
МОБОЗНАВСТВО

FUNCTION WORDS IN INTERACTION: FALSE SYNONYMS

Volkova L.

Kyiv National Linguistic University

У статті запропоновано порівняльний аналіз чотирьох пар дискурсивних маркерів: *at last – finally, yet – so far, in fact – actually, any (no) longer – any (no) more*, які традиційно вважають синонімами. Зроблено висновок, що аналізовані мовні одиниці не є синонімами, оскільки вони виконують різні інтерактивні функції. Уживання конкретного дискурсивного маркера залежить від прагматичних настанов мовця.

Ключові слова: інтеракція, дискурсивний маркер, імпліцитна інформація, кореляція, семантична структура, текст, дискурс.

В статье предлагается сравнительный анализ четырех пар дискурсивных маркеров: *at last – finally, yet – so far, in fact – actually, any (no) longer – any (no) more*, которые традиционно считаются синонимами. Делается вывод, что анализируемые единицы синонимами не являются, поскольку они выполняют разные интерактивные функции. Выбор конкретного дискурсивного маркера зависит от прагматических установок говорящего.

Ключевые слова: интеракция, дискурсивный маркер, имплицитная информация, корреляция, семантическая структура, текст, дискурс.

The article focuses on the comparative analysis of four pairs of discourse markers: *at last – finally, yet – so far, in fact – actually, any (no) longer – any (no) more* that traditionally are treated as synonyms. The conclusion is arrived at that the analyzed units are not synonyms because they perform different functions in interaction. The choice of the definite discourse marker is conditioned by the speaker's communicative intention.

Keywords: interaction, discourse marker, implicit information, correlation, semantic structure, text, discourse.

It is not a secret that most students who learn English as their first foreign language find it hard to speak naturally. In other words, their speech is not authentic. It can be explained by a lot of reasons, the most evident one is that they lack speaking practice. However, there is one more reason, not so evident: our students do not know how to use certain discourse markers, those language units used by native speakers in interaction flow subconsciously without understanding how they work. In general, competent native speakers do not have to seek laboriously for the contextual meaning of a word, phrase or sentence because it is obvious for them [7, p. 4]. To make things worse, the meanings of such discourse markers cannot be given in any precise way in a dictionary because they are dependent on pragmatic context for their interpretation. Such items can be especially problematic for non-native speakers of language. The article **is aimed** at revealing the difference between four pairs of discourse markers defined as synonyms by dictionaries but demonstrating different functional peculiarities at the discourse level and correspondingly used for different pragmatic purposes. The aim of the article presupposes solving the following **tasks**: defining the role of these discourse markers in interaction, providing their similar and differential features, analyzing their functional properties. **The object** of investigation of the article is a set of language units functioning as discourse markers: *at last – finally, yet – so far, in fact – actually, any (no) longer – any (no) more*. **The subject** of investigation is semantic, pragmatic and functional peculiarities of the discourse markers mentioned above. **The actuality** of the research is predetermined by the necessity of revealing specific conditions of functioning of those language units that are devoid of referential and nominative power. **The illustrative material** for the article was taken from modern fiction by British and American authors.

English discourse markers present quite a numerous group of function words belonging to different grammatical classes. The groundwork for studying discourse markers was laid by D. Schiffrin [4]. She, in fact, introduced the notion of discourse markers, defined them as sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk and considered them as a set of linguistic expressions that comprised of members of word classes as varied as conjunctions (*because, and, but, or*), interjections (*oh*), adverbs (*now, then*), and lexicalized phrases (*y'know, I mean*). Her main conclusion was that these markers could work at different levels of discourse to connect utterances across different planes [4, p. 312; 5, p. 54-75]. A decade later D. Blakemore classified as discourse markers some utterance initial units like *so, well, still, after all* defining the role these expressions play as marking, signaling or indicating how one unit of discourse is connected to another [1, p. 113]. B. Frazer sees discourse markers as serving an integrative function in discourse, contributing to discourse coherence, he defines them as 'discourse glue' and provides their pragmatic classification; his list of discourse markers comprises about 30 lexical items belonging to different classes of words [3, p.1-16]. All language analysts mentioned above agree upon the fact that the main function of discourse markers is to provide cohesive ties within discourse fragments. In this article discourse markers are defined as non-referential language units that perform not only the role of providing discourse cohesion but also serve as the speaker's means of either providing some implicit information or indicating the relevance of the information flow and topics shift in interaction. A topic in this case is a coherent aggregate of thoughts introduced by some participant in a conversation, developed either by that participant or another or by several participants jointly, and then either explicitly closed or allowed to peter out [2, p. 674].

The first pair of discourse markers we are going to compare, *at last* and *finally*, are usually introduced as synonyms [8, p. 380] because of their evident temporal semantics. In order to disprove this statement let us consider two text fragments. In this regard, we should mention that following M. Stubbs, we understand text as any stretch of naturally occurring language in use, spoken or written, which has been produced, independently of the analyst, for some real communicative purpose [6, p. 305]. The text below goes well with this definition.

(1) *Me, Jude and Shaz spent all day watching Princess Diana's funeral. All agreed it was like funeral of someone you know, only on somewhat grander scale, so that afterwards you feel as though you have been put through a wringer; but also as though something has been let out of you. Just so pleased that they managed to get everything right. It was all good. Beautiful and really good as if the establishment has really got the message at last, and our country can do things properly again* [11, p. 365].

In this text fragment, the explicit proposition *the establishment got the message at last* correlates with the implicit proposition *the establishment did not get the message earlier*. This correlation becomes possible by means of the discourse marker *at last*. Thus, the main function of the analyzed language unit can be defined as introducing some implicit information (temporal change) by means of correlating explicit and implicit propositions. In addition, *at last* here indicates that the speaker was looking forward to this temporal change for quite a long period because everybody admired Princess Diana while it was a well-known fact the Royal Family treated her badly when she was alive. This pragmatic meaning of a long-expected temporal change is inherent in the semantic structure of *at last*.

(2) *Carl stepped from his private elevator, came face-to-face with Abused Imelda, cursed at the sight of her, ignored his valet, dismissed the rest of the staff, and when he was finally alone in the wonderful privacy of his bedroom, he put on his pajamas, a bathrobe, and heavy wool socks* [13, p. 194].

As is clearly seen from the example (2), discourse marker *finally* is used here in order to show that the event took place after a sequence of other events (*stepped, came, cursed, ignored, dismissed*), which are expressed by explicit propositions. Our numerous examples prove that it is the only function of *finally* in interaction. Thus, *finally* marks intertextual relations by correlating explicit propositions and indicating the last event in the sequence of other events.

Therefore, *at last* and *finally* turn out to be false synonyms after all. At the discourse level they reveal different functions – *at last* correlates explicit and implicit propositions and possesses the semantic meaning of a long expected temporal change while *finally* correlates explicit propositions and indicates the last event in the succession of other events.

Our next object of comparative analysis is language units *yet* and *so far*. They are defined as synonyms with respect to their ability to indicate a temporal change with reference to the future (it should be noted that this meaning is the only one *so far* can render while *yet* has some other meanings as well, but they are easy to trace and cause no problems). Thus, the utterance *He is not here yet/so far* correlates with the implicit proposition *He will be here later*. The idea of a temporal change in the future is rendered by means of the analyzed discourse markers. Their pragmatic peculiarities, however, are different, which is the reason for their functioning in different pragmatic situations. Consider the following examples:

(1) *Mississippi's reputation as a judicial hellhole, as a dumping ground for thousands of frivolous lawsuits, as a heaven for reckless trial lawyers, had changed almost overnight. Thank you, Ron Fisk. Many firms were beginning to see the first signs of stabilized rates for liability insurance protection. Nothing definite yet, but things looked promising. Thank you, Ron Fisk* [13, p. 433].

In example (1) the proposition *nothing definite yet* correlates with the implicit proposition *there will be something (definite) in the future*. This hidden implicit information becomes evident at the discourse level by means of *yet*. Accordingly, the semantic content of the linguistic unit *yet* can be described as “temporal change in the future”. This meaning of a future change is combined with the pragmatic meaning of the speaker’s certitude in this change, which is confirmed by the context (*things looked promising*). *So far*, however, reveals different functional properties. Consider example (2):

(2) *He walked past four cabins, each with at least three passengers, none of whom looked suspicious. He went to the restroom, locked the door, and waited until the train began to slow. Then it stopped. Zug was a two-minute layover, and the train so far had been ridiculously on time* [12, p. 260].

In this fragment, the utterance *the train so far had been ridiculously on time* correlates with the implicit proposition *the train may not be on time in the future*, that is, the component “temporal change in the future” is also present in the semantic structure of *so far*. However, in this case the speaker is not so certain that the temporal change will happen, on the contrary, he hopes that it will never happen and the train will arrive at the place of destination on time but leaves place for some doubt, which is confirmed by the commentary adverb *ridiculously*. Thus, the semantic meaning of the future change is combined with the pragmatic meaning of the speaker’s uncertainty of this change.

As we have seen, discourse markers *yet* and *so far* possess obvious pragmatic distinctions that depend on the speaker’s estimation of the future even as highly possible or problematic. Therefore, these discourse markers have different spheres of pragmatic application. Consider the use of *yet* in the following example where the pragmatic meaning of this marker makes it a perfect means of indirect strategy of threatening:

“If you leave, we’ll just follow,” Plant said as he stood from his slouch position and took a step closer. “You don’t want us on campus, do you?”

“Are you threatening me?” Kyle asked. The sweat was back, now in the pits of his arms, and despite the arctic air a bead or two ran down his ribs.

“Not yet,” Plant said with a smirk [14, p. 7].

Discourse-oriented approach makes it possible to analyze another pair of false synonyms – *any (no) longer* and *any (no) more*. Both discourse markers possess an invariant semantic component “termination of the previous state of events” but their pragmatic peculiarities are obviously different. The choice of these markers depends on the speaker’s intention because, as our illustrative material shows, the use of *any (no) more* demonstrates that the speaker regards termination of the previous state as final while the use of *any (no) longer* presupposes that the previous state of events may be resumed in the future. In other words, the difference lies in the change character: final or temporary. Let us consider two text fragments:

(1) *As soon as they were gone, Drew's crying abated. "I don't like them either," Casey confided, rocking Drew back and forth until the baby's roar dropped to a steady whimper. "That's a good girl," she whispered. You feel better now, don't you? Me too. My name's Casey. I'm your big sister, and I'll take care of you. You won't have to cry anymore" [9, p. 77].*

By using *anymore* in example (1) the speaker (a child) is trying to calm down her kid sister by implying that the previous state of things (her sister's crying) will never happen again because now she will take care of her. Example (2) demonstrates that the speaker admits that the change in the state of events may be temporary because former partners, who are friends, can become partners again:

(2) *"They were partners?"*

"Yes."

"But they no longer work together." The observation was part statement, part question.

"No. They went their separate ways about a year ago" [9, p.54].

It should be noted that functioning of the analyzed discourse makers has nothing to do with the grammatical tense-form or aspect semantics of the verb (as it is often taken for granted) the meaning of which is modified by *any (no) more* or *any (no) longer*. Our corpus of examples proves the fact that the choice of the discourse marker depends on the speaker's intention only. Consider, for instance, two fragments where both units modify the stative verb *to be*:

And Jude had heard survey on the radio that by the turn of the millennium a third of all households will be single, therefore proving that at last we are no longer tragic freaks [10, p. 77].

"Anyway, there's no such thing as general knowledge any more," I said indignantly [11, p. 247].

The last problematic set of discourse markers under discussion are *actually* and *in fact* – a real trap for non-native speakers of English as these two units are multifunctional, besides, they are frequently used in natural communication. In some of their functions, they become rather close to each other in their meaning. It can be explained by the fact that both language units possess contrastive-concessive semantics, which becomes clear at the discourse level. We describe this meaning as "partial contradiction/correction of the communicant's previous statement". These markers serve in interaction as a tool for rendering the speaker's intention to provide some additional information that he considers relevant and necessary. Consider the following example:

"Do you want me to stay with her?" said Rebecca to Mark, all wide-eyed concern – as if I were a troublesome toddler. "Then you could have a good ski before dinner." <...>

"Actually, I think I need a rest," I said. I'll just have a hot chocolate and recover my composure." [11, p. 92].

The main function of *actually* here is to provide the speaker's disagreement with the hearer's previous statement. In the given text fragment *actually* by means of correlation introduces the following implicit information: *though you want to help me by staying with me, I don't need your help*. Specific procedural concessive semantics of the analyzed discourse marker makes it a perfect means of realizing an indirect face-saving strategy of rejecting the offer of the previous speaker. Thus, *actually* is aimed at providing a contradicting viewpoint or to offering polite disagreement with the communicant's statement. It should be noted that this discourse marker is often used for this purpose by native speakers but misused by students of English who try to imitate native speakers but they do not know the scope of action of this tricky language unit, that is why their attempt to use *actually* all the time may produce a humorous effect.

As it was mentioned above, the meaning of *in fact* is semantically close to the meaning of *actually*. However, the research on functional peculiarities of these discourse markers enabled us to arrive at the conclusion that *in fact* would be more typical and appropriate for the instances when the speaker wants to correct himself (not the previous communicant) in order to sound more convincing. Consider the following example:

He looked at me, chewing, grinning expectantly. Funnily enough the usual sniggers round the table weren't happening. In fact the whole Thailand interlude seemed to have brought a new respect from my colleagues that I was naturally delighted by [11, p. 346].

In the analyzed conversational fragment *in fact* is used as the marker of the speaker's correction of herself and indicates that she wants to add some more relevant information. The relevance of the given information is confirmed not only by *in fact* but also by the contextually collocated nouns *sniggers* and *respect*.

It follows that *actually* and *in fact* have different interactive functions: *actually* is the marker of correcting of the previous speaker's statement while *in fact* is the marker of correcting the speaker's own statement.

The comparative analysis undertaken above makes it possible to arrive at the following **conclusion**: analyzed pairs of discourse markers are not synonyms since the role they play in interaction is different and the basic factor that governs their use in discourse is purely pragmatic.

The prospect of further investigation lies in providing a contrastive analysis of discourse markers in the English and Ukrainian languages.

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