Syntactic and Prosodic Features of Discourse Markers Used by Native and Non-Native Speakers of English

الملامح النحوية والتطريزية لعلامات الخطاب المستخدمة بين الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية

الأصليين وغير الأصليين

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the syntactic and prosodic features of discourse markers (henceforth DMs) used by native and non-native speakers of English. Towards this end, an analysis model has been developed. It includes some of the DMs used and their functions. The proposed analysis model also includes the syntactic features such as types and positions of DMs, prosodic features, which incorporate types and functions of tones, and acoustic features associated with the DMs. The analysis model has been applied to native and non-native spoken discourse samples. Based on the results obtained from analysing such data, it is concluded that: (1) syntactically, like native speakers, non-native speakers have the choice to use the DMs at any position in discourse, (2) prosodically, non-native speakers tend to be more assertive

and affirmative in their use of DMs than the native speakers of English, and (3) when non-native speakers converse with each other, the prosodic features of some of their DMs seem to be nearly the same in terms of pitch change/direction and duration.

Keywords: discourse markers (DMs); syntactic features; prosodic features; native and non-native (Egyptian) speakers of English

الملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الملامح النحوية والتطريزية لعلامات الخطاب المستخدمة بين الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية الأصليين وغير الأصليين. وللقيام بذلك، قام الباحث بإعداد نموذج تحليل متضمنًا علامات الخطاب المستخدمة ووظائفها وكذلك الملامح النحوية والتطريزية، ومن ثم تطبيقه على عينتين من الخطابات أخذت شكل المقابلات الحرة/الغير منظمة. ولقد خلص الباحث من نتائج بحثه إلى ما يلي: (١) يشير عدم وجود اختلاف في الملامح النحوية لعلامات الخطاب سواء كانت المستخدمة بواسطة الناطقين الأصليين أو غير الأصليين إلى أن القواعد النحوية المنظمة لهذه العلامات ليست ثابتة، فبالرغم من إمكانية وصف ملامحها نحويًا، إلا أن هناك صعوبة في وضع قواعد منظمة لها سواء للناطقين الأصليين أو غير الأصليين، (٢) وتطريزيا يشير ارتفاع طبقة الصوت (النبر الصوتي) فى بداية العلامات الخطاب المستخدمة بواسطة الناطقين غير الأصليين إلى المعنى التوكيدى لهذه العلامات فى سياق الخطاب، (٣) تتشابه معظم الملامح التطريزية من حيث اتجاه/تغير طبقة الصوت وكذلك المدة التى تستغرقها بعض علامات الخطاب بين كل من الناطقين الأصليين وغير الأصليين. كما أوصى الباحث من خلال نتائج بحثه بضرورة إكساب دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بوظائف علامات الخطاب الشائع استخدامها بين الناطقين الأصليين وكذلك ملامحها النحوية والتطريزية .

الكلمات المفتاحية: علامات الخطاب، الملامح النحوية، الملامح التطريزية، الناطقون باللغة الإنجليزية الأصليين وغير الأصليين (من المصريين).

Introduction

Although many linguists (e.g., Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999, 2009 & Muller, 2005) have referred to the importance of prosody and syntax in identifying and characterizing Discourse Markers (*henceforth DMs*), little research has been done on the types, functions, positions, tones, prosodic and syntactic features of DMs, especially when used by non-native speakers of English. DMs, as defined by many linguists (e.g., Schiffrin, 1987; Heine, Kaltenböck, & Kuteva, 2019) are words, phrases or clauses that are independent of discourse. DMs are also syntactically detachable and set off prosodically from the rest of the utterance. Accordingly, the meaning and underlying message of discourse is complete if DMs are not used. However, one of the many functions of DMs is to organize the interaction between the speaker and the hearer.

To investigate DMs, a number of linguistic approaches such as the *Integrative Theory* (Schiffrin, 1987) and *Coherence and Relevance Theory* (Andersen et al., 1999 and Muller, 2005) should be taken into account. According to Schiffrin's discourse model, there are five levels of talk on which DMs function: (1) exchange structure, (2) action structure, (3) ideational structure, (4)

participation framework, and (5) information state. Schiffrin describes her model as '*integrative*' since it involves multiple contextual components which contribute to the overall sense of 'the coherence' of discourse. Besides, the *Relevance Theory* is also important in investigating DMs because it is based on two frameworks, namely *Coherence* and *Relevance*. According to Andersen et al. (1999) and Muller (2005), while the coherence framework is concerned with textual functions, the relevance framework concerns itself with cognitive processes.

As for the classification of DMs, Fraser (2009) claims that a DM is one type of pragmatic markers. It can be subdivided into elaborative, contrastive, or inferential discourse marker. There are also syntactic cases for DMs, among which there is this pattern: *S1- (and/but) +S2* in which S1 stands for segment one and S2 stands for segment two. It is worth noting here that the DM is part of segment two. It is therefore used to connect/contrast two utterances or independent clauses.

The features that are characteristic of discourse markers are both syntactic and prosodic. According to Aijmer (2013), the syntactic features include the position of a DM in the utterance (initially, medially, or finally) and the

lexical categorization or lexical class of DM (e.g. conj., adv., excl., etc.). The prosodic features include intonation (i.e. tone and function of DM) and acoustic features (i.e. pitch and length). It is also worth mentioning here that parentheticals (also known as comment clauses or theticals) can also function as DMs. They are, according Biber et al. (1999), separate from the host utterance. A parenthetical also takes the form of a clause, a comment clause, and is attached whether at discourse-initial, middle or final position. It can easily be omitted from discourse making no change in the syntactic structure.

When an interlocutor uses such markers in his/her conversation, it means that s/he uses language in such a way a native speaker does. When nonnative speakers copy the linguistic behavior of native speakers of English, they are expected to achieve spoken mastery of the language. According to Cots (1992), "success in foreign language learning is graded in terms of how similar the linguistic behaviour of the learner is to that of the native speakers of the language" (p. 169). This supports the use of DMs in communication.

1. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to investigate the syntactic and prosodic features of the DMs used by native and non-native speakers of English. Thus, two spoken discourse samples (i.e. unstructured interviews between native and non-native speakers of English and between only non-native speakers) are collected in order to identify the DMs frequently used. These markers are then investigated in terms of their functions, syntactic features (type and position) and prosodic features (type and function of tone and acoustic features).

2. Questions of the Study

In order to handle the aforementioned problem, the study attempts to answer the following basic question:

When nonnative speakers of English are brought together in face-to-face interaction, will they show the same prosodic and syntactic features if compared to their interaction with native speakers of English?

This question can be reformulated into several sub-questions:

1. What are the types and functions of DMs used by native and non-native speakers of English?

2. In which positions do DMs appear in discourse when used by native and non-native speakers of English?

3. What are the syntactic features associated with DMs of native and non-native speakers of English?

4. What are the prosodic features associated with DMs of native and non-native speakers of English?

3. Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the syntactic and prosodic features of DMs when used by native and nonnative speakers of English. Accordingly, it attempts to achieve the following objectives:

1. Reviewing the literature and previous studies related to DMs in order to develop an analysis model of their types, positions and functions in discourse and display their syntactic as well as prosodic features.

2. Identifying the types and functions of DMs used by native and nonnative speakers of English.

3. Identifying the positions of DMs in discourse when used by native and Nonnative speakers of English.

4. Displaying the syntactic features associated with DMs when used by native and nonnative speakers of English.

5. Displaying the prosodic features associated with DMs when used by native and nonnative speakers of English.

4. Delimitations of the Study

The experimental part of this study is delimited to the following:

a. Four unstructured interviews drawn from international TV Channels on YouTube (*e.g. CNB, Bridge Show, Nile TV International*) to represent the native and non-native speakers' spoken discourse. It is worth mentioning here that the NNSs are delimited to a sample from the Egyptian speakers of English whereas the native speakers are American and British English speakers.

b. The lexical classes of conjunctions (e.g. *so*) and adverbs (e.g. *yeah*) functioning as DMs.

c. Some clausal forms/parentheticals functioning as DMs (*e.g. you know, I mean, I think, as you say, as you mentioned, as you said, as you mention*).

5. Method

As explained in the previous sections, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the syntactic and prosodic features of DMs of both native and nonnative speakers of English. In order to identify such features, it is

necessary to collect data from both native and nonnative speakers (*i.e., the type of data collected is naturally-occurring*). Then, the data obtained from the speakers is to be analyzed in order to identify and investigate the syntactic and prosodic features of DMs.

5.1 Participants

The participants in this study are ten native and non-native speakers of English. They are divided into two groups; the first group consists of five participants (three native and two non-native speakers). The second group consists of other five participants (only non-native speakers of English). The samples of the study include spoken discourse (i.e., unstructured interviews) drawn from local and international TV stations. In order to represent the spoken discourse of native and non-native speakers of English, two interviews are taken from YouTube TV stations; interview one is taken from *The Bridge Show* and interviews two is taken from *CNBC Channel*. This is intended to represent the use of DMs through the interaction between native and non-native speakers of English. However, the other two interviews are taken from *Nile TV International* on YouTube in order to represent the spoken

discourse of only non-native speakers of English. The non-native speakers' level of English proficiency is nearly the same.

5.2 Instruments

For the purpose of study, the following instruments are used:

1. A model for analyzing the syntactic and prosodic features of the DMs used by native and non-native speakers of English developed by the researcher (See Appendix A).

2. The Acoustic Analysis Software Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2010).

3. The intonation contours (primary tones) based on Peter Roach distinction, i.e. *level, fall, rise, fall-rise, and rise-fall* (1983 – 1998).

6. Data Analysis and Discussion

An analysis of the syntactic and prosodic features of the DMs used by native and non-native speakers of English yields various results. First of all, the most frequently used DMs in the native and non-native's spoken discourse data (i.e. the first two interviews) are selected and investigated in terms of their syntactic and prosodic features. So, in

interview one, the DMs used by the native speaker are: *you know, yeah, I mean,* and those used by the non-native are: *you know, yeah, I think*. Syntactically, the use of these DMs by both the native and non-native speakers does not require a fixed position within discourse segments/utterances because such markers are movable to any position; they can occur at segment-initial, middle or final positions. The native and non-native speakers' DM *you know*, for instance, occurs at segment-middle position. In addition, *you know* is also considered a comment clause or parenthetical. It is syntactically detachable, and syntactic optionality is a feature common among the DMs of these sorts.

Prosodically, variation in the pitch of the native and non-native speakers' DM *yeah* is noticed. While the tone associated with *yeah* in the case of the native speaker is rising, the one associated in the case of the non-native speaker is falling. Given the context of the interview and gender differences in pitch range, the non-native speaker's DM *yeah* has a higher initial pitch (230Hz) than that of the native (193.2Hz). This might indicate that the interviewer (i.e. a male non-native speaker) is more assertive than the interviewee (i.e. a female native speaker) despite the fact that females normally tend to have higher pitch range than

males. Furthermore, as pointed out by Romero-Trillo (2012), a high initial pitch range indicates that a speaker seems affirmative in his/her feedback, and may want to show active listenership. However, the high pitch level in final position in the DM *yeah* (231.2Hz) in the case of the native speaker indicates a more tentative and non-assertive meaning than the non-native does. As for the DMs' duration, both native and non-native speakers have almost the same length, and this shows that the non-native speaker does not deviate from the typical native use in interview one.

Based on the size of the data and rate of turn-taking, the non-native speaker of English uses the DMs *yeah* and *you know* repeatedly. This might indicate the notion that the non-native speaker in interview one may want to sound like the native speaker (the interviewee). On the contrary, the native speaker does not use DMs more often, but only when necessary given the context and date size of the interview. The native speaker's use of *I mean*, for example, introduces more elaboration, and is used only once.

In interview two, both the native and non-native speakers use parentheticals that function as DMs. The native

speaker uses *I think, as you say,* and *so*, and the non-native speaker uses *I think, as you mentioned,* and *so*. Syntactic flexibility is a feature common between the native and non-native speakers in the DMs *I think, as you say, as you mentioned*. While in the case of the native speaker, the DM *I think* occurs at segment-initial position, in the case of the non-native speaker, it occurs at segment-middle position. In addition, both *as you say* and *as you mentioned* occur at segment-middle position. This means that there are no syntactic rules that restrict the distribution of DMs within the spoken discourse (Heine, Kaltenböck, and Kuteva, 2019). In addition, *I think, as you say,* and *as you mentioned* are considered comment clauses or parentheticals, and if omitted, the sentence syntactic structure is not affected. So, they are syntactically flexible, but somewhat contextually different. As for the DM *so*, it occurs at segment-initial position in both cases.

Prosodically, the non-native speaker's DM *as you mentioned* is similar to the native speaker's DM *as you say* in terms of pitch level. Both speakers use high initial pitch and low final pitch. However, given the gender difference in pitch range, the interviewee (a female speaker) has a high initial pitch level (204.3Hz) and a low final pitch (165.4Hz)

whereas the interviewer (a male speaker) has an initial pitch (174.7Hz) and a final one (131.6Hz). So, this pitch level indicates that both speakers are being assertive in what they say. However, in the non-native speaker's DM *I think*, the final pitch (246.1Hz) is relatively higher than the initial pitch (215.7Hz), which indicates a state of tentativeness. As for the length, both the native and non-native speaker's DMs are quite the same (See table 4.1.2). So, the non-native speaker does not deviate from the typical native use of the DMs given the context of the interview.

To conclude, the syntactic and prosodic features of the DMs in interviews one and two show that there are no fixed or specific syntactic rules that govern the use of DMs either by native or non-native speakers within spoken discourse. This is due to the fact that the use of DMs is characterized as having syntactic flexibility. They are syntactically detachable and separate. However, the analysis of the prosodic features of both native and non-native speakers' DMs shows that both native and non-native speakers of English tend to be assertive as their initial pitch is relatively high. In addition, they tend to be tentative and non-affirmative as their final pitch is relatively high. This depends on the context in which the DM is used. Therefore,

having prosodic and syntactic features similar to the native speakers of English can be attributed to the notion that non-native speakers may be well-educated, or have studied aboard where they may have interacted with native speakers of English and mastered the use of such markers in spoken discourse (See the speakers' background information in Chapter Three).

Kachru (1985) classifies the various types of Englishes using a circles analogy. Thus, three concentric circles can be distinguished: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle represents the traditional historical and sociolinguistic bases of English in the regions where it is used as a primary language (including the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand). The Outer Circle represents the regions of the world formerly colonized by Britain and the USA. In these regions English has been adopted as an additional language for intranational purposes of administration, education, law, etc. (e.g. India, Nigeria, the Philippines, Singapore). The third 'circle' of Englishes which Kachru identifies belongs to the 'expanding circle'. It is found in countries where English is traditionally learned as a foreign language. It is worth noting that English is used as a foreign

language in Egypt where it plays little or no administrative or institutional role. It is primarily used as a medium of international communication. According to Kachru and Smith (2008, p.73), the use of rhythmic patterns of the Outer and Expanding Circle varieties is usually attributed to the personality of the speaker rather than to his or her competence in language. This might explain the fact that the prosodic features of native and non-native (Egyptian) speakers of English tend not to be the same.

In interview three, the DMs *so* and *I think* are used by both non-native speakers (i.e., interviewer and interviewee). It is important to shed light on the parentheticals that are also used (e.g. the interviewer's DM *as you mention*, the interviewee's DM *as you said*) for the sake of comparison with those of the native speakers of English. First, as for the common syntactic features of the DM *so*, it is used at the beginning of the discourse to connect between discourse segments. As discussed earlier, *so* is also used at sentence beginning in the case of native and non-native speakers. This means that there is a common feature of *so* as DM; it is a conjunction used at discourse-initial position.

The parentheticals *I think*, *as you mention,* and *as you said* function as DMs. *I think* and *as you mention* are used in the simple present form. However, in *as you said*, the verb is in the simple past tense. This is an inflectional change, not lexical, and it does not change the lexical category of the verb.   The parentheticals also consist of the first-person subject pronoun. So, they meet the criteria of a DM. However, *I think* is used at the discourse segment-initial position in the case of the interviewer, whereas it is used at the discourse segment-middle position in the case of the interviewee. In interviews one and two, it is also used by the non-native speakers in the middle of discourse segments (cf. interviews one and two). Therefore, it seems clear that the non-native speakers of English in this study tend to use *I think*, *as you mention, as you said* and *as you mentioned* in the middle of the discourse whether when they are brought together, or have interviews with the native speakers of English. This does not deviate from the typical native use of the parenthetical *as you say* in interview two.

Second, the pitch direction of the non-native speakers' (both the interviewer and interviewee) DM *I think* shows movement from a high position to a low position, and the type of tone is thus falling, which indicates neutrality

and somewhat confirmation to what is said. Given the gender difference in pitch range, the interviewer's (i.e., female) initial pitch (248.1Hz) is higher than that of the interviewee (i.e., male). When the DM *I think* is compared with that of the non-native speaker in interview two, it is clear that the type of tone is somewhat rising (i.e. initial pitch 215.7Hz and final pitch 246.1Hz). therefore, given the context of the interview, the non-native speaker has the choice to change his pitch level. Furthermore, the duration of the DM *I think* in interview three seems equal in both cases, and when compared with the non-native speaker in interview two, the duration is also the same. Therefore, the non-native speakers' use of the DM *I think* in this study has the same duration, which does not deviate from the typical native use (0.353ms) in interview two.

Although the DMs *as you mention* and *as you said* have the same duration, the pitch direction and level are different. While the pitch direction in the case of the interviewer fluctuates, that is to say, moving from a high position to low position, then to high position again, the pitch direction of the interviewee's DM goes from a high position to a low one. Furthermore, the pitch level in the

case of the interviewer's DM is higher than that of the interviewee due to gender difference in pitch range.

In interview four, some DMs (e.g., *you know, yeah, and I mean*) are selected for the sake of comparing and contrasting with those used by native and non-native speakers of English in interview one. So, the DMs *yeah, you know* and *I mean* are used by both the interviewer and interviewee in which *I mean* is used only once by the interviewee in the entire interview. As for the syntactic features of the clausal forms functioning as DMs, both the interviewer and interviewee's DM *you know* occurs at discourse discourse-middle position. In both cases, the DM *you know* is a clausal form consisting of two parts: a first-person subject and a verb in the simple present form.

Similarly, the DM *you know* in interview one is used in the middle of the discourse segments (See table 4.1.1). Therefore, one might claim that the native and non-native speakers of English in this study tend to use the DM *you know* in the middle of the discourse in order to, as claimed by Erman (1987) and Crystal (1988), clarify any misunderstanding of what is previously said by the conversational partner. In addition, although native speakers

of English make use of presentation markers such *you know* when they have conversations with their friends, the non-native speakers in this study use *you know* frequently when they talk to native speakers of English, given the fact that native speakers may appear strangers. This goes against Jucker and Smith's (1998) claim that friends employ presentation markers more frequently.

As for the syntactic features of the DM *yeah*, both the interviewer and interviewee use it at discourse-initial position in order to show agreement and confirmation to what is said by the other conversational partner. In both interview one and four, the non-native speakers use the DM *yeah* at the discourse-initial position whereas the native speaker in interview one uses it at discourse-middle position. As to the syntactic features of the interviewee's DM *I mean*, it is used at discourse-middle position. No syntactic differences can be found between the native's use in interview one and the non-native's use in interview four as it is considered syntactically loose and separate from the host utterance.

Prosodically, while the pitch of the interviewer's DM *you know* moves from a low position to high position, the

interviewee's pitch moves from a high position, to low, and then to high position again. The tone associated with the former is rising, but that of the latter is a fall-rise tone. When the DM *you know* is compared with the one used in interview, it is clear that the tone associated with the one used by the non-native speaker in interview one is level while the tone associated with that of the native is partially falling. Given the contexts of both interviews, the pitch and tone associated are different. In addition, the duration of the DM *you know* in both cases of the interviewer (0.374ms) and interviewee (0.273ms) is somewhat the same. So, there is no deviation from the typical native use in interview one (0.277ms).

The kind of pitch change/direction of the DM *yeah* in the cases of the interviewer and interviewee is quite the same. In both cases, the pitch moves from a high position to a low position. Similarly, the pitch direction in the case of the non-native speaker in interview one shows the same pitch movement (See Graph 4.1.2). So, the type of tone in both cases is falling signaling follow-up and agreement between the interlocutors. Furthermore, the duration of the DM *yeah* in interview four is somewhat similar (i.e., for both the interviewer and interviewee) to that of the native

speaker and non-native speakers in interview one. In addition, when comparing the prosodic features of the interviewee's DM *I mean* with the one used by the native speaker in interview one, the pitch direction is quite the same. So, in both cases, the pitch moves from a high position to a low one creating a falling tone. The duration of the DM is also the same. This means that the non-native speaker's DM duration (0.345ms) does not deviate from the typical native use (0.374ms).

Some of the DMs used by the non-native (Egyptian) speakers of English whether when they interact with native speakers or with other Egyptian speakers somewhat share the same syntactic and some prosodic features. So, as pointed out by Giles (1973), who proposes the Speech Accommodation Theory, speakers slowly converge toward the speech patterns of the interlocutor they are interacting with. Further, Kachru and Smith (2008) state that interlocutors get familiar with each other's system of phonological organization, they accommodate their habitual patterns to those of the other speaker(s). Throughout this analysis, the following findings, conclusions and recommendations are obtained.

7. Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Findings of the study

1. Non-native (Egyptian) speakers of English tend to use DMs, *e.g. yeah* and *you know, I think, so* and *as you mentioned* when they interact with native speakers in order to achieve ongoing interaction during the interviews.

2. When interacting with native speakers of English, non-native speakers do not use various DMs, but stick to particular ones, i.e. the repeated use of *yeah* and *you know* in interview one. Lack of using diverse DMs may be attributed to the context of the interview as well as ratio of the interviewer to the interviewee talk.

3. The syntactic features of the DMs in interviews one and two (i.e. native vs. non-native speakers of English) show that there are no fixed or specific syntactic rules that regulate the uses and positions of DMs either by native or non-native speakers within spoken discourse. The degree of appropriateness or flexibility is attributed to the syntactic nature of DMs in general.

4. Non-native speakers of English in this study tend to use parentheticals, e.g. *as you mentioned, as you said, as you*

mention to function as DMs. Given the contexts of interviews three and four, parentheticals functioning as DMs do not carry new information because they are syntactically and prosodically set off from the rest of discourse. They are only used to introduce new information or connect the ideas.

5. Both the native and non-native speakers of English in this study tend to use the parentheticals *I think*, *as you mention, as you said, as you mentioned* and *I mean* in the middle of the sentences.

6. The DM *so* is restricted to sentence-initial position in the interviews between native and non-native speakers and those between the non-native speakers. It is also used to fulfil various functions. In interview two, for instance, the non-native speaker uses *so* as a main idea unit marker, that is to say, connecting propositions. However, in interview three, it is used to signal transition of ideas.

7. Given the gender difference in pitch range, the auditory perception and acoustic measurements show that the female speakers (i.e., both native or non-native speakers in this study) tend to have higher pitch level than the male speakers.

8. The DM *yeah* has a higher initial pitch (230Hz) in the case of the non-native speaker in interview one, which indicates a more affirmative meaning than the native speaker whose initial pitch is (193.2Hz). By using a high initial pitch, the non-native speaker, according to Romero-Trillo (2012, p.129), "sound more affirmative in the feedback function and whose aim is to show active listenership."

9. In the non-native speakers' interviews, the length/duration of the DMs *so, I think, as you mention, as you said, yeah, you know,* and *I mean* tend to be somewhat the same, given the context of the talk. There is no deviation from the typical native use in interviews one and two. However, in interview two, the non-native speaker's (i.e., the interviewee) DMs *I think, as you mentioned,* and *so* are somewhat longer in duration than those of the native speakers. This might indicate a state of tentativeness and non-assertiveness from the part of the non-native speaker in that interview.

7.2 Conclusions

The present study has presented the use of some DMs, (i.e. *yeah, you know, I think, so, as you mention, as you say, as you mentioned,* and *I mean*) by native and non-

native (Egyptian) speakers of English in an attempt to investigate the syntactic and prosodic features of such markers. The foundations of this study lie in the fact that when the native and non-native speakers of English are brought together in face-to-face interaction (i.e. interviews), the non-native speakers tend to use DMs in order to trigger discourse, preface a response or action, aid the speaker in holding the floor, and bracket the discourse either cataphorically or anaphorically (Brinton, 1990). The non-native speakers also tend to stick to particular DMs and use them repeatedly (See interview one). They also tend to use parentheticals that function as DMs.

When the non-native speakers of English interact with the native speakers in this study, there are common syntactic features in terms of the type and position of the DMs used. In this study, the results of analyzing the syntactic structure of the DMs show no difference in the type and position; both native and non-native speakers use DMs from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, e.g. *so*, adverbs, e.g. *yeah*, and clausal forms/parentheticals, e.g. *I think, as you mention,* and *as you say.* The position of these DMs within discourse is quite the same in the both cases of the native and non-native speakers. The markers can be used

in the middle of the sentence, e.g. *I think, as you say, as you mention/ed,* and *I mean*, or restricted to sentence-initial position, e.g. *so*. The interviews between the non-native speakers of English also show the same results of the syntactic use of the same DMs (cf. interviews three and four). Therefore, as pointed out by (Schiffrin, 1987; Boye and Harder, 2007; Urgelles-Coll, 2010; Aijmer, 2013 and Dehé, 2014), the syntactic use of DMs is characterized as having syntactic independence and flexibility. They tend to appear outside the syntactic structure, or they are syntactically detachable because of their invariability.

In this study, the pitch and length/duration of the native and non-native speakers' DMs have been measured acoustically, and in some cases the auditory perception assessment has also been used. The results of the prosodic analysis show no significant difference in the pitch of the DMs used by native and non-native speakers of English. However, based on the gender difference in pitch range, the female native and non-native speakers tend to have a higher pitch level than the male native and non-native speakers. In some cases, (e.g. interview one), the non-native speakers tend to have higher pitched DMs at initial position and somewhat longer duration than the native speakers, which

might indicates a state of affirmativeness and non-tentativeness to show active listenership (Romero-Trillo, 2012). Given the context of each speaker's turn, the pitch indicates a different type of tone associated with each DM. Furthermore, the duration of the DMs used by non-native speakers when they interact with native and other non-native speakers of English, which is somewhat similar, might be due to the notion that non-native speakers feel at ease with other non-native speakers. So, interlocutors get familiar with each other's system of phonological organization, they accommodate their habitual patterns to those of the other speakers (Kachru and Smith, 2008). To conclude, in spite of the fact that DMs are elements that are outside any grammatical, lexical, syntactic or prosodic restrictions, they are used to fulfil contextual functions that may help sustain the interaction between interlocutors.

7.3 Recommendations for applications

The study of the syntactic and prosodic features of DMs is fundamental to the correct linguistic performance of speakers of English as a foreign language (i.e., Egyptian speakers of English) due to the following two reasons:

1. It helps adult/EFL students to sound like the native speakers of English by following the typical native use of DMs.

2. Pedagogically speaking, a list of DMs including their functions can be developed and incorporated in a speaking skills program to enhance EFL learners' spoken English proficiency.

7.4 Suggestions for further research

1. A comparative study may be conducted to investigate and analyze the semantic and pragmatic features of DMs used by native and non-native speakers of English in order to see how far the semantic as well as pragmatic use of DMs varies from non-native speakers to the native speakers of English. In this respect, it can be hypothesized that in connecting these two variables, a lot of differences may be discovered and investigated.

2. A further study may also be conducted to investigate why the non-native speakers of English do not use various DMs when they interact the native speakers. This study involves a number of considerations such as background education, social context, level of language mastery, etc.

3. A prosodic study may also be required in order to investigate the vowel quality and intensity of the DMs used by non-native speakers in comparison with the native speakers of English.

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