
**DISCOURSE MARKERS IN TALK SHOWS: THE CASE STUDY OF THE
TONIGHT SHOW STARRING JIMMY FALLON**

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to determine what type and function of discourse markers occur in spoken language, especially in public informal conversation, using Fraser's (2009) theory. The data was taken from a popular talk show entitled 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Falon.' This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with five chosen episodes of 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Falon' from February to April 2023. Based on the findings, four types of discourse markers and six functions of discourse markers were found in the data. The most used discourse markers were elaborative, and the most used function was to denote additive information or ideas. In contrast, inferential markers were the most infrequently used discourse marker in the data. Moreover, the most infrequent function of discourse markers found in the data was to conclude information or ideas since this shows belongs to light entertainment.

Keywords: discourse markers; spoken language; talk show

INTRODUCTION

Communication is essential in connecting people. By communicating, people can share each other's thoughts, ideas, information, and feelings. As a social individual, a human will always need others' presence. Therefore, good comprehension and communication skills are important to avoid misinformation that causes misunderstanding. Language as the communication bridge plays a significant role in transferring messages.

Noermanzah (2019) defined language as a message delivered in the form of expressions used as communication tools in any situation and spoken or written activities. These language expressions include sound, tone, words, and sentences. Linguistics, commonly described as the study of language, particularly human language, includes various elements that combine to create and form a particular language. These elements are divided into several parts, and one of them is called discourse analysis.

According to McCharty (1991), discourse analysis as a branch of linguistics is a broad term that studies how people use the language in both written and spoken interaction. Therefore, the scope of discourse analysis is vast and varied. Discourse analysis is the analysis of the content of communication and how the analysis of the message of the discourse is organized, manipulated and understood in order to understand the intention conveyed in the discourse. In addition, in the process of analyzing a discourse, we need to know some tools that help to promote the understanding of ideas such as coherence and coherence (Irawati, 2021).

Achieving effective communication and communicating complex ideas can be daunting, especially for public communication. Authors or speakers must use various linguistic devices to guide the reader or listener to follow the message and increase coherence throughout the text. Among these devices, discourse markers play an important role in connecting ideas,

showing relationships between concepts, and facilitating the smooth flow of information.

According to Schiffrin (1987), one of the language elements with a different index relationship and the coherence of the talking units are Discourse Markers (DM). They form logical, temporal, causal, or asymmetrical relationships between various text parts and are also referred to as Disposition Connectors or Transitional Elements. Schiffrin (1987) explained how to use discourse markers when the speaker delivers an interview or a written speech, there are terms namely information management markers such as response markers ‘*too*’, linking discourse ‘*for example, and, but, or*’, tags of causes and results, such as: ‘*so*’ and ‘*because*’, temporal adverb namely ‘*now*’ and ‘*than*’, information and participation like ‘*you know*’, ‘*I mean*’. They act as signposts, guiding the reader into the author’s thought process and helping them understand the information presented. DMs range from simple words such as ‘*but*’, ‘*thus*’ and ‘*furthermore*’ to more complex phrases such as ‘*on the other hand*’, ‘*consequently*’ and ‘*in contrast*’.

The analysis of DM in academic writing offers valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by writers to construct coherent and persuasive arguments. By examining the distribution, frequency, and contextual use of these markers, researchers can uncover the underlying patterns and functions that contribute to the overall organization and structure of scholarly texts. Fraser (1990) states that discourse markers do not affect the sentence grammatically. In this case, discourse marker analysis provides a lens through which researchers can investigate the interplay between language and argumentation, shedding light on how writers present evidence, make claims, and establish logical connections within their discourse.

Discourse markers are not limited to written academic texts; they also play an important role in spoken language, especially in intimate situations. In everyday conversations, people use a variety of speech markers to facilitate interaction, convey meaning, and manage the flow of speech. Trillo (2002:774) as cited in Sadeghi (2014) explains that DMs have no specific meaning on its own. However, they are fundamental to organize the flow of

interaction. These linguistic devices serve a variety of functions, such as indicating agreement or disagreement, expressing uncertainty, signaling a change of subject, or organizing information.

In contrast to the more structured and planned nature of academic written language, spoken language in informal settings is characterized by spontaneity, rapid rotation, and immediacy of context (Ayomi, 2021). DM in spoken language serve as verbal cues to help interlocutors navigate conversational exchanges, maintain coherence, and manage contributions to ongoing discourse. These markers can include single words, phrases, and even non-lexical elements such as delays, padding, and intonation patterns (see also (Ratnadi et al., 2022). Fraser (1999) categorized two major types of DMs. The first type is DMs which relate messages, such as: contrastive markers (*though, but, etc*); elaborative markers (*above all, also, and, etc*); inferential markers (*accordingly, so, etc*). The second type is the DMs which relate topics such as *returning to my original point, by the way, etc*.

The analysis of DMs in spoken language reveals the subtle mechanisms employed by speakers to negotiate meaning, establish rapport, and manage interpersonal dynamics. Researchers investigate how DMs contribute to the construction of social identities, politeness strategies, negotiation of power, and the establishment of common ground between participants.

Farahani (2022) found that the function of four DMs in academic spoken English such as “*I mean*,” “*I think*,” “*you see*,” and “*you know*” were multifunctional based on their context of usage in spoken English. The result of the research showed that DMs in spoken discourse are purposed to serve many kinds of functions depending on the context of usage and the intension of the speaker. In other hand, Oktaviani (2020) analyzed DMs in informal conversation which in movie found ten types of DMs and six functions of DMs used by the movie’s character, according to Schiffrin theory. They are used for information management which can reach two classes of DMs namely Interjection Marker and Expletive Marker. Second, marker of response can cover five types of DMs such as linking adverbial,

stance adverbial, hesitator, response form, and various polite speech-act. Third, markers of connective include only linking adverbial. Fourth, markers cause and effect which also contains linking adverbial. The fifth is markers of temporal adverb including three classes, they are stance adverbial, greeting and farewell, and vocative marker. The last, markers of information and participation consist of two types namely stance adverbial marker and response elicitors marker.

Additionally, DMs analysis sheds light on how speakers use these markers to signal their involvement and engagement in the conversation, including their reactions, emotions, and cognitive processes.

The study of DMs in spoken language and informal settings which is based on sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics and interactive sociolinguistics has also been done by Maksum (2016). He use methods such as transcription and speech analysis to identify and analyze various DMs used in public figure speech such as J.K Rowling, Oprah Winfrey and Steve Jobs. These approaches provide a nuanced understanding of how speakers strategically use these markers in real-time to guide turnover, resolve communication glitches, and convey social meaning. Analysis of the use of discourse markers in spoken language provides insight into the dynamics of informal communication and the strategies individuals use to engage in effective conversation. Through the analysis of discourse markers in spoken language and informal situations, the readers can gain valuable insights into the complexities of everyday conversation and the social dimensions of language use.

The researcher chooses talkshows as the data source because there are a lot of informative and interesting topic related to lates updated from many popular public figures. Talk programs frequently bring up a studio audience, a guest panelist (including specialists and regular participants), a studio audience, and occasionally a group of "callers" through the guidance of a host.'(Ilie, 2006). In talkshows the data are presented in casual and comfort way to deliver information to the viewer especially teenager who related to the current popular topic, issues, and public figure. The

tonight show is one of the most popular talkshow in America hosted by an actor and comedian, Jimmy Fallon which airs on late-night at NBC. The researcher chose The Tonight Show Starring by Jimmy Fallon as the data source since the show have been popular not only in America but also around the world including Indonesia. They have various of famous guest stars from actors, actrees, musician, artist, producers, etc that entertain the audience from any ages. It is also aired in Online Platform Channel and social media for free such as YouTube so the audience can easily rewatch any episodes of the talk shows.

This research discussed what type and function of Discourse Markers occurs in informal conversation especially in talk show entitled 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon'. By exploring the functions, variations, and contextual influences of these markers, both the researcher and the readers can enhance their understanding of how individuals engage in interaction, negotiate meaning, and establish social relationships in informal settings. Ultimately, this research can contribute to improving communication skills, promoting intercultural understanding, and enhancing effective interpersonal interactions in diverse social contexts.

METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative method. Rahardjo (2010) stated that qualitative research is used to understand the phenomenon under study. According to Fraenkel, (1993), as quoted in Alifatul (2020), descriptive methods are analytical methods that use a variety of techniques, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, observations, and texts to describe, analyze, and categorize something. This research used observation and text to describe what type and function that occurs in informal conversation during talkshows. On the other hand, Shanti (2017) as cited in Ussolichah et al., (2021) argues that qualitative research is usually descriptive and about phenomena that are difficult to analyze, since qualitative research involves further study of non-numerical data that provide naturalistic data.

The researcher uses descriptive qualitative techniques to explore the nature of discourse markers used in informal conversations on

Jimmy Fallon's talk show, "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon." the types and the functions. This method is used to obtain accurate results from data analyzed by Fraser's category and function of discourse Markers (2009). The taken data are presented in the form of utterances and phrases, including DMs used by talk show hosts and guest stars. This study focuses on the process of classifying discourse markers in conversation. In this study, the researcher investigated the DMs context used to determine DMs function. The purpose of this study was to analyze the importance of the DMs composition used.

The data were collected from five episodes of 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Falon' that were uploaded in the talkshow's official youtube channel from February to April 2023 as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Data Source

No	Title of the Episode	Release Date	Video Duration
1	Pedro Pascal Talks The Last of Us and Tries to Dodge Mandalorian Spoilers	3 February 2023	8'46"
2	Jenna Ortega Wants More Horror in Wednesday and Reveals She Didn't Know How Scream VI Would End	10 March 2023	6'32"
3	Rina Sawayama Threw Her Back Out on the First Training Day for John Wick: Chapter 4	16 March 2023	8'43"
4	Keanu Reeves Spills Exiting Details on John Wick: Chapter 4 (Extended)	17 March 2023	10'21"
5	Drew Barrymore Loves Getting Up	28 April 2023	9'33"

Close and Personal with Her Talk Show Guests (Extended)

Furthure more, the author will use codes to facilitate the reader in reading the finding examples of data served in the discussion section. The codes used as the guideline such as: **H, H1, H2, H3, etc** represent examples of utterance spoken by the host; **G, G1, G2, G3, etc** refers to examples of utterance spoken by the guest star; and **V1, V2, V3, etc** are the representative of which video of five choosen episode where the example taken from according to Table 1.

DISCUSSION

The researcher's findings are served in this part and classified by the types, functions, and expression of DMs which occurs in the data in the form of words and phrases, the quantity of the expression occurring, and the total quantity of discourse marker in each type and function.

Based on the data shown in Table.2, there are four types of discourse markers inquier in this research namely Contrastive Marker, Elaborative Marker, Inferential Marker, and Temporal Marker. Each type of discourse marker has different function. Contrastive Marker are used to signal any contradictions, contrasts, and comparison. Elaborative Marker is used to denote additive information or idea, otherwise to limit or introduce an example of a particular idea. Inferential Markers used to show cause-effect relationships also to conclude information or ideas. Meanwhile, Temporal Markers are used to indicate sequence of events, time order, or logical division.

Table 2. Type, function, and quantity of discourse markers found in the data.

Type of DMs	Function	Express ion Occurs in the Videos	Qty	Tot al
		<i>or</i>	4	56

Contrastive Marker	To signal any contradictions, contrasts, comparison	<i>but</i>	48		<i>next</i>	3		
		<i>but then</i>	4		<i>second</i>	1		
					<i>third</i>	1		
					<i>once</i>	1		
Elaborative Marker	To denote additive informations or idea	<i>too</i>	3	231	<i>at least</i>	1		
		<i>and</i>	213		<i>where</i>	2		
		<i>also</i>	5		<i>done</i>	1		
		<i>like</i>	3		Total	426		
		<i>or</i>	5					
		<i>either</i>	1					
		<i>as well</i>	1					
		Inferential Marker	To limit or introduce example of particular idea	<i>if</i>	10	30		
				<i>what if</i>	2			
				<i>in case</i>	1			
<i>like</i>	17							
Inferential Marker	To show cause effect relationship	<i>so</i>	35	48				
		<i>because</i>	12					
Inferential Marker	To conclude informations or idea	<i>since</i>	1					
		<i>well</i> <i>done</i>	1	1				
Temporal Marker	To indicate sequence of event, time order, or logical division	<i>and then</i>	21	60				
		<i>now</i>	8					
		<i>first</i>	5					
		<i>then</i>	4					
		<i>again</i>	2					
		<i>when</i>	3					
		<i>last</i>	2					
		<i>end</i>	2					
		<i>after</i>	3					

After classifying the data into its categories, the author found the amount of discourse markers used in informal conversation in the data as served in Table. 2. As a result, there are four types and six functions of discourse markers found in the data. Further explanation from the type and function of discourse markers according to (Fraser, 2009) will be discussed as follows.

a. Contrastive Marker

These markings indicate that there is direct or indirect contrast information or alternatives between the first sentence or utterance and the next utterance.

Hence, when these expressions are found within a discourse, we may be able to distinguish that these are used to mark contrast information. Look at the example found in the data below:

G : "...I'll be replaced. Like, not just as the Mandalorian, *but* as a human being in life. [V1: 2:53]

The context of the example above was that the guest star explained about his character in the new upcoming movie, but then he realized that he gave too much information and that if he spoiled more information, he would be replaced. '*but*' here, emphasized the contrast and comparison with what is expected. That is the consequence for him by telling too much information.

H1 : "What would you do with this idea --Then what would society do with that *but then* he's cursed with violence."

G1 : "He doesn't want to be violent."

H2 : "He doesn't want to be violent."

G2 : “No, *but* it's in his blood.” [V4:4:14]

In the conversation above, the host talks about the character that the guest star would play as his role in his new movie as shown in H1. The host marked contrast information from the first utterance and the second utterance by saying ‘*but then*’. The guest also added a contradiction marker by saying ‘*but*’ in reply to the host statement.

b. Elaborative Marker

Moreover Fraser (2009) argued that these markings served to indicate details or additions in the second utterance to the information claimed in previous utterance. For the example, see the following sentence:

G : “...Everybody's so amazing and talented. *And* they take these, you know, blocks of, you know, white-hot terror apart for you with big cue cards.” [V1:1:02]

The example above contains elaborative marker “*and*” between the first clause and the next clause in order to add more information about the topic in the first clause.

Elaborative Discourse markers giving two different function such as:

1. The first function of elaborative markers is to denote additive informations or idea. Look at the data findings below:

H3 : “Oh, sorry. So, you heard people were getting married or something?”

G3 : “No. It was outside *and* there was another part of the hotel *and* it was outside of London *and* they were having a wedding *and* then the groom came by *and* he was like, "Hi," *and* I was like, "Hi." *And* then he was like, "Do you want to take a picture with everybody?" *And* I said, "Yeah, sure, let's do it." [V4:2.29]

In the example above, the guest star used a lot of additional conjunction ‘*and*’ in his utterance (G3) in order to add more information since he was describing the chronology of his story as asked by the host.

2. The second function of elaborative markers is to limit or introduce example of particular idea.

H4 : “*If* things weren't big enough for you and your life and your career, "The Last of Us," it is the biggest thing in the world.

G4 : “I've got to get up in the morning. I take an Ambien to go to sleep *just in case* – they've got my adrenaline kind of going and my -- my hopes up.

H5 : “Yes, so you take a sleeping pill, so you don't have to think about anything.

G5 : “Exactly.” [V1:1:44]

In the conversation above, the host used discourse marker ‘*if*’ to give limit of their topic discussion in H4. The guest star also added marker ‘*just in case*’ to introduce example of information in G4.

c. Inferential Marker

The other sort of discourse markers defined by Fraser (2009) is inferential markers which express certain signals to what information that the utterances are gathering. The expressions include as inferential markers such as *so*, *all things considered*, *as a conclusion*, *etc.*

G : “But I was kind of freaking out *because* she was sitting next to Paul Mescal,” [V2: 3:04]

The context of the utterance above is the guest telling a situation from his own experience. He used marker ‘*because*’ to show the causes of the feeling or situation he had explained.

Example 2

H : “And man, oh man, it turned out one of the biggest shows in the world on netflix. *so*, congratulations.” [V2: 1:43]

Meanwhile, in the example above, the context was the host shared the guest’s achievement, which was his successful Netflix shows, to the audiences. The host used the marker ‘*so*’ to conclude his idea that he needed to express his appreciation by congratulating the guest for his accomplishment.

It can be concluded that Inferential Markers also have two different functions namely (1) to show cause-effect relationship and (2) to conclude information or ideas. More description will be served in the following examples.

1. To show cause effect relationship

- G6 : "We go through things so quickly."
 H6 : "Is it *because* you're savoring every moment?"
 G7 : "Maybe, I guess you could say."
 [V2:1.02]

The cause effect function is found in video 2 at minute 1:02 as shown at H6. The host used marker '*because*' as the cause-effect conjunction for the situation occurs in G6 and gave the solution at H6 in their conversation.

- H7 : "Last time we were here, we were talking about "Wednesday."And, man, oh, man, it turned out one of the biggest shows in the world on Netflix. *So*, congratulations.
 G8 : "Thank you."
 H8 : "And *since* you've been here, it got picked up for season two, *so* there you go. [V2:1:40]

The other example occurs in the same video at minute 1:40. The host used the marker '*so*' to link the utterance to congratulating the guest after talking about the guest star achievement in H7. Besides in H8 the host also used marker '*since*' to connect the situation and the action before he played the guest new project trailer. And another marker '*so*' in '*so there you go.*' to link the action of playing the trailer afterward.

- H9 : "Like, the SAG Awards, it was, you know, all of your peers, everyone who's a part of SAG, *so* you're seeing these people like -- you had a hot table. I loved your table." [V2: 2:47]

The marker '*so*' in H9 showed the effect of the host's statement talking about SAG Awards which makes sure of the guest star feeling on that awards show.

2. The second function of Inferential Markers is to conclude informations or idea. Look at the finding on video 5 below.

- H10 : "That's what I'm talking about, bud."
 G9 : "I'm just --"
 H12 : "*Well done.*"
 G10 : "I'm very -- Well deserved."
 [V5:8.10]

From the data found in video number 5 at minute 8:10, the markers '*well done*' aimed to show the host concluding his statement as mentioned at H10 about the guest star before ended the conversation and closing the show.

d. Temporal Marker

Temporal marker is used to signal the sequence between utterances, while also indicating timing signals. The signals classified into temporal markers are *then, after, as soon as, eventually, when..., etc.* The use of temporal marker can be seen in the sentence below:

- G : "And I was like 'oh i can do this'. *Then* they banned smoking..." [V3: 1:24]

The context of the monologue above was the guest telling something that could motivate him before he went on airs, but then the company did not allow him to do those things anymore, which in this case is smoking. The guest used the DM '*then*' to express the change in time or to mark the time and differentiate the then and now situation.

From example above, the last type of discourse markers stated by Fraser (2009) is Temporal Marker. The function of this type is to indicate sequence of events, time order, or logical division. Look at the following example found in the data.

- H12 : "Every episode, by the way, has grown and almost like – It already was a hit, the *first* episode. *Then* it's grown, *second* episode. *Third* -- It's the biggest thing. It's getting bigger and bigger and bigger. [V4:7:06]

The utterance found in video 4 at minute 7:06 showed some time markers such as: '*first, then, second, third*'. Those expressions in H12 show the time order and sequence of time from one sentence to the next sentence.

- G11 : "That's very interesting. Yeah, yeah, yeah."
 H13 : "Yeah, *after* a certain amount, you're like, "Who cares? 3,000 -- 3 million."
 [V3: 1:05]

The discourse marker 'after' was found in video 3 at minute 1:05. This expression shows the sequence of time to continue the topic of conversation between the host and the guest star.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research, two things can be concluded. First, four types of discourse markers occur in The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. They are *contrastive, elaborative, inferential, and temporal markers*. The most type found in the data is Elaborative Markers, as many as 261 in the form of words and phrases followed by the second most occurs namely Temporal Markers as many as 60 words. Those two types were frequently used in spoken language, especially informal conversation. Talk shows or talk programs typically discuss or promote concerns about conflicts, deliver information, or serve entertainment purposes. Talk shows include ever-evolving episodes that highlight various points of view on significant subjects in society such as politics, culture, religion, entertainment, media, or other hot topics regarding to the guest star. Since the host and the guest stars talked about chronological events, there was a lot of additional information and they delivered their story using a timestamp or time order. Therefore, the most type of discourse markers found in the data were Elaborative and Temporal Markers.

Secondly, the function of discourse markers occurs in the data. There are six functions of discourse markers found in the data. There are: *to signal any contradictions, contrasts, or comparisons; to denote additive information or idea; to limit or introduce examples of ideas; to show cause-effect relationships; to conclude information or idea; to indicate the sequence of events, time orders, or logical divisions*. The most function found was to denote additive information or idea by the use of additives in such as conjunction: *and, also, like, too, either, as well*. The frequency of this function occurs as many as 231. Meanwhile, the most infrequent function found is to conclude information or idea as many as one phrase. This function is commonly found in formal situation. Since talkshows is a light entertainment with informal environment,

there are less situation that need to uses this function as concluding information or idea.

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