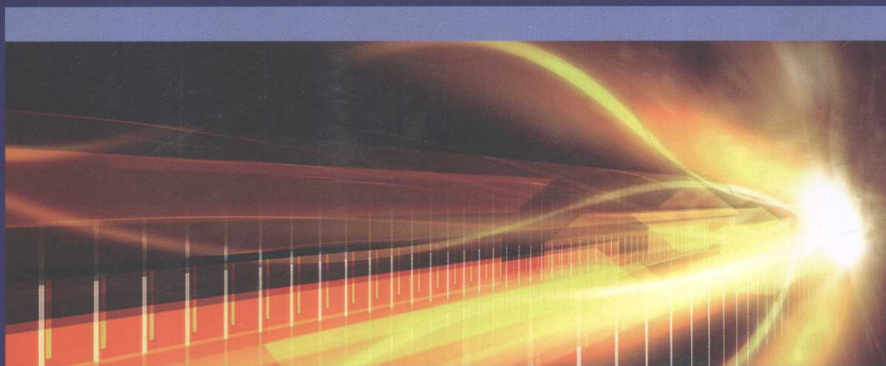


RESEARCH ON THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF DMS
IN ENGLISH LISTENING

英语语篇标记语的 听力意义研究

郝 昕 牟雅敏◎著



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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语语篇标记语的听力意义研究 = Research on the Significance of DMs in English Listening: 英文/郝昕, 牟雅敏著. —北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 2015. 5

ISBN 978 - 7 - 5161 - 6182 - 1

I. ①英… II. ①郝…②牟… III. ①英语—语言学—研究 IV. ①H31

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2015) 第 106802 号

出 版 人 赵剑英
责任编辑 陈雅慧
责任校对 李伟光
责任印制 戴 宽

出 版 中国社会科学出版社
社 址 北京鼓楼西大街甲 158 号
邮 编 100720
网 址 [http: //www. csspw. cn](http://www.csspw.cn)
发 行 部 010 - 84083685
门 市 部 010 - 84029450
经 销 新华书店及其他书店

印 刷 北京君升印刷有限公司
装 订 廊坊市广阳区广增装订厂
版 次 2015 年 5 月第 1 版
印 次 2015 年 5 月第 1 次印刷

开 本 710 × 1000 1/16
印 张 8.75
插 页 2
字 数 148 千字
定 价 36.00 元

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山东省社会科学规划研究项目
德州学院学术著作出版基金资助项目

前 言

语篇标记语是为了引导和制约听者正确理解话语而选择的语言标记。语篇标记语作为一类词汇表达式，其形式包括连词、副词、介词短语及某些短语或小句。早在 20 世纪 50 年代，语言学家 Charles Carpenter Fries 和 Randolph Quirk 以语篇标记语作为研究焦点，对之进行语言学意义的分析研究。20 世纪 70 年代中后期，关于语篇标记语的研究逐渐形成和发展起来。直至目前，不同的学者从不同的角度对这一普遍的语言现象进行了研究，使语篇标记语这一领域的研究进入蓬勃发展的时期。

在语言学视域中，语篇标记语发挥着重要的语言功能，标示着前后话语间的关系，将标记语从其所依附的话语中去掉，既不影响该话语的语法正确性，也不影响其命题内容，却影响其语用得体的性、语义连贯性与系统性。语篇标记语尽管不增加句子的真值意义，但具有重要的程序意义，对于分析听力的概念、听力的过程机制、听力的相关策略具有重要的现实作用与影响。

《英语语篇标记语的听力意义研究》一书以关联理论为基础，分析语篇标记语在英语听力中的内在机制、基本作用、应对路径等学理与现实问题。该书共有七章，第一章为绪论部分，明确研究背景和目的，总结国内外关于语篇标记语的研究现状与趋势，明确相关的研究方法；第二章为实证调研分析部分，主要是进行问卷调查的数据采集、语篇标记语测试数据采集以及听力测试数据采集；第三章为理论依据考察部分，运用连贯理论、认知—语用等理论视角予以分析；第四章为语篇标记语分析部分，主要是解析语篇标记语的本质、综合解读、特性以及语篇标记语的功能；第五章为英语听力分析，主要分析听力的概念、听力的过程、听力学习存在的问题以及听力的相关策略；第六章为语篇标记语与新闻听力部分，研究语篇标记语与英语听力的关联性，语篇标记语在听力理解中的作用，以及

听力理解中语篇标记语教学的必要性分析。第七章为发现与启示部分，立足该书研究的主要问题与内容，探讨语篇标记语在英语语言学中的相关学理启示。

该书综合运用文献解读法、调查分析法、对照研究法与案例分析法，通过收集、分类和汇总国内外文献，对相关文献进行分析，全面系统梳理国内外关于语篇标记语的研究现状。运用实证分析的调查方法，以国内高校的英语教学为主要调查对象，注重调查方式的多样性与典型性，基于相应的数据统计与定量分析，实现学理研究与实证分析研究的有机结合。在解析中西文化差异以及高等教育差异的基础上，系统梳理语篇标记语对英语语言理解的基本作用，分析语篇标记语对国内高校学生的适用性范围和程度。基于语篇标记语在听力理解中的作用，以及听力理解中语篇标记语的必要性分析，探讨语篇标记语对语言理解，尤其是听力理解的相关学理启示。

在该书付梓出版之际，作者尤感欣慰，该书能获得德州学院学术著作出版基金资助，更感欣慰能得到多位领导、专家与学者的指导与指点。在此，一并表示衷心感谢。

限于作者水平，该书难免有疏漏之处，恳请专家、同行和广大读者批评指正，以期进一步修订和完善。

作者

2015年6月

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Chapter I Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose

With the rise of discourse analysis, many linguists are showing great interest in the role that the discourse markers play in second language learning. Meanwhile, many of them (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1987&1990; Blakemore, 1987 and Ran Yongping, 2002, 2003&2004) have devoted great efforts to the study of discourse markers. As is known, the study of discourse markers is one of the most important research areas in discourse analysis. Discourse markers are the words that indicate the logical connection among sentences and are generally at the beginning of a sentence to guide the main sentence or clause, and the words that show the attitude, intentions or tendencies of the authors or the speakers (Schiffrin, 1987). Thus, through these markers, when understanding a discourse, we will be able to see what attitude, intention or inclination the authors wanted to express. The function of discourse markers is generally larger than that of their grammatical sense, so their great value not only lies in their grammatical role in the sentences, but also their semantic vicarious function in between the sentences, among the sentences and in the whole chapter (Fraser, 1990). Discourse markers have been studied under different theoretical frameworks carried out for different purposes. Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory, as well as Blakemore's cognitive – pragmatics perspective which is also based on the relevance theory provides a new view to study discourse markers. According to relevance theory, the hearer interprets every utterance in the smallest and most accessible context that yields adequate contextual effects for unjustifiable effort. Because of the wide range of the

semantic function and relevance theory of discourse markers in the textual analysis and its great significance in English listening, it is a phenomenon that should be paid great attention to in the process of English listening comprehension.

Many linguists have done extensive research on the meaning, purpose, processes, strategies and skills of listening comprehension. Listening is an interactive process between the listener and the discourse and also a complex cognitive activity. In our country, listening comprehension has long been a major problem for EFL learners and news listening comprehension is considered by many EFL learners the most difficult part. In the listening course, teachers usually lay emphasis on the teaching result instead of the process of listening comprehension. Actually, the comprehension process is of great significance in utterance interpretation. In recent years, many scholars have done a lot of research both in listening and discourse markers respectively, but few of them link the two. Many scholars abroad have done some researches on listening comprehension strategies, such as O' Malley and Chamot (1990) who made a division of listening strategies as follows: metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy and social/affective strategy, Jane Willis (1996) who presented several listening strategies and Ellis (1994) who identified several characteristics to define language learning strategies. In China, the research on listening comprehension is mainly carried out under the frameworks of schema theory, top - down and bottom - up model, culture input perspective and so on. Only Zhu Yanran, He Mengyi and Wang Shuli conduct the research on listening comprehension based on the function of discourse markers, however, their studies are not done in detail. Moreover, none of them has laid emphasis on news listening.

As to discourse markers, the previous studies only focus on the effect of discourse markers on English reading, writing, speaking and other aspects, while their impact on the process of listening comprehension is ignored. According to Blakemore, the hearer will not only understand the propositional content of the message, but will expect to find further implications about the information in the given context. In order to achieve contextual implications, the

speaker's contextual assumptions interact with the hearer's existing assumptions about the world. Discourse markers are linguistic cues that guide the hearer by constraining the number of possible interpretations (Blakemore, 1992). This paper will illustrate some relevance theories of discourse markers, based on which we can understand the foundation of discourse markers. Moreover, mainly based on relevance theory, this paper attempts to explore the application of discourse markers in news listening comprehension and the role discourse markers play in English news listening. Therefore, this thesis is on the first attempt to find out today's college students' mastery of discourse marker and the extent of their awareness based on a questionnaire designed by the author. Then, it will dig out what kind of relationship exists between news listening and discourse markers and to what extent the application of discourse markers affects the students in their accurate understanding, identifying and dealing with the message conveyed by the news. To do this, the author divided the subjects in this study into two groups – experimental group and controlled group. In the experimental group, the author carried out a training of using discourse markers to facilitate English news understanding in their English listening class for three months. In the controlled group, no training of the usage of discourse markers was given. The author also used pre – test and post – test to test the subjects' news listening level. Through a series of studies, involving the analysis of the results from questionnaire and tests, the author attempts to extensively seek the role of discourse markers in the news listening comprehension, in terms of its pragmatic functions based on relevance theory, in order to demonstrate and prove the usefulness of discourse markers in helping students to understand English news.

1.2 Studies of Discourse Markers Abroad and at Home

1.2.1 Studies of Discourse Markers Abroad

Entering 1970s, the formation and understanding of discourse more and more aroused people's interest, and the number of scholars engaging in the study

of discourse markers hence increased. The consideration of language use requires us to go beyond the sentence and look at larger stretches of language. Normal linguistic behavior does not consist in the production of separate sentences but in the use of sentences for the creation of discourse. (Widdowson, 1973)

Leech, Svartvik, Erman, Schiffrin, Redeker, Simon and Fraser respectively made systematic description of discourse markers and discovered that the use of discourse markers in itself is not optional, but rule – based. At the same time, along with the development of pragmatics and discourse analysis, the study of discourse markers was also given a great boost.

Leech and Svartvik, (1975) devote one section to “Meaning in connected discourse” and look at how meaning can be put together in utterance discourse. They present four ways of organizing connections which can be exemplified as follows:

1. linking signals

These include familiar ‘signposts’ which signal what comes next, for example *incidentally* for changing the subject or *that is to say* to signal an explanation

2. linking constructions

These include conjunctions used to co – ordinate and subordinate clauses, for example *and*, *or* and *if*, *because*, and adverbial links such as *however* for contrast.

3. general purpose links

These include participle and verbless clauses, for example:

Being a farmer, he has to get up early.

He started at the floor, too nervous to reply.

4. order and emphasis

This includes variations in presenting information in order to create emphasis, using such devices as ‘it – clauses’, for example:

It was by train that we reached Istanbul.

Never have I seen him so angry.

(Leech and Svartvik 1975: 156 – 81)

Though there is no overt ideas about discourse markers in the above, these categories actually imply there are a certain number of signals in the sentences or utterances to help the listeners more easily understand and grasp what the speaker emphasized and to know how the ideas are organized and ordered, and linked and developed through a piece of discourse.

Late in the 1980s is the golden stage for the development of the study of discourse markers, during which time, whether its research team, research results, or the impact on linguistics, were far better than before. The following are several major events of discourse markers research in the late 1980s:

1. Two special edition

In 1977, *Journal of Pragmatics*, founded in Netherlands, Jacob L. Mey (Odense University – Denmark) is the current editor. In 1986 the magazine for the first time generally introduced the study of discourse markers (termed particle at that time) in various languages in the form of special edition; the profile of this issue edited by Anna Wierzbick from Australian National University was named *Particles* as its topic. In 1990, “discourse markers” as the special edition theme was officially published in *Journal of Pragmatics*, J. Ostman and J. Verschueren were the editors. In addition, the magazine often published articles about “discourse markers”.

2. Two books:

DISCOURSE MARKER written by linguistics professor Deborah Schiffrin from Georgetown University in 1987 is generally accepted in linguistics and has the greatest impact in the field of discourse markers. It was a revision based on Schiffrin’s doctoral thesis at the University of Pennsylvania and recognized as a pioneer in the field of discourse markers.

Another one is much more known, that is *Pragmatic expressions in English: a study of you know, you see and I mean in face – to – face conversation* written by a English major professor Britt Erman from Stockholm University in 1986. Maybe the reason why it is not conducive to study it as an independent subject is that the terminology “Pragmatic Expressions” employed by Erman is too general. But it is worth noting that Erman is the first to make a systematic description of such expressions based on the study of a large number of empirical

examples (taken from the existing corpus) .

The above two books marked the culmination of research results was to a large part based on previous scholars' research.

Schiffrin(1987) as a pioneer in this field, published her masterpiece *Discourse Markers* in 1987, in which she suggests that discourse markers are never binding, which means that the content of the text can be far from incomplete and unintelligible with the omitting of discourse markers. Therefore, they do not add propositional content to the sentences, and the meaning of each sentence would still be complete and transparent when they were omitted. If so, why do people still use so many discourse markers in discourse? This may be due to the fact that Discourse markers have many important functions. Thus, she also listed some functions of discourse markers, such as cohesive function, repairing function and regulative function.

Redeker, in a review article, criticizes Schiffrin' s model for several reasons. Two of the main points are that there are inconsistencies between the descriptions of the individual discourse markers and their place in her model (resp. a table assigning markers to planes of the model) , and that the planes in her model are not all comparable nor well – defined or consistently treated. Regarding the first point of criticism, Redeker writes: “Examples of marker functions not included in DS' s [Schiffrin' s] table can be found in DM [the book *Discourse markers*], in the narratives described in Redeker (1986), and elsewhere in the literature on spontaneous talk” (Redeker 1991: 1151) . Following this statement, Redeker presents examples of markers which Schiffrin describes as functioning at a particular plane, and analogous examples with other markers which have not been accorded the same place in the her model. Furthermore, Redeker complains about the lack of examples for marker – plane relationships; some markers' function on particular planes (e. g. so in action structure) are only scantily illustrated (Redeker 1991: 1149) .

Regarding the second point of criticism, Redeker argues that “the components information structure and participation framework are clearly not on par with the other three planes. The cognitions and attitudes composing those two components concern individual utterances, while the building blocks at the

other three planes are relational concepts" (Redeker 1991: 1162). In the course of the book, moreover, the notion of ideational structure seems to be defined in various ways, surrounding it with "unnecessary haziness" (ibid.). Also, she considers it a shortcoming that Schiffrin does not include monological discourse in her model.

American scholar, Fraser whose study is most worth mentioning continued to make a series of study of discourse markers from the perspective of pragmatics and syntax. Fraser's framework depends upon a differentiation between content and pragmatic meaning. Content meaning is referential meaning: "a more or less explicit representation of some state of the world that the speaker intends to bring to the hearer's attention by means of the literal interpretation of the sentence" (Fraser, 1990: 386). He suggests that discourse markers have their own syntactic features, yet they also have a pragmatic function. His perspective on discourse markers was a syntactic – pragmatic one. Therefore, he claims that the discourse markers can be termed as a "pragmatic category" like syntactic categories. They are used to indicate the relationship between the previous and the current utterances; express procedural meaning, as opposed to conceptual meaning; and they provide orientation for text comprehension. Their function is to facilitate the reader's identification and comprehension of discourse, rather than express their own semantic content or propositional meanings. However, in his analysis he only mentioned a single statement or a nearby word, instead of analyzing the relations between discourse markers and discourse coherence in a broader scope or in the overall, which is his shortcoming. Anyhow, Fraser's theory provides a convenient and appealingly rational basis for assigning expressions to the category of discourse markers.

Simon Muller's categorization of textual functions comes close to Schiffrin's functions in the ideational structure, but it goes slightly beyond. Most of these occurred in the narrative parts of the GLBCC, although they were not entirely restricted to the narratives. These functions have in common that they do not directly address the hearer; instead, they remain focused on lexical expressions and propositional content expressed in units of various length, from single words or phrases to a sequence of utterances describing a particular scene. Thus, focus

on lexical expressions is found in instances where the discourse marker is used to indicate a search for a phrase which expresses what the speaker has in mind, and where it is used to mark false starts and repair. Also, the marker can indicate that the following term is not necessarily an exact one. Other functions at the textual level are to structure propositional content: for example, they mark transitions from one scene to another, from main ideas or the main story line to explanations and exemplifications and back to the main idea again. Markers may also serve to distinguish between the speaker's own voice and the voice of somebody else by introducing quotations. In the course of my analysis, it has become obvious that several of the textual functions are served by more than one marker, though in different ways.

He described the functions of *so*, *well*, *you know* and *like* in detail and compare them to the functions other researchers had identified for these four markers. Therefore, the author will here present only a short summary of how the functions of (groups of) discourse markers have been described in the literature. Most researchers agree that the use of discourse markers facilitates the hearer's task of understanding the speaker's utterances. As Aijmer (1996: 210) puts it, they "function as cues or guides to the hearer's interpretation" (cf. also Ariel 1998: 223). There are two basic frameworks which look at discourse markers from different perspectives but eventually come to very similar conclusions: Coherence and Relevance Theory. Risselada and Spooren (1998: 131) still claim that most approaches to discourse markers are based on coherence (cf. for example Schiffrin 1985; Holmes 1986; Redeker 1990; Lenk 1995; Mosegaard Hansen 1998; Takahara 1999; Lee - Wong 2001; Degand and Sanders 2002; Fuller 2003); there are also a number of studies using Relevance Theory (cf. for example Blakemore 1988; Jucker 1988; Blass 1990; Helt and Foster - Cohen 1996; Unger 1996; Ariel 1998; Andersen 2001). While the coherence framework is said to focus more on the textual functions (e. g. Andersen et al. 1999: 1339), Relevance Theory focuses on cognitive processes (see Sperber and Wilson 1986).