A Pragmatic Analysis of Co-occurrence of Discourse Markers in texts: Pragmaticalization of Fuunctions

Ali Mohammad Mohammadi[1]

1.INTRODUCTION

In production and interpretation of discourse, interlucutors apply discourse markers (DMs) to establish and discover the relationship between discourse units (Crible & Dagand, 2019; Mohammadi & Radjaee, 2020; Schiffrin, 1987). DMs offer metadiscoursive instructions for the interpretation of discourse by the audience. This interactive process is activated through different types of metacommunicative knowledges and skills. Part of this experience embraces knowledge of text to employ grammatical and lexical elements to convey meaning. More important aspect of this faculty is related to metalanguage involving the capability to communicate different individual and social characteristics, to utilize language to communicate feelings, thoughts, and negotiate meaning (Maschler & Schiffrin, 2015). The analysis of DMs co-occurrences and combinations as a metadiscursive strategy can help researchers to predict specific possible patterns of DMs' categorizations and such empirical and pragmatic findings will build up some foundations for future typological exploration as well as for the theorization of DM co-occurrences and collocations in general (Kassaei & Amouzadeh, 2020). Moreover, research in the area of language fluency has substantiated the positive influence of DMs investigation and analysis on second language acquisition and opens new horizons towards cognitive processes of discourse production and comprehension (Crible & Dagand,2019; Crible & Pascal, 2020). Based on DMs' combinations sensitivity to contextual variables in real life situations, they develop novel interactive pragmatic strategies in communication in terms of emphasis, fluency of communication, and intimacy among the interlocutors (Jucker & Ziv, 1998). Consequently, the present researcher tried to investigate and compare the uses and pragmatic functions of co-occurrences of DMs in Arabic, English, and Persian texts.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This descriptive and qualitative investigation benefited from various scientific and research informing bases and resources. Theoretically, the study is supported by coherence theory, assuming that generally texts enjoy coherence (Schiffrine, 1987,

[1] Assistant professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Arak University, Arak, Iran; a-mohammadi@araku.ac.ir

2006). In addition, pragmatic analysis of the coexistences of DMs and their functional spectrum in Arabic, English, and Persian literary, research, educational, political, critical, and the Quranic texts formed the second informing resource of the investigation. Moreover, the current analysis utilized Fraser's (2006) classification of DMs and Brinton's (1996, 2015) functional analysis framework in order to discover DMs pragmatic functions and behaviors. Fraser's classification of DMs provides the criteria for determination of whether an element is a DM or not in these texts. And Brinton's (1996, 2015) functional analysis framework was used to investigate the functions of DMs' co-occurrence in these texts. Another resource of the research was inviting two raters for each text in the projects. All raters were English instructors with 5 to 10 years of experience in teaching. Also, they were familiar with the literature, theories, and models in DMs research. Their MA theses were conducted in this area, and as a result, they possessed the necessary knowledge and expertise. Moreover, each rater had the experience of rating two other MA research projects in her resume.

The corpus consisted of literary, research, educational, political, critical, and the Quranic texts consisting of more than 200000 words. The selection procedure was based on stratified sampling. All of the instances of DMs co-occurrences in the corpora were verified and sorted using Fraser's (2006) classification of DMs and DMs' functional spectrums were analyzed and explored through Brinton's (1996, 2015) functional analysis framework. First all the texts were read by the researchers and DMs instances were identified and marked. Then, their pragmatic functions and behaviors were analyzed and determined. After that, from 20 to 50 percent of the DMs occurrences and co-occurrences along with their identified pragmatic functions in the texts were extracted and presented to the raters to approve the reliability of the research findings. As the raters were familiar with the literature, theories, and models, they examined and reviewed the instances and expressed their agreement or disagreement with the functions determined for the instances of DMs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The results revealed that the first rank of co-occurrence tendency of DMs belonged to elaborative DMs with 96% of frequency. And contrastive DMs possessed the second rank with %65 frequency of co-occurrence. Third and fourth ranks belonged to inferencial and temporal DMs with 54% and 15% frequency of co-occurrence. Generally, in all instances of co-occurrences of DMs, the first DMs indicated a general relationship between discourse units and the second DMs reflected a specific relationship between discourse units. However, analysis of the pragmatic functions and behaviors of DMs by applying Brinton's (1996, 2015) functional analysis framework resulted in a multilateral system of functional spectrum consisting of a six-plane framework for monitoring the relationship between discourse units in these literary, research, educational, political, critical, and the Quranic texts. This multilateral functional model consisted of the following pragmatic behaviors: information indicators, topic switchers, attitude markers, temporal markers, opening markers, and closing markers. Grammar textbooks and dictionaries do not cover these functions. The variety and flexibility of the functions can be the result of triangular interaction among three pragmatic strategies of metacomment (Aijmer, 2002), metacommunication (Frank-job, 2006), metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005). The result of this interaction is the pragmaticalization DMs' pragmatic behaviors. Pragmaticalization results in new, complex, and creative inferences regarding the

functions of DMs. These inferences are changing and developing constantly. This interpretation is in accordance with results reported by Fischer (2006). Moreover, justification for this flexibility is supported by Frank-job's (2006) findings in real life situations where DMs take on novel pragmatic connotations. As the concept and the strategies of pragmaticalization are not introduced to our educational and research settings, authorities, teachers, practitioners, and researchers are not equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in this area. Therefore, it seems necessary to introduce modifications in our present approaches to teaching discourse and pragmatics in TEFL, translation, and other relevant areas. Specially, teaching grammar, writing, and conversation should be approached on a corpus-oriented, practical, and innovative system following the strategies established in pragmaticalization of these discourse monitoring variables.

Keywords: Co-occurrence; Discourse Markers; Pragmatic Analysis; Pragmaticalization of Functions