

Complex Procedures Encoded by the Combination of Discourse Markers and Fillers

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Complex Procedures Encoded by the Combination of Discourse Markers and Fillers

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This paper investigates the patterns of combinations of discourse markers (DMs) and fillers and the operation of complex procedures in discourse. Recent outstanding research on this issue from Fraser (2015) classifies discourse markers as either primary (e.g. but, so) or secondary (e.g. nevertheless, on the other hand, therefore, as a consequence, etc.) according to the distinction between general and specific meanings, and illustrates the possible combination of two discourse markers from the same class with those from different classes. One important finding of Fraser's explorations on the distribution of combinations is that some certain DMs are more likely to combine than others. Relevance-theoretic views may provide more sufficient semantic and pragmatic explanations to this question. Unlike concepts, compositional semantic rules are not applicable to the procedures encoded by discourse markers. In spite of such insusceptibility, more than one discourse marker can be employed in order to arrive at the intended interpretation of the utterance with which they are concerned, or to otherwise achieve the same or similar interpretation of cognitive effects (cf. Rouchota 1998: 116-117).

Linguistic data, especially in a dialogical context, indicate a variety of combinations of DMs. This paper explores the combinations of DMs and fillers (e.g. I mean, you know, you see, like, etc.): primary DM and secondary DM, primary DM and filler, and filler and filler (lower occurrence of secondary DM and filler). The types and the order of these combinations of DMs and fillers create a presumption of optimal relevance that can be achieved according to the dialogical context. Primary DMs — in the primary DM-secondary DM combination and the primary DM-filler combination — determine the direction of utterance interpretation by strengthening, contradicting, and deriving implicated conclusions as cognitive effects. The following DMs and fillers in the primary DM-secondary DM combination and the primary DM-filler combinations perform a fine adjustment. Secondary DMs in the primary DM-secondary DM combination restrict the direction of the intended interpretation, while fillers in the primary DM-filler combination convey the speaker's interpersonal attitude toward the proposition of the utterance. In addition, the occurrence of the primary DM-filler combination and the filler-filler combination is associated with the highest priorities in communication, such as an invitation to make inferences, the mitigation of attitudes, or the faithfulness of thoughts. In this paper, I propose two patterns of the complex procedures: one is that similar procedures strengthen the constraint in order to lead the utterance to the intended interpretation, and the other is that different constraints complement each other in order to construct an inferential process for the interpretation of the utterance within which the combination is observed.