The effects of informal communication through technologies on learners’ use of discourse markers

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Christina Lyrigkou
The Open University, UK
christina.lyrigkou@open.ac.uk
Introduction

Informal L2 Contact → learners’ L2 contact outside the classroom through informal sources

➢ early research: e.g. Krashen (1976), Pickard (1995)
➢ Extramural English (Sundqvist, 2009; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016)
➢ Informal Digital Learning of English (Lee & Dressman, 2018)
➢ Mobile Assisted Language Use (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013; Jarvis & Krashen, 2014)

Common characteristics:
• Informal (mainly online) sources → not designed for language learning purposes
• Individualised, learner-initiated
• Learning: intentional vs. incidental / by-product
Informal L2 sources

Then:

traditional sources

Now:

Web 2.0 technologies
Previous research

• Exploratory studies:
  - type of learners’ informal L2 contact (Rothoni, 2017; Trinder, 2017)
  - frequency of learners’ informal L2 contact (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013; Lai & Zheng, 2017)
  - learner attitudes & perceptions (Lintunen, Mutta & Pelttari, 2017)

• Studies that report positive correlations between informal L2 contact and:
  - lexicogrammatical knowledge (Cole & Vanderplank, 2016; Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015)
  - listening & reading scores (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013)
  - written fluency, accuracy & complexity (Kusyk, 2017)
  - oral fluency (Sundqvist, 2009) & speaking scores (Lee & Dressman, 2017)

• Literature Gap:
  - learners’ communicative language choices in spoken discourse
  - L2 pragmatics, e.g. discourse markers
## Discourse Markers in learners’ spoken production


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2</th>
<th>Grammar and Vocabulary</th>
<th>Discourse Management</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Interactive Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms.</td>
<td>Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation.</td>
<td>Is intelligible.</td>
<td>Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a wide range of familiar topics.</td>
<td>Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas.</td>
<td>Intonation is appropriate.</td>
<td>Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.</td>
<td>Sentence and word stress is accurately placed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms.</td>
<td>Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation.</td>
<td>Is intelligible.</td>
<td>Initiates and responds appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a range of familiar topics.</td>
<td>Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition.</td>
<td>Intonation is generally appropriate.</td>
<td>Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses a range of cohesive devices.</td>
<td>Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms.</td>
<td>Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation.</td>
<td>Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.</td>
<td>Contributions are mostly relevant, despite some repetition.</td>
<td>Initiates and responds appropriately.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses basic cohesive devices.</td>
<td>Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Performance below Band 1.*
What are Discourse Markers (DMs)

**Definitional** fuzziness (Schourup, 1999; Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999)

Aijmer (2002): Intra-textual and Interpersonal functions

**Categorization:** included: “well”, “you know”, “like”, “and stuff”

(colloquial)

excluded: “furthermore”, “moreover”, “secondly”

(also found in formal oral and written discourse)

Bottom-up approach → particularities in each student’s discourse
Factors associated with DM use

• Existing Literature:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual (learner-internal) factors</th>
<th>Contextual (learner-external) factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>learner identity (e.g. Liao, 2009)</td>
<td>L2 proficiency (e.g. Müller, 2005; Neary-Sundquist, 2014; Fung &amp; Carter, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 acculturation (e.g. Diskin, 2017; Liao, 2009; Müller, 2005; Hellermann &amp; Vergun, 2007)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>formal L2 instruction (controversial) (e.g. Polat, 2011; McCarthy &amp; McCarten, 2018; Jones &amp; Carter, 2014; Buysse, 2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Literature Gap:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual (learner-internal) factors</th>
<th>Contextual (learner-external) factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>learner motivation (e.g. Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2016)</td>
<td>individualised informal L2 contact (e.g. Cole &amp; Vanderplank, 2016; Kuppens, 2010; Sockett, 2014; Sundqvist, 2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

• **RQ1** Do learners of the same CEFR\(^1\) level and with high grades in spoken production differ in the frequency, range and functions of the discourse markers they use?

• **RQ2** Are there any differences between high achieving learners with broader DM use and high achieving learners with more limited DM use, in the frequency, range and nature of *informal contact with English*?

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\(^1\)CEFR=Common European Framework of Reference for languages, Council of Europe (2001)
Methodology of pilot study

• **Sample**: 7 Greek adolescent learners of English – B2 level

• **7 Data Collection Instruments**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA COLLECTION TOOL</th>
<th>DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>speaking activities</td>
<td>students’ DM frequency, range and functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus group discussion</td>
<td>trends among adolescents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“monthly L2 contact” questionnaire</td>
<td>informal language contact - last month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“daily L2 contact” survey-diary</td>
<td>informal language contact - last 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student interviews</td>
<td>showcase of informal contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher interviews</td>
<td>role of formal instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher discourse audio-recordings</td>
<td>discourse markers in formal settings &amp; nature of formal instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• **Ethics**
  - adolescents
  - researcher’s access to online content and private info
RQ1 Do learners of the same CEFR level and with high grades in spoken production differ in their use of discourse markers?

Frequency and Range of DM use

- **well**
- **so**
- **like**
- **I mean**
- **actually**
- **and stuff**
- **you know**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>well</th>
<th>so</th>
<th>like</th>
<th>I mean</th>
<th>actually</th>
<th>and stuff</th>
<th>you know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **considerable DM use**
- **moderate DM use**
- **limited DM use**
RQ1 Do learners of the same CEFR level and with high grades in spoken production differ in their use of discourse markers?

• *I’m trying not to be. I mean, you know, influence is big in our days […]* (S1-considerable DM use)

• *I saw all different kinds of people who were like kind of faking everything […]* (S2-considerable DM use)

• *umm well I have visited a lot of islands […]* (S3-moderate DM use)

• *[…] so that I can call my parents and stuff* (S4-moderate DM use)

• *I see other people who do it and I find it really annoying. I mean, who cares if you woke up.* (S5-moderate DM use)
RQ1 Do learners of the same CEFR level and with high grades in spoken production differ in their use of discourse markers?

• S6 & S7 → LIMITED use of colloquial discourse markers, but:

• (Student 6) “Truth be told, I really use my phone”

• (Student 7) “On the one hand, we have more things to do with our mobile phones or social media but on the other hand we spend less time with our friends face to face”
RQ2: Are there any differences between high-achieving learners with broader DM use and high-achieving learners with more limited DM use, in the frequency, range and nature of informal contact with English?

### FROM LEAST TO MOST FREQUENTLY PRACTISED INFORMAL L2 ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1-3 times a month</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write a blog in English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read blogs in English</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read articles in English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat online in English</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read posts &amp; comments in English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch short videos in English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to songs with English lyrics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Choice of media for informal L2 contact - Percentage of Use

- Smartphone: 65%
- Laptop: 26%
- Other (e.g. TV, cinema, radio, etc.): 9%

@LyrigkouC
**RQ2:** Are there any differences between high-achieving learners with broader DM use and high-achieving learners with more limited DM use, in the frequency, range and nature of informal contact with English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Discourse Marker Use</th>
<th>Favourite frequently practised informal activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Considerable Use</td>
<td>Skype <strong>spoken &amp; written communication</strong> in English with French friend of higher proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Considerable Use</td>
<td>WhatsApp <strong>spoken communication</strong> in English with Greek friend of higher proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Moderate Use</td>
<td><strong>listening</strong> to pop songs with English lyrics on Spotify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Moderate Use</td>
<td><strong>watching</strong> videos of foreign YouTubers in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Moderate Use</td>
<td>playing video games on a console – <strong>reading</strong> instructions in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>Limited Use</td>
<td><strong>writing</strong> down passages from books in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Limited Use</td>
<td><strong>listening</strong> to “6 minutes English” podcast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Closing Remarks:
Considerations for the Main Study

Research Design

dynamic & longitudinal → Dynamic Systems Theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008)

a. learners’ frequency, range and functions of discourse markers tracked longitudinally

b. explore the way various factors interact over time shaping a learning trajectory (e.g. content of formal instruction, learner identity, L2 motivation)

Implications

➢ Practices of language learners & teaching professionals
➢ Evaluation of existing course books
➢ Multi-media instructional materials
Thank you

Thank you

Thank you