

**THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG
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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO DISCOURSE
MARKERS IN CONVERSATIONS USED IN
ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE SHORT STORIES**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

Literature is the foundation of life. It expresses an emphasis on many issues from human life and society in all time. It is claimed that literature has the role to reflect real things both in mental and physical life. Literature is an integral part of language and it is a useful means to show the beauty of a language. Literature helps people to see through the lenses of others and sometimes even inanimate objects. Literature, therefore, provides people with a lot of experiences from sad stories and happy ones which can touch in heart. With writers, to reach beauty in a word, they use varieties of linguistic means. One of the useful literature means is discourse markers.

In fact, discourse markers are referred to as linking words, linking phrases and sentence connectors, they are the “glues” which help the content of the text to become smooth and attractive to readers. Warner (1988) stated that “Discourse markers are discourse lubricants which help us to introduce a topic of conversation, to link what we have to say to what someone has just said to agree or disagree, to respond to what we have heard” [48, p.4]. This is the first important reason why I choose to study the discourse markers (DMs). Furthermore, I will focus on investigating the use of discourse markers because the knowledge of discourse markers helps people to apply in teaching foreign languages in general and language skills in particular.

Let's compare the following two examples – one without DMs.

1. Freddy: I don't want to interrupt you.

Lind Seth: How can I help you?

Freddy: I like to ask you to sign a permission slip to take the course you teaching next term.

Lind Seth: I'm glad you decide to take it...

[5, p.74]

In (1) there are not any mistakes with conversation structure, with the informative exchange, but this conversation is not authentic and it lacks the communicative interaction signals.

2. Freddy: Excuse me, I don't want to interrupt you...

Lind Seth: No, no. it's quite alright. How can I help you?

Freddy: Well, I would like to ask you to sign a permission slip to take the course you are teaching next term.

Lind Seth: Of course, Freddy. Actually, I'm glad you have decided to take it... [5. p.74]

A conversation can only be real if it contains DMs that help to catch listeners' attention such as "excuse me", or replying "no" or "of course", or limiting the meaning with "would like/actually/quite", and even fillers to smoothen the conversation like "well".

From the two examples, it can be seen that DMs, play active roles in discourse. In most cases, some factors decide the successful

interaction: the introducers, the social context, the state of consciousness, and the communication control. Obviously, House and Edmondson (1981) stated that “a conversational gap that might hinder the smooth flow of an ongoing talk” [44, p.69], so DMs play the role of the discourse lubricant that help to plug.

With these above mentioned reasons, I decide to conduct a study entitled “AN INVESTIGATION INTO DISCOURSE MARKERS USED IN SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE”.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Aims

The study aims to examine the discourse markers used in short stories in English and Vietnamese in order to provide learners with knowledge of discourse markers in these short stories so that they will be able to use them more accurately in their English learning.

1.2.2. Objectives

This study is intended to:

- Investigate the discourse markers used in short stories in English and Vietnamese.
- Apply the discourse marker theory in order to analyze semantic and syntactic features used in the short stories in English and Vietnamese.
- Make suggestions for language teaching and learning.

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research aims at investigating discourse markers used in short stories in English and Vietnamese. This research concentrates on investigating the collection of stories of women writers in the mid-21st century and this research only concentrates on investigating the short stories which have from 1,000 words to 1,200 words.

1.4. RESERCH QUESTIONS

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the discourse markers used in the short stories in English?
2. What are the discourse markers used in the short stories in Vietnamese?
3. What are the similarities and differences of the discourse markers used in the short stories in English and Vietnamese?

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The intention of this study is intended to express the functions and features of discourse markers the communicative interaction signals - doing functions to lubricate a conversation and to help Vietnamese learners of English as well as language teachers know all about the three functions of discourse markers in short stories in English and Vietnamese. Besides, it helps the learners to understand more about the importance of using discourse markers as a means of lubricating sentences. Moreover, the study provides learners with knowledge of discourse markers used in the short stories in English and Vietnamese in order to apply in teaching and learning English.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH

This study has 5 chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: “Introduction”

Chapter 2: “Literature Review”

Chapter 3: “Methods and Procedures”

Chapter 4: “Findings and Discussion”

Chapter 5: “Conclusion”

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourse markers expressions like well, but... are one set of linguistic items that function in discourses of various styles or registers. Fraser (1998) calls discourse markers “a growth market in linguistics” (p.8). Since the late 1980’s discourse markers have been studied in a variety of languages and examined in a variety of genres and interactive contexts, though many scholars do not agree on how to define them, even what to call them. Redeker (1991) calls them discourse operators and defines them as “a word or phrase, for instance, a conjunction, adverbial, comment clause, interjection that is uttered with the primary function of bringing to listener’s attention a particular kind of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context” (p.168) Schiffrin (1987) defines discourse markers at a more theoretical level as “members of a functional class of verbal and nonverbal devices which provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk” (p.41). Fraser (1998) defines “a discourse marker is a lexical expression which signals the relation of either contrast (John is fat but Marry is thin), implication (John is here, so we can start the party), or elaboration (John went home. Furthermore, he took his toys)” (p.302). Discourse markers have variant degrees of semantic meaning, they are utterance-initial and they can signal a discourse relationship or signal a writer’s or a speaker’s attitude.

A text that is well organized requires cohesion and coherence at the same time. Building sentences, in a way, is the

organization of a written discourse and a text. But unlike putting up one brick on another, sentences must relate to each other and discourse needs to follow grammatical rules. Halliday and Hasan (1976) identify five main cohesive devices in English discourse: reference, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion and conjunction. Halliday defines conjunction, or connective element, as discourse markers, which are the use of formal sentences to connect separate sentences, clauses and paragraphs to one another. The use of conjunction is different to that of reference, substitution and ellipsis in a way that it provides no instruction to the readers in supplying missing information by finding it somewhere else in the sentence and by filling structural slots. By contrast, conjunction support the writers by connecting what is about to be mentioned to what has been mentioned previously.

There are a lot of research on discourse markers which are related to this research:

Schiffirin (1983) analyzed how individual expressions can be used to constitute conversational interaction and making discourse cohesive. Such language tools were supposed to be discourse markers with semantic function, apart from attitudinal devices that present the speaker's attitude on the proposition (Biber, 1999).

Biber, (1999) conceived such linguistic devices as discourse markers with semantic function; besides attitudinal devices expressing the speaker's attitude toward the proposition typically conveying an evaluation, value judgment, or assessment of expectation were examined thoroughly.

Jones (1990) points out some techniques of DMs. The author states that hesitation is a natural part of using a language. Most people need to hesitate a lot during a conversation. Expressions useful for this aim are how shall I put it?, let's see now, you see, you know, actually...

Recently, there have been some Vietnamese researchers such as Diep Quang Ban (1999) Nguyen Thien Giap (2002) who suggest using backchannels such as *tốt thôi, để xem đã, thế à, ừ, à...* as one of the ways to facilitate the continuation of a conversation. These expressions indicate to the speaker that his or her message has been received.

Diep Quang Ban (1999) presents cohesive devices and divides link words into four categories according to their semantic relations like Halliday's: Additive, Adversative, Casual, Temporal...

Until now, a number of previous studies have shown the importance of syntactics or, semantics, but there have been few the authors mentioning two features: syntactics and semantics as this paper. Some master studies at the University of Da Nang will be used at references as:

Nguyen Van Muoi (2011) "A Study of the Syntactic, Semantic, and Pragmatic Features of Discourse Markers Only and in Vietnamese Translational Equivalents" deals with the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic generalizations on linking words. Bui Thuy Linh (2011) "An Insightful Investigation into Discourse Markers in the Conversation of the Current English Textbooks Used in Vietnamese High Schools from a Pragmatic Perspective" deals with

discourse markers in the conversation that are useful for preventing a conversation from a sudden closure.

Ha Nguyen Bao Tien (2003), in her master thesis “An Investigation into Stance Markers Affecting the Content of the Utterance” investigates the structure relation between the constituent presenting the personal stance and the constituent presenting the qualified proposition.

Besides, there has been so far no research into discourse markers used in short stories in English and Vietnamese, so I have decided on the thesis entitled “AN INVESTIGATION INTO DISCOURSE MARKERS USED IN SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE”.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1. Semantic features

2.1.2. Syntactic features

2.2.1. The concept of discourse

2.2.2. Features of discourse

2.3.1. Discourse markers

2.3. SUMMARY

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, I use two research methods in investigating the data: qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method is used in analyzing data so that I can find out the discourse markers used in short stories in English and Vietnamese. Besides, the quantitative method is used to identify the rate and provide statistics of frequencies of occurrence in percentage which helps to have clear evidences. In addition, some other methods can be employed in the study:

Firstly, the descriptive method provides a detail description of discourse markers used in short stories in English and Vietnamese.

Secondly, the analytic method is used in order to clarify and justify certain aspects in detail. In addition, it is very necessary to have a deep appreciation about the data in short stories in English and Vietnamese. Finally, the synthetic method is used in order to give a whole insight of the discourse markers.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.4. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The procedure of the study is carried out by the following steps:

- Downloading the data of the short stories in English and Vietnamese

- Reading theoretical background of discourse markers.
- Reading samples in the data of the short stories in English and Vietnamese
- Reading some previous researches related to this study.
- Classifying of samples in terms of the mentioned linguistic features and analyzing them.
- Finding out discourse markers used in the short stories

3.5. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

3.6. SUMMARY

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. OCCURENCES AND FREQUENCY OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMSES

Table 4.1: Occurrences and Frequency of DMs in Short Stories

Types of DMs	Openers	Links	Responders	Closers	Polite markers	Total
Occurrences	128	758	121	3	2	1012
Frequency	12.64%	74.9 %	11.95%	0.29%	0.19%	100%

4.1.1. Links

DMs and conjunction that are considered to be in this type are respectively ones that contribute to develop conversation and state the connection among propositions.

Table 4.2: Occurrences and Frequency of Links in Short Stories

Meanings	DMs	Occurrence	Frequency	Total
Adversative	But	296	39. 05%	296
Additive	..too, ..either/neither And	5 1 409	54.75%	415
Causal	so	37	4.88%	37

Temporal	then	10	10 1.32%	10
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4.1.2. Openers

This includes all DMs and tokens employed to initiate a conversation, to start off a question/ suggestion/ topic.

Table 4.3. Occurrences and Frequency of Openers in Short Stories

Meanings	DMs	Occurrence	Frequency	Total
Getting attention	Oh, well, ok, yes, now	108	84.38%	108
Introducing aspects of a topic	First, next	7	5.7%	7
Opinion	think/guess	1	0.78%	1
Action strategies	Would you like...? Can/could ...	10 2	9.37%	12

4.1.3. Responders

DMs of this type appear in replies

Table 4.4. Occurrences and Frequency of Responders in Short Stories

Meanings	DMs	Occurrence	Frequency	Total
Agreement/disagreement	Yes	78	82.03%	105

	too	15		
	No	5		
	Sure	6		
	Of course	1		
Acknowledgement	Know/see	1	0.78%	1
Compliment	Great	2	7.81%	10
	It's very	3		
	nice	5		
	thanks			
Modality	Perhaps/maybe	7	9.4%	12
		5		
	Little, too			

4.1.4. Closers

The occurrence of closing DMs prepares interlocutors a farewell. Usually they are in last turns.

Table 4.5: Occurrences and Frequency of Closers in Short Stories

Meanings	DMs	Occurrences	Total Frequency	Total
Casual closing	Thanks/good bye	2	3 66,7%	3
Formal	Not at all	1	133.33%	1

Closing				
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4.1.5. Polite Markers

Including in the group are honorifics: please, kindly..

Table 4.6. Occurrences and Frequency of Polite Markers in Short Stories

Meaning	DMs	Occurrences	Total
Softening the face threat	please	2	2

4.2. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF DMS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.2.1. Positions of DMs in Sentence

4.2.1.1. Initial Position

For example, when DMs are placed in the beginning position of the clause, regardless of the presence of juncture, they will appear before subject or other compulsory constituents of the clause.

4.2.1.2. Medial Position

The medial position can be identified after the lexical verb and in front of other obligatory element of the clause.

4.2.1.3. Final Position

It is difficult to find out DMs in the final position.

4.2.2. Syntactic Functions of DMs in Short Stories in English and Vietnamese.

4.2.2.1. Premodifying a Noun Phrase

There are many instances of DMs assuming the position of an approximation before a noun phrase, premodifying a noun or noun phrase seems to be the most frequently used function of DMs.

4.2.2.2. Premodifying an Adjectival or an Adverbial Phrase.

Comparing to an adjective which modifies a noun or a pronoun, an adverb can modify even more types of words such as a verb, an adjective, another adverb itself, a clause or a phrase. The adverb is utilised to define or set a boundary for the meaning of a word, a phrase or a clause, which otherwise are too wide, by adding information about who, how, and to what extent.

4.2.2.3. Premodifying a Declarative Content, or an Imperative Clause

It would be a serious mistake if we studied the syntactic features of DMs without mentioning that DMs can premodify a declarative, an interrogative an exclamative or an imperative clause.

4.2.2.4. Premodifying a Verb

For most English sentences a crucial part of meaning resides in the verb, the concept expressed by the verb is typically the heart of the propositional content of a sentence. It is obvious that the pre-verb position of DMs gives more information to the verb.

4.3. SEMANTIC FEATURES OF DMS IN SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.3.1. DMs Achieved by Means of Thematic

Thematic structure is the factor that defines the basic framework of semantic features of DMs. The first factor can be expressed as textual themes, which are expected to be from another

group of linking words, and hence a set of conjunctions is an indicator of textual themes. The initial position of conjunctions gives them the thematic status. Take an example, in a text, conjunctions such as *if*, *although*, *unless*, *because*, and *in order to* are likely to introduce dependent clauses which enhance the argument. Other conjunctive adjuncts such as *therefore*, *nevertheless*, *in addition*, *finally* and *in conclusion* may also be thematic if they occur at the beginning of a clause to signpost the development of the text.

4.3.2. DMs Achieved by Means of Thematic Progression

A great number of linguists maintain that any text may be represented as a sequence of themes. The characteristics of the thematic structure of a text are realized by a special cohesion of themes, their connections with separate parts of the text and the text in general. Dane [20, p.7] called the whole complex thematic relations in the text “thematic progression”. That is the progression from theme to rheme in a clause. the thematic progression contributes to the text coherence significantly.

Butt (1995) stated that at the level of clause complex, the first clause is considered to be thematic [24]. In some cases, the entire first clause can be regarded as theme for the second as in the following:

When she got there (theme) the cupboard was bare (rheme)

The first clause of the first clause complex signals what the paragraph is concerned with, the writer’s point of departure for what will come text. This part of the paragraph is often called the topic sentence. Texts also have a point of departure - the first paragraph

generally frames the rest of the text and introduces the main thrust of what is to follow.

Over the past decade, thematic progression has been widely studied in terms of an effective means of analyzing how text is developed since it indicates the basic principle of text development. According to Dane (1974) thematic progressions are abstract models that underlie the structure of a text. The patterns of thematic progression distinguished by Danes rarely occur independently in texts. In most cases, there is usually a combination of these patterns across various text types.

To identify how substantial the contribution of thematic progression is to writing coherence, one must look into the flow of the information in the clauses. It is essential that short stories use signposts by positioning components from the Rheme of one clause onto the theme of the next, and reiterating an implication from the theme of one clause in one of consequent clauses, that way, the readers can follow the progression of that stories effortlessly.

4.4. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DMS IN SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.4.1. Similarities and Differences in Syntactic Features of DMs in English and Vietnamese

4.4.1.1. Similarities

Table 4.7: Similarities in Syntactic Positions and Syntactic Functions of DMs in English and Vietnamese

No	Syntactic Function of DMs	In English	In Vietnamese

1	Premodifying a noun phrase	+	+
2	Premodifying an adjectival phrase	+	+
3	Premodifying a verb phrase	+	+

4.4.1.2. Differences

There are some differences in syntactic positions and function of DMs in English and Vietnamese as show in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Difference in Syntactic Positions and Syntactic Functions of DMs in English and Vietnamese

No	Syntactic Function of DMs	In English	In Vietnamese
3	Premodifying an adverbial phrase	+	–
5	Premodifying a declarative content clause	+	–
6	Premodifying an imperative clause	+	–

4.4.2. Similarities and Differences in the Semantic Features in English and Vietnamese

4.4.2.1 Similarities

Table 4.9. Textual theme in English and Vietnamese

Textual theme	English		Vietnamese	
	Occurrence	Rate	Occurrence	Rate
Coordinating conjunctions	572	59.7%	439	64.5%
Subordinating conjunctions	386	40.3%	242	35.5%
Total	958	100%	681	100%

Table 4.10. Thematic Progression in short stories in English and Vietnamese

Pattern	English		Vietnamese	
	Occurrence	Rate	Occurrence	Rate
Linear theme	545	39.3 %	505	41.3%
Constant theme	843	60.7%	718	58.7 %
Total	1388	100%	1223	100%

4.4.2.2. Differences

4.7. SUMMARY

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

In this chapter 4, we have analyzed semantic and syntactic features of DMs in short stories in English and Vietnamese.

Firstly, the theoretical background which lays the foundation for the thesis is a brief literature review of such dimension as DMs, characteristics of DMs, function of DMs, and classification of DMs of which the last three are central. The characteristics of DMs are viewed in the aspects of meaning and position privilege. As regards to DM functions, and some different classifications of DMs are critically reviewed, and the most favored is that of Keller and Warmer combined with Nguyen Quang Bang's suggestions. According to this classification, there are five main categories of DMs: Openers, Links, Responders, Closers, and Polite Marker and these are sub-categorized into 22 groups.

The data analysis shows that DMs in short stories in English and Vietnamese have the five main above-mentioned categories though their proportions are not evenly distributed. Links and Openers are the most and second most frequently used, accounting for 74.90% and 12,64%, responders ranks the third with 11.95%. The least common of the five is Polite Markers with 0.19%.

Secondly, syntactically, DMs in English and Vietnamese appear in initial and medial positions. Besides, syntactic function has 6 functions as follows:

- Premodifying a noun phrase
- Premodifying an adjectival phrase

- Premodifying an adverbial phrase
- Premodifying a verb phrase
- Premodifying a declarative content clause
- Premodifying an imperative clause

Thirdly, thematic structure and thematic progression types help to accomplish DMs in English and Vietnamese short stories. The presence of such thematic structure and progression is so important that it is often acknowledged in not only English but also Vietnamese short stories, involving textual theme for thematic structure, and constant theme and linear theme for thematic progression. Via these types of thematic structure and progression where stimulating and essential part of the text inhibits in the temporary position, rheme arises as the subject of the following sentences. . Therefore, it is easy for the reader or listener to follow the train of thought of the short stories. In short, the thematic structure and thematic progression are skillfully used in English and Vietnamese short stories.

To sum up, discourse markers give their user's attitude to the information to which they relate, and DMs have an good efficient and felicitous means of facilitating the smooth production... therefore, the user should have a balanced use of DMs so that the users can use language which has natural, lively and authentic lubricant.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS

5.2.1. Implications for Teaching

It is not easy to use DMs correctly or to transfer them properly, and this score of the study will be useful for teachers. It equips teachers with general knowledge or understanding expressions in terms of

DMs in short stories in English and Vietnamese. Moreover, the findings of this thesis will help teachers in teaching the language skills because if teachers are highly aware of DMs, they can help students use DMs effectively and smoothly.

5.2.2. Implications for Students

Learners of language can gain many benefits from the outcome of this study. The grasp of DMs' theory and how they work provides student the understanding of syntactic and semantic features in any text, and therefore, helps to build a solid foundation to consolidate their language skills and translation. Besides, vocabulary and grammar rules are not the only prerequisites when students start learning a new language, writing a coherent and cohesive paragraph is as important in comparison. They can know how to use DMs, meanings of expressions more effectively. Thus, this research paper will help students deal with this.

5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The thesis has been completed with my greatest effort and to the best of my knowledge and understanding. However I cannot avoid mistakes and inadequacies due to the limited knowledge, these limitations of time, reference documents and other constrains relating to the researcher's ability. Besides, this thesis concentrates only on analyzing DMs in short stories in English and Vietnamese, ways to achieve DMs short stories, without aiming at analyzing errors relating to DMs, comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences in way to achieve DMs in English and Vietnamese as well. For these limitations, I would be very grateful to receive any comments from teachers and friends, I hope to make the research a truly better one.

5.4. SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

Some recommendations for further research would be highly put forward as follows:

1. Language and emotion: discourse-pragmatic perspective
2. Analyzing Discourse Marker Sequences
3. The Use of Discourse Markers in Academic Writing.