



THE ROLE OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN MAINTAINING COHERENCE IN SPOKEN ENGLISH

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Annotation

This article examines the role of discourse markers in maintaining coherence in spoken English. Discourse markers are important linguistic elements that help speakers organize their ideas, connect utterances, express relationships between ideas, and make communication more understandable and natural. The study focuses on common discourse markers such as well, so, however, therefore, actually, I mean, and you know, and explores their functions in spoken interaction. Particular attention is given to how these markers contribute to the logical flow of speech, clarify relationships between ideas, and support effective communication. The study also highlights the importance of teaching discourse markers to English language learners in order to improve their speaking fluency, coherence, and communicative competence.

Keywords

discourse markers, spoken English, coherence, cohesion, oral communication, fluency, communicative competence, spoken interaction, language teaching.

РОЛЬ ДИСКУРСИВНЫХ МАРКЕРОВ В ОБЕСПЕЧЕНИИ СВЯЗНОСТИ УСТНОЙ АНГЛИЙСКОЙ РЕЧИ

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Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается роль дискурсивных маркеров в обеспечении связности устной английской речи. Дискурсивные маркеры являются важными языковыми средствами, которые помогают говорящему организовывать свои мысли, связывать высказывания, выражать отношения





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между идеями и делать речь более понятной и естественной. В исследовании рассматриваются распространённые дискурсивные маркеры, такие как *well, so, however, therefore, actually, I mean* и *you know*, а также анализируются их основные функции в устной коммуникации. Особое внимание уделяется тому, как дискурсивные маркеры способствуют логической последовательности речи, уточнению связей между высказываниями и эффективному взаимодействию между участниками общения. В статье также подчёркивается значение изучения дискурсивных маркеров для совершенствования беглости речи, связности высказываний и коммуникативной компетенции, изучающих английский язык.

Ключевые слова: дискурсивные маркеры, устная английская речь, связность, когезия, устная коммуникация, беглость речи, коммуникативная компетенция, речевое взаимодействие, обучение английскому языку.

INTRODUCTION

Spoken English is an important means of everyday communication, allowing people to express opinions, exchange information, share experiences, and interact with others. Unlike written language, spoken communication is often spontaneous and produced in real time. Speakers may pause, change their ideas, introduce new topics, or reformulate what they want to say. Therefore, effective spoken communication requires not only grammatical accuracy and a sufficient vocabulary but also the ability to connect ideas in a clear and logical way.

One of the important linguistic resources that helps speakers organize their speech is discourse markers. Discourse markers are words and phrases such as *well, so, but, however, actually, therefore, I mean, and you know*. They can help speakers connect different parts of speech, introduce new ideas, show contrast or results, and manage interaction. Schifffrin¹ explains that discourse markers play an important role in organizing discourse and helping participants understand connections within

¹ Schifffrin D. Discourse Markers. Cambridge University Press. - 1987. - 364 p.





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communication. Although some discourse markers may seem grammatically unnecessary, they often have an important communicative function in natural conversation.

A central concept related to discourse markers is coherence. Coherence refers to the meaningful and logical relationship between ideas in a text or conversation. In spoken English, listeners need to understand how one idea relates to another in order to follow the speaker's message. Discourse markers can make these relationships more noticeable by signaling transitions, explanations, contrasts, conclusions, or changes in topic. Fraser² points out that discourse markers help indicate the relationship between an upcoming message and the preceding discourse.

Discourse markers are also particularly important for English language learners. Students may have good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but still experience difficulties when trying to speak fluently and coherently. They may produce separate sentences without clearly showing how their ideas are connected. Learning to use discourse markers appropriately can help learners organize their speech, maintain the flow of conversation, and communicate their ideas more naturally. Müller³ emphasizes the importance of discourse markers in spoken interaction, particularly in distinguishing natural conversational discourse from more formal or written forms of language.

Moreover, discourse markers can perform different functions depending on the context. For example, but can introduce a contrast, so can indicate a result or move the conversation forward, while well can introduce an answer or express hesitation. Expressions such as I mean may be used to clarify or reformulate an idea, whereas you know can help maintain interaction between speakers. This contextual nature makes discourse markers an important but sometimes challenging aspect of spoken English for language learners.

² Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. - 1999. - Vol. 31, No. 7. - P. 931–952.

³ Müller S. *Discourse Markers in Native and Non-native English Discourse*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. - 2005. - 260 p.





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For this reason, the study of discourse markers is relevant not only to discourse analysis but also to English language teaching. Greater awareness of their functions can help learners develop more coherent, fluent, and natural speech. The present study therefore examines the role of discourse markers in maintaining coherence in spoken English, focusing on how they connect ideas, organize information, manage topics, and support successful communication.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of discourse markers in maintaining coherence in spoken English. The research focuses on commonly used discourse markers such as well, so, but, however, actually, I mean, and you know, and analyzes their functions in spoken communication. Data are collected from examples of natural conversations and spoken English materials, including dialogues, interviews, and everyday conversations. The study applies discourse analysis to identify how discourse markers connect ideas, signal relationships between utterances, manage topic changes, and support the overall flow of speech. The collected data are analyzed according to the context and communicative function of each discourse marker. This approach makes it possible to understand how discourse markers contribute to coherent, natural, and effective spoken English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of discourse markers has received considerable attention in linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. Schiffrin⁴ describes discourse markers as linguistic elements that help organize spoken discourse and connect different parts of communication. Halliday and Hasan⁵ emphasize the importance of cohesion and the ways linguistic devices create connections within a text. Fraser⁶ focuses on the pragmatic functions of discourse markers and explains that they can signal relationships

⁴ Schiffrin D. Discourse Markers. Cambridge University Press. - 1987. - 364 p.

⁵ Halliday M. A. K., Hasan R. Cohesion in English. Longman. - 1976. - 374 p.

⁶ Aijmer K. English Discourse Particles: Evidence from a Corpus. John Benjamins Publishing Company. - 2002. - 308 p.





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between an upcoming utterance and the previous discourse. Müller⁷ also highlights their importance in spoken interaction, particularly in making communication more natural and organized. Aijmer⁸ demonstrates that discourse markers can express speakers' attitudes, intentions, and relationships with listeners. Previous research therefore shows that discourse markers are not simply unnecessary words or fillers; they perform important structural and communicative functions. However, their role in helping English learners maintain coherence and produce natural spoken English still requires attention, particularly in language teaching contexts.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis shows that discourse markers play an important role in maintaining coherence in spoken English. They help speakers organize their ideas, connect different parts of their speech, and make conversations easier for listeners to follow. The analysis of spoken examples indicates that discourse markers are used for several main purposes, including showing relationships between ideas, introducing new information, changing topics, clarifying meaning, and managing interaction. Their function depends largely on the context in which they are used.

One of the most common functions of discourse markers is connecting ideas. Markers such as so, therefore, but, and however help speakers show logical relationships between statements. For example, so can be used to introduce a result, while but and however can show contrast. These markers give listeners clear signals about how the next idea is related to the previous one. Without such signals, spoken discourse may sometimes sound disconnected or difficult to follow.

Another important finding is the role of discourse markers in organizing the structure of conversation. Expressions such as well, anyway, and so can be used when speakers want to begin an answer, return to an earlier point, or move the conversation

⁷ Müller S. Discourse Markers in Native and Non-native English Discourse. John Benjamins Publishing Company. - 2005. - 260 p.

⁸ Aijmer K. English Discourse Particles: Evidence from a Corpus. John Benjamins Publishing Company. - 2002. - 308 p.





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to another topic. For example, when a speaker says “Anyway, let’s talk about the next point,” the marker anyway clearly indicates a shift in the direction of the conversation. This shows that discourse markers help speakers manage the development of spoken discourse rather than simply connect individual sentences.

The analysis also demonstrates that discourse markers contribute to clarification and reformulation. Expressions such as I mean are frequently used when speakers want to explain an idea in a different way or correct what they have just said. For example, a speaker may say, “It was difficult-I mean, it was more challenging than I expected.” Here, I mean signals that the speaker is reformulating the previous statement. This function is particularly useful in spontaneous speech because speakers do not always prepare their sentences before speaking.

Discourse markers such as you know and well also have an important interactional function. They can help speakers maintain contact with listeners, introduce an answer, express hesitation, or make an utterance sound less direct. For example, well can be used before giving an unexpected or careful response, while you know can indicate that the speaker expects the listener to understand or share some background information. These expressions demonstrate that coherence in spoken English is not only about logical connections between ideas but also about maintaining interaction between participants.

The findings further indicate that discourse markers can support fluency and naturalness in spoken English. Native and proficient speakers often use discourse markers naturally as they plan and organize their speech. They can provide speakers with additional time to formulate an idea without creating a complete break in communication. For English learners, appropriate use of discourse markers may therefore make speech sound more connected and natural. However, excessive or inappropriate use can have the opposite effect and make speech repetitive or unclear.

Overall, the results demonstrate that discourse markers have both textual and interpersonal functions. Textually, they help organize information and create logical





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connections between different parts of speech. Interpersonally, they help speakers manage conversations, express attitudes, respond to listeners, and maintain interaction. This supports the observations of Schiffrin⁹, Fraser¹⁰, and Müller¹¹, who emphasize the importance of discourse markers in the organization and interpretation of spoken communication.

The findings also have implications for English language teaching. Learners should not only memorize discourse markers as individual vocabulary items but should learn how and when they are used in real communication. Classroom activities based on authentic dialogues, interviews, role-plays, and discussions can help students notice and practice these expressions. When learners understand their functions, they can use discourse markers more appropriately to connect their ideas and produce more coherent spoken English.

The analysis confirms that discourse markers are an important resource for maintaining coherence in spoken English. They help speakers connect ideas, organize information, manage topic changes, clarify meaning, and maintain interaction with listeners. At the same time, their effective use requires attention to context and communicative purpose. Therefore, developing learners' awareness of discourse markers can contribute to greater coherence, fluency, and naturalness in spoken English.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study demonstrates that discourse markers play an important role in maintaining coherence and naturalness in spoken English. Spoken communication requires not only correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary but also effective organization of ideas. Discourse markers such as well, so, but, however, actually, I mean, you know, and anyway help speakers connect their ideas, organize information, signal contrast or result, introduce new topics, and clarify their meaning.

⁹ Schiffrin D. Discourse Markers. Cambridge University Press. - 1987. - 364 p.

¹⁰ Fraser B. What are discourse markers? Journal of Pragmatics. - 1999. - Vol. 31, No. 7. - P. 931–952.

¹¹ Müller S. Discourse Markers in Native and Non-native English Discourse. John Benjamins Publishing Company. - 2005. - 260 p.





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Therefore, they should not be considered merely unnecessary words or fillers, as they perform important communicative functions.

The analysis shows that discourse markers make spoken interaction easier for listeners to understand by signaling relationships between different parts of a conversation. They also help speakers manage conversations, express hesitation, reformulate ideas, and maintain interaction. These findings are consistent with the views of Schiffrin and Fraser, who emphasize the role of discourse markers in organizing discourse and establishing relationships between utterances.

The study also highlights the importance of discourse markers in English language teaching. Learners may have sufficient grammatical and lexical knowledge but still experience difficulties producing coherent and fluent speech. Developing awareness of discourse markers can help students connect their ideas more effectively and make their speech sound more natural. Authentic dialogues, interviews, podcasts, discussions, and role-play activities can provide useful opportunities for learners to notice and practice discourse markers in meaningful contexts.

At the same time, learners need to understand that discourse markers should be used appropriately according to the context and communicative purpose. Overuse or incorrect use may make speech repetitive or unclear. For this reason, teaching should focus not only on memorizing discourse markers but also on understanding their functions and using them naturally in real communication.

Overall, the study confirms that discourse markers are an essential part of coherent spoken English. Their appropriate use contributes to the logical organization of speech, interaction between speakers, fluency, and communicative competence. Consequently, greater attention to discourse markers in English language classrooms can help learners develop clearer, more coherent, and more natural spoken communication.

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