**Discourse Markers in comparable spoken corpora: a contrastive study between Greek and English**

**Literature Review**

Discourse Markers (DMs) comprise a functional class of linguistic items that do not typically change the propositional meaning of an utterance but are essential for the organization and structuring of discourse (spoken or written), for marking the speaker’s/reader’s attitudes to the proposition being expressed, as well as for facilitating processes of pragmatic inferences. These linguistic elements have been labelled using different terms (Discourse Markers, Pragmatic Markers, Discourse Particles, Pragmatic Expressions, Cue Phrases, Hedges). Morphologically, they are short items difficult to place within a traditional word class (as they appear to have lost their lexical/propositional meaning), coming from various sources of the Lexicon: Connectives, Adverbials, Adjectives Verbs, Nouns, Prepositional Phrases, Particles, Lexicalized Clauses, Metalinguistics Expressions). Although they can be found in several positions within the clause, DMs usually concentrate on the Left Periphery of the utterance.

DMs have been much studied in the last twenty-five years by different researchers under different labels. A variety of approaches and definitions have been offered, each one informed by the particular theoretical framework and linguistic field (Discourse Analysis, Conversational Analysis, Semantics, Pragmatics). Despite the rapidly growing body of DM research, there are still a number of fundamental questions that need to be answered. Some of the issues include the lack of generally accepted terminology, overlapping categories and classifications, and uncertainty regarding essential formal, semantic and pragmatic characteristics. It is generally recognized, however, that these polysemic elements are multifunctional, operating on two main levels, viz. the textual/ideational and the interpersonal/expressive level, their basic functions being that of monitoring discourse and the activity of communicating, respectively. As textual monitors, they are cohesive devises, which are used to signal transitions of various kinds, between smaller or larger chunks of discourse ensuring that the hearer/reader decodes the text and gets a coherent picture of what is being communicated. As social monitors their principal function is to negotiate the meaning and management of discourse and to ensure that the channel is open between the interlocutors.

The growth of Corpus Linguistics with its statistical and quantitative methods did cut new paths into the DM research by broadening the field to new markers and new contexts. The development of many new corpora provided a large body of authentic data which allows a combination of quantitative as well as qualitative analyses. We can now study DMs in many text types, contexts, activities both inter-linguistically and cross-linguistically in several languages. Nevertheless, there are still major theoretical and descriptive challenges to be addressed.

**Methodology and Research Questions**

The aim of this thesis is to study contrastively in two languages (Greek and English) a number of DMs in two different text genres of spoken discourse, thus doing a comparative corpus analysis. For that purpose there will be formed two comparable corpora (in English and Greek) each one containing transcripts from: a) spontaneous natural discourse (the data will be from the spoken parts of the BNC and Greek SEK respectively), b) TV talk shows (semi-constitutional discourse) (e.g. CNN’s *Larry King Live*, *The Late Show with Steven Colbert*, Greek TV talk shows, etc.).

Thus, four sub-corpora of the same size of spoken language will be formed and used for the needs of this research (two for each language). The analysis of the data will be performed based on the methodological tools of Corpus Linguistics, comparing the four sub-corpora on two levels: a) between the two text genres of spoken discourse in one language, b) between the same text genre in two languages.

The following research questions are going to be addressed:

* What is the distribution of DMs under specification across the two text genres in each language? Are there differences in the distribution patterns and frequencies of certain DMs according to genre? Which are the functions of DMs in each text genre in each language? Can we establish similarities and differences with regard to their distribution and functions both monolingually and in a contrastive perspective?
* Given the multifunctionality of DMs can we arrive at a functional typology and a satisfactory account of meaning relations on the semantic and pragmatic levels in each language and cross-linguistically (English-Greek)?
* By exploring and comparing meanings and functions of particular markers in a cross-language perspective can we establish correspondences between DMs across the two languages? Are there perfect equivalents?
* The larger question which this thesis will address is whether languages develop functionally parallel DMs in the same way as they develop, say, functionally parallel grammatical categories. Specifically, if different languages independently develop DMs displaying the same functions, or, the same range of functions, and if the lexical sources of these markers are also similar, then this would appear to have important implications for cross-language comparative study of these elements, in order to address typological questions and find discourse universals.

In a broader sense we hope that studying DMs in a contrastive perspective (here the pair Greek/English) will make a major contribution to the ever-growing research in the linguistic fields of Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics, bearing in mind the potential applications that the findings and reflections may have for the study of second language acquisition and teaching as well as translation.

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