

Chapter 19

A dynamic-interactional approach to discourse markers

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem statement

Research on discourse markers (DMs) in various languages faces the following recurrent analytical problems:

- the semantic polyvalence of syntagmas and word forms used in a discourse-organizing function,
- the broad functional range that DMs cover, and consequently,
- the difficulty of defining discourse markers as members of a semantically, formally, and pragmatically coherent and homogeneous word class.

The present paper suggests that in order to resolve these problems, it is necessary to take into account the dynamism inherent in the development and interactional functioning of DMs.

1.2. Approach

This paper focuses on both the interactive processes that lead to the use of certain linguistic items as DMs (thereby assigning a polysemic status to them) and the mechanisms of discourse processing that underlie the interactional functioning of DMs (and that contribute to a better understanding of their multifunctionality).

DMs evolve out of processes of “pragmaticalization”. At the beginning of such a process, we find lexical items (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbal syntagms) with propositional meanings which are used in a metacommunicative way. Through processes of habitualization and automatization, metacommunicative use creates a variant of the original item, whose main function is interactional (see section 3 below).

Meanwhile, in their interactional functioning, DMs fulfil important tasks for the discourse processing activities of the participants. It is because discourse processing works

simultaneously at different levels that some DMs are multifunctional (see section 4 below).

My approach to DMs can therefore be considered as polysemic (see Moosegard Hansen, this volume, section 1.4.1.) in two different ways: first, we are dealing with a polysemy resulting from a diachronic process in which additional metacommunicative meanings appear. Second, we are dealing with a polysemy that consists of several pragmatic meanings working simultaneously on different levels of discourse processing.

Given its twofold orientation, this paper has recourse to different research traditions: the first part, which looks at the development of DMs, deals with research on grammaticalization (Hopper and Traugott, 1993; Lehmann, 1995; Traugott, 1995; Hagège, 2001). The second part, which looks at DM-functions in the discourse processing, is based on conversation analysis (Schegloff, 1972; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974; Bergmann, 1981; Gülich, 1991, 1999; Gülich and Mondada, 2001; Mondada, 2001) and on text/discourse processing research (van Dijk, 1980; van Dijk and Kintsch, 1978, 1983).

1.3. Pragmatic meaning and the study of DMs

In real-life conversation, we can distinguish three coexisting types of meaning: a lexical or propositional meaning relating to nonlinguistic entities, a grammatical meaning relating to the syntagmatic functions of linguistic entities,¹ and a pragmatic meaning revealing the relation between persons participating in a conversation as well as their intended and actual behavior.

Whereas lexical and grammatical meaning can be described without respect to actual communication, pragmatic meaning is essentially tied to the context in which utterances are produced:

Semantics is primarily concerned with meanings that are relatively stable out of context, typically arbitrary, and analyzable in terms of the logical conditions under which they would be true. Pragmatics, by contrast, is primarily concerned with the beliefs and inferences about the nature of the assumptions made by participants and the purposes for which utterances are used in the context of communicative language use. It concerns both speakers' indirect meaning, beyond what is said, and also hearers' interpretations, which tend to enrich what is said in order to interpret it as relevant to the context of discourse. (Hopper and Traugott, 1993: 69).

The study of pragmatic meaning belongs therefore to the study of discourse, whereas the study of lexical and grammatical meaning belongs to the study of language as "historical techniques" (Cosieriu, 1981a; Cosieriu, 1981b: 7).²

This is fundamental for the linguistic status of DMs as object of research. DMs only function in real communicative contexts. Within these contexts, the actual function and meaning of a given DM are not ambiguous; hearers are usually able to choose its correct meaning. It is only when the necessary context information is lacking that a hearer can

misunderstand the meaning of a DM. That is why, in the analysis of DMs, the use of constructed data should be excluded and illustrating examples should be taken from real verbal interactions.

1.4. The data

Most of the data presented in my paper are taken from the Italian spoken language corpus *LIP* and from the German spoken language corpus *DGD*.^{3,4} Additionally, some examples of real conversation in Italian, French, Spanish, German, and English are taken from conversational analysis research (Schiffrin, 1980, 1987; Bazzanella, 1990; Chodorowska, 1997; IDS-Corpus).

2. Definition

DMs constitute a formally heterogeneous, open class of linguistic items (particles, adverbs, substantives, verbal syntagms, etc.) that have undergone a linguistic change by ways of regular metacommunicative use and the regular fulfilment of discourse-interactive functions.⁵ This process can be described as pragmaticalization.

Pragmaticalization is the process by which a syntagma or word form, in a given context, changes its propositional meaning in favor of an essentially metacommunicative, discourse interactive meaning. In this regard, pragmaticalization functions like grammaticalization as described by Hagège (2001):

En d'autres termes, si un sens est perdu, un autre est acquis. Il n'est pas vrai que, comme on aime à le répéter, la grammaticalisation aboutisse à des unités figées ou sans contenu. Il serait plus vrai de dire qu'elle aboutit à des unités spécialisées. (Hagège, 2001: 1612)⁶

The same is true for the words and phrases that undergo the process of pragmaticalization.

The main function of grammaticalization and pragmaticalization processes is to facilitate communication. Recurrent communicative problems both on the level of message structuring (*grammar*) and on the level of discourse structuring (*discourse pragmatics*) tend to be resolved by speech communities in a durable way, i.e., in routinized techniques which can be used in a merely automatic manner.⁷

In the case of pragmaticalization, the routinization and functional specialization affects the discourse organizing function of words: instead of contributing to the propositional content of the interaction, the pragmaticalized linguistic item operates on the level of discourse organization.

In the synchrony of a historical language, this process leads to polysemy between the pragmaticalized word form and its propositional origin.⁸

3. The development of DMs in interaction

The following examples are all taken from the same conversation. They show three instances of the German adverb *gut* (English 'well') demonstrating a successive loss of propositional meaning in favour of a metacommunicative meaning.

In example (1) the adverb is used with its propositional meaning attributing the value 'well' to a verbal phrase:

- (142) S2: im vorigen Jahrhundert waren vielleicht Ehen noch mehr gefährdet, da die Menschen doch sich zusammenfanden, weil vielleicht die Höfe zusammenpassten oder die Fabriken **gut** sich gegenseitig gebrauchen konnten

S2: in the last century marriages were perhaps even more endangered, since people got together because their farms went well together or because their factories could **well** profit from each other
(DGD FR 030, 14)

Example (2) shows the same adverb still used with a propositional meaning, but in this instance the adverb refers to the preceding utterances of S1 (*das is . . . ein Extrem* in the first instance and *vielleicht ist es doch ein bißchen übertrieben* in the second instance of *gut*):

- (143) S1: entschuldige aber das is sagen wir ein Extrem. aber du hast richtig vorher gesagt nicht wahr also an diesen Extremen an diesen Extremen kristallisieren sich

S2: ja **gut** schön ja

S1: die also die die Standpunkte irgendwie ganz deutlich vielleicht is es doch ein bißchen übertrieben. aber trotzdem

S2: es ist ein Aspekt

S1: ja

S2: **gut**. das geb ich zu.

(DGD, FR 030, 23)

S1: sorry, but this is, let's say, an extreme. But previously you were right to say, well, its with these extremes, with these extremes that

S2: yes fine, **okay** fine

S1: the points of view come out very clearly in a way perhaps it is a little bit exaggerated after all, but still

S2: it is one aspect

S1: yes

S2: **okay**, I admit you are right, but again I would now have to . . .

Example (3) shows the metacommunicative use of the same adverb, which has lost all of its propositional meaning (there is no aspect in the preceding utterances of S3 that is positively evaluated by the German *gut* of S2). In a metacommunicative way it indicates the explicit ending of the preceding turn of S1 and thus prepares the beginning of the turn by S2:

- (144) S3: ich brauch da nich noch großartig eine eine eine Bestätigung von vom Pastor
und so
S2: nein paß mal auf **gut**
S3: daß sie daß sie mir gehört ja das das dazu brauch....
S2: ja ja also die Frau gehört dir das is überhaupt mal die Frage
(DGD-Fr 030, 11)
- S3: I don't need a a a special confirmation from, from the pastor and so
S2: no, listen **well**
S3: that she, that she belongs to me, yes that that for that I need
S2: yes, yes, so the woman belongs to you but that is in fact the question. . . .

The frequent metacommunicative use of the adverb *gut* in actual colloquial German as seen in example (3) has led for the German *gut* to develop into a discourse marker.

3.1. The pragmaticalization process⁹

The starting point in the development of DMs are linguistic units (words and expressions) which refer to the physical referential environment of a conversation (the *Zeigfeld* of Bühler, 1934). Particularly central within this framework are signals for reception and action (*Rezeptionssignale* and *Aktionssignale* in Bühler's terminology¹⁰)—expressions that symbolize the physically perceptible entities that are part of the direct speech context: the persons involved in a conversation and their physical behaviour (English *listen, look*; Italian *senti, guarda*; French *écoute, regarde*; German *hör, schau*; etc.), evaluative reference to the directly preceding part(s) of the interaction (English *well, okay*; French *bon/bien*; German *gut*), as well as local (English *here*; Italian *ecco, qui*; French *voilà, voici*; German *hier*) and temporal (English *now*, Italian *adesso*, French *maintenant*, German *nun*) features of the situation the conversation is embedded in.

In order to fulfil their communicative needs, speakers use these signal words in a metacommunicative way, no longer referring to the features of the situation but to the linguistic act itself.

Thus, in the following example, the temporal deictic *adesso* ('now'), which originally refers to the actual moment of conversation, now refers to the utterance that follows:

- (145) A: [...] comunque se vuole far la terapia magari
B: mh
A: eh chiama_ insomma **adesso** ci pensa un attimo e vede un pochino
B: sì'
A: [...] well, if you want to do the therapy perhaps
B: mh
A: eh call_ okay, **now**, think about it for a moment and look it over a little bit
B: yes
(LIP RB 13)

As DM, *adesso* prepares the next utterance (*ci pensa un attimo e vede un pochino*) and guides the attention of the participant in that it functions as initial marker for a new interactional unit (a new thematic sequence in this instance).

In a way which is similar to the processes of lexicalization and grammaticalization, pragmaticalization functions by means of routinization and frequency. This leads to some formally detectable features of DMs.

3.2. Clues to pragmaticalization processes

The formal (phonetic, morphologic, syntactic, and textual) features which accompany the pragmaticalization of a lexical item or an expression into a DM and which point to the fact that pragmaticalization processes have occurred are the following:

- frequency
- phonetic reduction
- syntactic isolation
- co-occurrence in contiguity
- deletion test

3.2.1. Frequency

In real-life conversations DMs appear strikingly often. Thus, in English everyday conversation the particle *well* is used every 150 words on average (Svartvik, 1980: 169). In the LIP-Corpus there is evidence of a regular, frequent use of DMs throughout all types of conversation. During a radio call-in quiz (LIP FB14) nearly one word in ten was a DM.¹¹

Another interesting aspect in this context is the frequent co-occurrence of several DMs. The LIP-Corpus gives many examples of this phenomenon. In the following case, each pair of DMs fulfils one single communicative function:

- (146) B: **okay_ va be'**
 A: **allora diciamo** che_ cominciamo da queste pagine qui perche'_ sono quelle che ho preparato
 B: **okay_ alright**
 A: **then, let's say** that_ we start with these pages there because_ these are the ones that I have prepared
 (LIP MA27)

In other examples, co-occurring DMs fulfil different communicative functions which complement one another. In the following example, both types of combination appear in a sequence of five DMs. This indicates an important transitional point within the conversation:

- (147) P: a me serve un altro giorno io studio filosofia
 N: ah **ho capito va be' allora senti** (incomprensibile) **comunque** cerchi #
 P: serve me another day, I am studying philosophy
 N: ah, I see, okay, so listen (incomprehensible) anyway, look #
 (incomprehensible) it up in [the catalogue] . . .
 (LIP MA21)

Whereas the first two DMs confirm and close the preceding turn, the next three initiate a new turn and simultaneously signal the end of a thematic sequence in conversation.

As Gülich (1999) argues, there is a clear correlation between the amount of DMs combined and the structural importance of their place in a given discourse:

Une étude systématique de ces combinaisons peut montrer que plus il y a de marqueurs, plus le changement thématique est important. Pour signaler la discontinuité le locuteur fait plus d'efforts que pour signaler la continuité, et ces efforts laissent des traces plus explicites que quand il s'agit de continuité.
(Gülich, 1999: 34)

3.2.2. Phonetic reduction

The more often DMs are used in actual speech, the more reduced tends to be their phonetic material:

There is a link between frequency of use and phonetic bulk such that more frequently used material, whether grammatical or lexical, tends to be shorter (phonetically reduced) relative to less often used material. (Bybee et al., 1994: 20)

Consequently, with many DMs we find phonetically reduced variants, such as Italian *va be'* instead of *va bene* (see (5)), Italian *di'* instead of *dimmi* (see (11)) or French *ben* instead of *bien*.¹²

Further studies may investigate whether or not the use of the reduced variant differs from that of the complete expression, as one could assume upon examining (7). In this example, the same participant uses both the long and the reduced variant of *va bene* in one and the same context:

- (148) F: la voce l l'unica cosa che non va in offerta e' la voce m
 E: okay **va be'** quindi tutto tranne_
 F: ... tutto abbiamo preso tutto siamo stati molto buoni
 E: **va bene va bene** <?> senti ...
 F: lot 1. The only one that will not be put on sale is lot 1
 E: okay, **okay**, so, all but_
 F: ... all, we have gone through all, we have been very good
 E: **okay, okay** <?> listen . . .

(LIP NB5)

The first instance (reduced form) is used by E in order to conclude the preceding turn and to take over. Since this goal is not achieved, E repeats the term, this time in its full form. This may lead to the assumption that the “complete” form functions simply as a reinforced variant of the reduced form.

During the process of pragmaticalization, expressions also tend to amalgamate into fixed units. This development is closely linked to the reduction of phonetic material as we can observe in the Italian expression *va be'* forming a unit in which no other word can be inserted.

The fusing of elements within the DM can be seen in the long term development of languages. The French and Italian DMs that developed from the Latin temporal expression *ad illa(m) hora(m)* ('at that time') have merged into one single word—French (*a)lors*, Italian *allora*—as they became DMs.¹³

3.2.3. Syntactic isolation

DMs are syntactically isolated. In (8), for instance, Italian *guarda* is accompanied by an accusative complement (*guarda questo*) while in (9) it is not:

- (149) B: **guarda** questo e' il eh quello che m'ha ril<asciato> rilasciato l'architetto
 B: **Look** this is the one which the architect issued to me
 (LIP FA10)

- (150) A: no poi soprattutto io_ dico_ **guarda** quando sono stato in Croazia_ per esempio # io son andato a far una storia par<ziale> specifica cioe' bambini_ ammazzati eccetera ...
 A: No, then, above all, I_ say_ **look** when I was in Croatia_ for example # I was making a special story like killed_ children etc. . . .
 (LIP MB8):

In (10), Spanish *entiendes* governs a subordinate (conditional) clause (*me entiendes cuando . . .*), while in (11) it is syntactically isolated:

- (151) ¿**Me entiendes** cuando te hablo muy rápidamente?
Do you understand me when I speak very quickly?
 (Chodorowska, 1997: 356)
- (152) Si yo, a mí eso me da igual ¿**me entiendes?** . . . Era más o menos para saberlo tú.
 Well me, it doesn't matter to me, **you know**, . . . I just wanted you to know it.
 (Chodorowska, 1997: 356)

3.2.4. Co-occurrence in contiguity

As DMs lose their original lexical meaning, it becomes possible for other items in the direct linguistic context to express that original lexical meaning, as can be seen in the following example:

- (153) **Allora**, ero assai giovane **allora**.
 Now, at that time he was quite young.
 (Bustorf, 1974: 24)

3.2.5. Deletion test

Finally, there is a deletion test that works with DMs. As Bazzanella (1990) points out, the content of an utterance is not altered if the DM is removed:

- (154) La via dove abito, sai, è così rumorosa.
 The street where I live, *you know*, is so noisy.
 (Bazzanella, 1990: 632).

4. Multifunctionality of DMs in discourse processing

4.1. Levels of discourse processing

Consider the telephone conversation in Table 1.

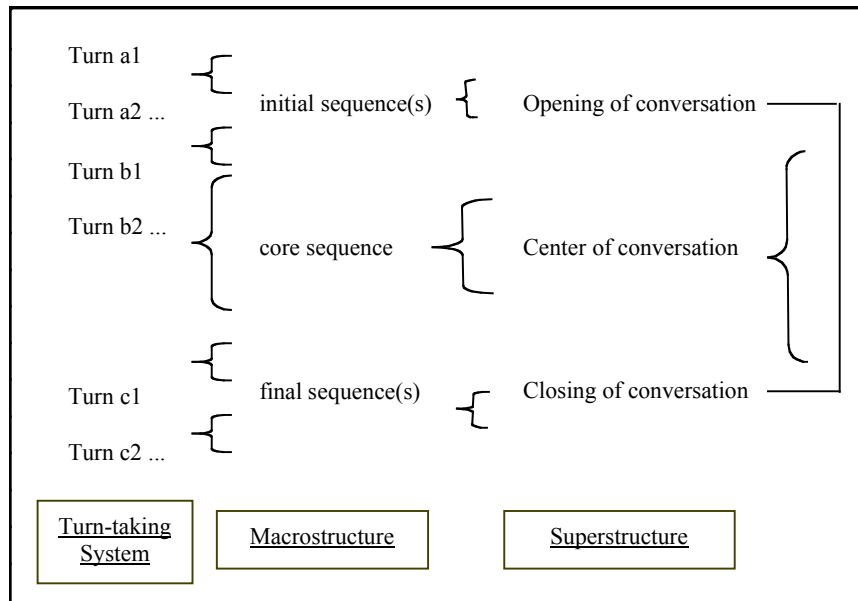
Table 1. Telephone conversation

1 A:	pronto?	Hello?
2 B:	<?> c'e' Paolo?	<?> Is Paolo there?
3 A:	eh no Paolo e' uscito ha detto che	Ah, no, Paolo's gone. He said that he
4 B:	tornava verso le sei	would be back around six
5 A:	va bene grazie	Okay, thank you
6 B:	cosa devo dire_?	Do you want to leave a message?
7 A:	sono Tiziana magari	I'm Tiziana perhaps I'll call again later, at
8 B:	richiamo_verso_ le sei e mezzo	about half past six
9 A:	ah va bene	Ah, okay
	grazie	Thank you
	niente arrivederci	You are welcome, good bye (LIP FB2)

The core part of this short conversation consists of two lines only (ll. 5-7). It is embedded in opening and closing routines. Opening, core, and closing parts of the conversation together form the global structure of a conversation, each of them being organized by pairs of speech acts or turns. In longer conversations, moreover, the core can be organized by different conversational subjects.

As has been shown in van Dijk (1980) and van Dijk and Kintsch (1978 and 1983), these organizational levels of conversation correspond to levels of discourse processing. Persons involved in a dialog perceive and produce the conversational interaction on these three levels of conversation structuring, illustrated in Fig. 1.

As research in conversational analysis has shown (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974; Gülich and Mondada, 2001; etc.), the first and basic structural instance of real-life conversation is the organization of turn taking. In order to guarantee correct functioning of a conversation, the participants have to deal with the two basic interactive problems of turn taking organization: they have to identify the moments in conversation when a change in turn is possible, and they have to manage the changes of the turn.

Figure 1. Levels of conversation structuring¹⁴

In order to minimize organizational problems, participants constantly and systematically look for possible moments of transition of the turn (Mondada, 2001; Gülich and Mondada, 2001). On this basic level of conversational interaction, we find the first and fundamental functions of new appearing DMs: they indicate the moments where a change in turn is possible (see examples in part 2).

Since participants methodically use DMs in a first instance to manage turn-taking problems, the process of pragmaticalization of a given item starts out at this basic level. It is then up to the participants in the dynamics of the verbal interaction whether the DMs are used (and interpreted) to refer to other levels of discourse processing.

Analytically, the distinction of different levels of conversation enables us to classify different functions of DMs according to the conversational level on which they operate. Thus, we can easily categorize the different functions of the Italian particle *va bene* in (14).

Va bene ('okay') is an example of positive backchannel behavior. Here, it metacommunicatively refers to the preceding speech act of the dialog partner. In making explicit that the message has been correctly understood and that there are no objections to its contents, *va bene* also serves as a closing signal to the turn. As such, it can very well serve as a signal to close the conversation as a whole, which indeed it does in line 7. The example of *va bene* shows that at least one aspect of the multifunctionality of DMs is

systematic. There is a principle behind the use of *va bene* which the dialog partners do indeed follow. The necessary condition for this broad functional use of *va bene* is given by its primary function on the basic level of conversation. This initial function remains an inherent feature in all the secondary functions that the particle may take on in a discourse setting.¹⁵

4.2. Types of DMs and their function at different levels of conversation

The role of the turn-taking system as the basic level of conversation becomes particularly clear when considering the fact that in many languages metacommunicative expressions are frequently used as DMs. As can be seen in (14), such expressions verbalize the basic communicative problems to be handled in turn taking:

- (155) A: *si_*
 B: *pronto_ sono <?>*
 A: ah **dimmi** ciao
 B: **di'** un po'
 A: **dimmi**
 B: c'e' questa storia che a Kuwait city stanno spegnendo l'ultimo pozzo . . .
 A: Yes_
 B: *Hallo_ its me <?>*
 A: ah **tell me**, hi
 B: **tell me** a little . . .
 A: **tell me**
 B: there is that story that in Kuwait City they are about to extinguish the last bore-hole . . .

(LIP MB6)

(14) is the beginning of a phone conversation. The DM *di/dimmi* functions on all three levels of discourse structuring: on the level of turn taking, it is used by both participants in order for them to yield the turn to the partner. In the fifth line, *dimmi* is placed at the end of the initial sequence and thus leads directly to the following first thematic sequence. In this instance *dimmi* also initiates the center of the conversation.

As they appear very frequently, these metacommunicative expressions are used in an automaticized way:

- (156) A: quando le mandi le lettere a Mario?
 B: quando tu non ci rompi le palle
 A: **senti** eh
 B: ah **dimmi**
 A: eh # Claudio non c'e' Gianni Oletta c'e'?
 A: when will you send them, the letters, to Mario
 B: when you've finished getting on my nerves
 A: **Listen**
 B: **Yes?**
 A: Ah # Claudio, is Gianni Oletta, isn't he there?

(LIP NB2)

Table 2 shows examples for this type of DMs in several languages.

Table 2. Basic communicative needs on the turn-taking level and their metacommunicative equivalents¹⁶

	verbalized speech act	verbalized act of reception
X wants to take (keep) the turn	<i>voglio dire...</i> (LIP MA4) <i>let me tell you – I'll tell you something ...</i> (Schiffrin, 1980: 207) <i>je voulais seulement dire que ... je voudrais simplement dire ...</i> (Meyer-Hermann, 1978: 131/139) <i>ich wollte sagen, ... darf ich hier mal einhaken</i> (Schwitalla, 1976: 83)	<i>senta una cosa</i> (LIP FA 12) <i>yeah but listen to me ...</i> (Schegloff, 1972: 353) <i>écoutez mon cher ...</i> (Meyer-Hermann, 1978: 134)
X wants to quit (stay out of) the turn	<i>Patrizia dimmi una cosa</i> (LIP FB 5) <i>say, can you lend me a dime?</i> (Schiffrin, 1987: 328) <i>alors, dites euh c'est pas loin ... ?</i> (Koch and Oesterreicher, 1990: 57)	<i>fammi sentire</i> (LIP FB5) <i>fatemi sentire</i> (LIP NA3) <i>fammi sapere</i> (LIP MB3)

Another type of DM makes a metacommunicative comment on the preceding turn. As we have seen in (13), expressions like Italian *va bene* function on the basic level of discourse structuring as signals for the turn holder that the reception process has been successful and, therefore, that he can stay on the turn. In making explicit that the turn is closed, they can then be used as cues for those points in the conversation where a change of turn becomes possible. All types of back-channel expressions can be used in this way, i.e., to mark the end of a turn. In fact, they very often serve the hearer to prepare his taking over of the turn:

- (157) C: il discorso di fondo e' diverso
 A: **si' va bene** ma voglio dire
 ...
 C: no non e'riprovevole e' che fa schifo
 A: **va be'** per<r> per me voleva dire ...

- C: the basic discourse is different
 A: yes, okay, but I want to say
 ...
 C: No, it's not something to disapprove of, it's simply disgusting
 A: okay, for, for me I wanted to say ...

(LIP RA4)

- (158) N: ah **ho capito va be' allora senti** ...
 N: Ah, I see, okay, now listen ...

(LIP MA21)

A third type of DMs comments on the structure of the conversation itself. These expressions present the discourse as temporal or local movement and mark salient points in it (English *now*, Italian *allora*, French *alors*, German *nun*; English *then*, Italian *poi*, French *puis*; Italian *ecco*, *quindi*, French *voilà*); they present the discourse as the development of an argumentative chain (English *but*, Italian *ma*, French *mais*, German *aber*; English *however*, Italian *invece*, French *par contre*, German *dagegen*); or they sum up the communication (Italian *insomma*, French *enfin*, German *also*).

On the basic level of conversation these DMs are used to guide the attention of the participants towards the following speech act and, in doing so, eventually to the following turn, thus preparing its beginning. On the macrostructural level, they can be used to introduce a new thematic sequence:

- (159) B: questo anzi e' uno simpatico
 A: vabbe' eh
 B: e tu come stai **invece**?
 A: niente io sto_ sto molto bene
 sono un po'_ cosi' un po'_ # ...
 B: he's a nice guy, as well
 A: okay
 B: and you, **for your part**, how are you?
 A: nothing, I feel_feel very good I'm a little_ ah a little_ # ...

(LIP RA1)

On the level of superstructure, they can function as initial signal for the center part of the conversation (see French *alors* in (3), Italian *allora* in (4)) or the closing of the conversation:

- (160) B: ahah Giovanna **insomma** ci si sente
 A: va bene
 B: va bene
 A: okay
 B: ciao ciao
 A: ciao
 B: ahah Giovanna, **so**, we will speak again
 A: okay
 B: okay
 A: okay

B: bye, bye
 A: bye

(LIP FB1)

4.3. How do the participants handle the multifunctionality of DMs?

The question remains as to how the participants understand the correct meaning of DMs and react adequately to it in conversation. We have seen that the first and basic function of DMs lies on the level of the succession of turns. This very fact shows that it is up to the participant in the ad hoc situation to decide upon the value of a given DM. From the perspective of the hearer, a DM that closes a turn, for example, presents a choice. He is free to take the turn and continue the thematic sequence, he can start a new theme, or he can start the routines to end the conversation.

Of course, the range of possible and adequate reactions is not completely open. It is determined on the one side by the basic function of the DM—to close, to open, to prepare—and on the other side by the three levels of conversation processing: a turn, a thematic sequence, the conversation.

Thus, the multifunctionality of DMs evolves in response to the dynamics of free spoken conversation where each turn, each new theme, and each start or end of conversation as a whole has to be negotiated spontaneously. The processes whereby mutual meta-communication indicates possible moments of turn change are necessarily open ones, to be determined by the negotiations of the participants.

5. Perspectives

As we have seen, at least a great part of the initially mentioned problems in the analysis of DMs as a functional class are due to the fact that DMs belong to the linguistic domain of discourse, a domain which is essentially determined by the dynamics of ongoing interactional processes. In discourse, meanings are not predefined and stable but constantly negotiated, altered, innovated, and attributed to the different levels of discourse processing. In the study of DMs, this basic value of any element of the analytic level of discourse has to be taken seriously.

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Notes

¹ Cf. Croft (2000) for the definition of lexical vs. grammatical meaning.

² For Coseriu, discourse or “text” represents an autonomous linguistic level.

³ Datenbank Gesprochenes Deutsch of the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache*, Mannheim:
<http://dsav-oeff.ids-mannheim.de/DSAv/>.

⁴ *Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato a cura di* Tullio de Mauro, Federico Mancini, Massimo Vedovelli, Miriam Voghera, Etaslibri, Fondazione IBM Italia (Milano) 1993 (LIP).

⁵ This definition excludes modal particles from the class of DMs.

⁶ As a result of this process however, grammaticalization and pragmaticalization differ considerably. Thus, grammaticalization results in the formation of new grammatical items:

“[grammaticalization is] le processus par lequel une unité lexicale d’une langue se développe, au cours du temps, en unité grammaticale, ou une unité grammaticale en unité plus grammaticale encore. . . . ce qui est en cause, c’est l’évolution morphogénétique par laquelle les langues spécifient leur grammaire” (Hagège, 2001: 1608-9).

The relations between grammaticalization and pragmaticalization, though, will not form the center of my attention. In my eyes, the main difference between the two processes consists in the linguistic status of the domain in which the new (pragmatic) meaning functions. In the case of grammaticalization, the domain to which the new meanings belong is that of the grammar of a historical *language*. In the case of DM, the domain is that of *discourse* (Coseriu, 1981b; see note 3 above). With this distinction in mind, I also refer to Oesterreicher (1997) and to Koch (forthcoming). In addition to Coseriu, Koch and Oesterreicher distinguish on the historical level between *Einzelssprache* (“historical language”) on the one hand and *Diskurstradition* (“discourse traditions”) on the other. The turn-taking rules that fulfil DMs in spoken conversations belong to the second level, whereas the grammatical norms and rules belong to the first one.

⁷ For the problem-solving and routinization aspect of grammar see Lüdtke (1988) and Hagège (2001).

⁸ It is characteristic for all long term processes in language change that for a relatively long period of time, new meanings and functions coexist with older meanings and functions.

⁹ Another view on the same processes is given by Waltereit (1999, this volume). For the parallel processes of grammaticalization of German modal particles see Diewald (this volume). For studies on diachronic aspects of DMs, see Stein (1985), Brinton (1996), Onodera (1995), Manoliu (2000), Schwenter and Traugott (2000), and Auer and

Günthner (2003). Only a few studies exist on spoken discourse in past stages of Romance languages; see Spitzer (1922), Schlieben-Lange (1983), Koch (1995, forthcoming).

- ¹⁰ “Das sprachtheoretische Axiom, daß alle Sprachzeichen *Symbole* derselben Art sein müssen, ist zu eng; denn einige darunter wie die Zeigwörter erweisen sich als *Signale*. Und von einem Signal darf man nicht dasselbe verlangen wie von einem (reinen) Symbol, weil zwischen beiden ein sematologischer Unterschied besteht. Die Zeigwörter sind eine eigene Klasse von Signalen, nämlich Rezeptionssignale (verschieden von den Aktionssignalen, zu denen der Imperativ gehört). Ein *dér* oder *ich* löst eine bestimmte Blickwendung u. dgl. und in ihrem Gefolge eine Rezeption aus.” (Bühler, 1934: 52-57)
- ¹¹ The occurring DMs are the following (in the order of their frequency): *ma* (176 occurrences), *ciao* (122), *ecco* (97), *pronto* (77), *va bene* (68, among them 22 *va be'*), *sentì* (55), *allora* (44), *dimmi* (23), *sentiamo* (13), *ho capito* (12), *vedi* (12), *guarda* (9), *insomma* (9), *niente* (7), *volevo dire* (2); the total number of words is 7739.
- ¹² See Moeschler (1996: 191): “bon **ben** oui – mais là c'en était pis voilà”.
- ¹³ For the analysis of typical prosodic features belonging to DMs, see Bazzanella (this volume, section 2.2.3).
- ¹⁴ See Bergmann (1981), van Dijk (1980), Fritz (1994), Henne and Rehbock (1982), Mondada (2001: 6), Gülich and Mondada (2002: 206ff.).
- ¹⁵ In most of the cases, this basic discourse-marking meaning conserves central features of the propositional meaning of the same word or expression. See Bazzanella (this volume, section 2.2.2); Fischer (2000, this volume) for the concept of a “core” meaning which the DM and its propositional origin have in common.
- ¹⁶ See also Schwitalla (1976: 82-83) and Bazzanella (1990: 640). In many languages, DMs have been pragmaticalized out of these direct verbalizations of turn-taking devices.