy to be concluded. There are five main components to shape the meaning potentials of a specific discourse marker according to its functions.

Component A: whether the DM works to structure boundary or structure relationship.

Green considers discourse markers as discourse particles; she believes that the employment of discourse particles is to establish a structure in English. The difference lies in whether it is the speaker's concerns about communicating with the addressee or the demarcation of boundaries of structural parts (Green, 2006). Therefore, she divides discourse markers into two parts, the structural discourse markers to structure boundaries and the attitudinal discourse makers to structure relationships. The division is more general and commanding than Brinton's division, so the structure domain will be the first component to decide the meaning potentials. The determination of the 11 DMs listed in Table 4 lies in the majority of function domain, which means a DM like *well* would be considered as a marker to structure relationships despite the fact that it could also structure boundaries as it mainly works to structure relationships.

Component B: whether the DM works to back-channel information or forward-channel information.

Component C: whether the DM works to establishment of coherence or solidarity in the text.

Discourse markers in discourse could be analyzed at the global and local level, which means discourse marker could indicate information or present a function in the whole discourse or in the surrounding utterances. Component B focuses on the local context of DMs and mainly concerns how the DM function to the preceding utterance or the upcoming utterance. Decided by the functions it showed in Table 5, we found *so*, *but*, *and so*, *and then*, *so*, *all right*, *you know*, and some cognitive information processing markers work to forward-channel information, which mainly signals information in the upcoming utterance. And *well*, *I mean*, *yeah*, function to backward-channel information in the preceding utterance, which mainly signals or responds to old information that was mentioned before.

In contrast, Component C focuses on the global context of DMs to find out the ultimate function they did to the whole discourse. As it was mentioned before, the ultimate goal of the textual function of DMs is to make a contribution to the coherence of the text, and the ultimate goal of the interpersonal function of DMs is to keep solidarity in the text. And the core function of DMs will decide what the ultimate goal is. As shown in Table 5, *and*, *so*, *but*, *and so*, *and then* work to the establishment of coherence of the text and *well*, *I mean*, *you know*, *all right*, *yeah* and the other cognitive information processing marker work to the establishment of solidarity in the text.

Component D: list the core meaning of the discourse marker in the TV talk show context.

According to Fraser, there is a primary or core meaning and a secondary meaning in a discourse marker in view of its multifunctionality. And the core meaning of a DM is determined by the biggest numbers of its function domain listed in Table 5. Therefore, *and* has the core meaning of continuity and introduction, *and so* has the core meaning of result, *and then* has the core meaning of sequence, *but* has the core meaning of contrast, *you know*, shows the core meaning of self-trust, *I mean* has the core meaning of repair and self-explanation, *yeah* has the core meaning of response, *all right* and other cognitive information processing words have the core meaning of reflexivity. It needs to be mentioned that *so* has the core meaning of question lead-in. It could be paired with *well*, which has the core meaning of answer lead-in in the TV talk show context.

Component E: whether the function domain of DM trends to be convergent or divergent.

This component is decided by the question of whether the multifunctionality of a DM converged in one type of function domain (textual function or interpersonal function) or diverged in two types of function domain. As the data shows, only *well*, *all right*, *I mean*, *you know*, could be functioned both interpersonally and textually in the TV talks show context. The other marker, even the most multi-functional one, the *and* could not be considered as function divergence because its all functions belong to only one type of function domain, the textual function. This component could help people know the function variety of DMs based on Brinton's classification.

In conclusion, the meaning potentials of DMs in the TV talk show genre could be determined through statistics, and the determination of meaning potentials will make a contribution to the interpretation of a specific discourse marker in a specific text. And also expand the interpretations of a specific discourse marker in its individual study.

5. Conclusion

This study has aimed at investigating the use of discourse markers in media discourse in the spoken genres. In order to achieve the aim of the study, first, the frequency and the functions of discourse markers were analyzed in the TV talk show discourse, and then, the use preference and meaning potentials of DMs were interpreted based on the data and theory analysis.

The results of this study revealed that the use of preference of DMs in TV talk show serves to the accomplishment of the question-answer conversation. And the types of discourse markers used in this discourse are limited, while each marker is frequently used, which demonstrates the multifunctionality and the importance of common culture in DMs. At the same, DMs could be interpreted at the global level and local level, which indicates that DMs have the ultimate goal of establishing coherence and solidarity with respect to their textual function domain and interpersonal function domain. What's more, the comparison between the use of DMs in the textual function domain and the interpersonal function domain presents both the spoken texts and written texts need to make sure the coherence of the whole text is accomplished firstly and then the solidarity. That means the textual function domain has a priority position over the interpersonal function domain. At the local level, the functions worked in the discourse segments make a big contribution to the interpretation of the meaning potentials of specific DMs in the TV talk show genre. Meaning potentials of discourse markers like *and*, *and then*, *and so*, *but*, *so*, *yeah*, *all right*, *well*, *I mean*, *you know*, and some cognitive information processing words in this paper make sense only through the TV talk show context.

The importance of genre in the use of DMs implies that writers or speakers should be aware of the patterns of language use characteristic of specific genres. Further analyses should indicate the various patterns on the basis of large scale genre research. This study is an attempt to contribute to such research, but due to the limitations imposed upon the present data, the present study also suggests that further research with larger and more varied samples can be done to arrive at more conclusive results or generalizations.

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