

American University in Cairo

AUC Knowledge Fountain

Archived Theses and Dissertations

6-1-2018

Discourse markers: Functions of /jacni/ in educated Egyptian Arabic

Amani Elshimi

Follow this and additional works at: https://fount.aucegypt.edu/retro_etds

Recommended Citation

APA Citation

Elshimi, A. (2018). *Discourse markers: Functions of /jacni/ in educated Egyptian Arabic* [Master's thesis, the American University in Cairo]. AUC Knowledge Fountain.

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/retro_etds/2382

MLA Citation

Elshimi, Amani. *Discourse markers: Functions of /jacni/ in educated Egyptian Arabic*. 2018. American University in Cairo, Master's thesis. *AUC Knowledge Fountain*.

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/retro_etds/2382

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by AUC Knowledge Fountain. It has been accepted for inclusion in Archived Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of AUC Knowledge Fountain. For more information, please contact mark.muehlhaeusler@aucegypt.edu.

Discourse Markers:
Functions of /ja^Cni/ in Educated Egyptian Arabic

This thesis
is submitted to
the TEFL department
at the English Language Institute
of the American University in Cairo
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts

by
Amani El Shimi

May 1992

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

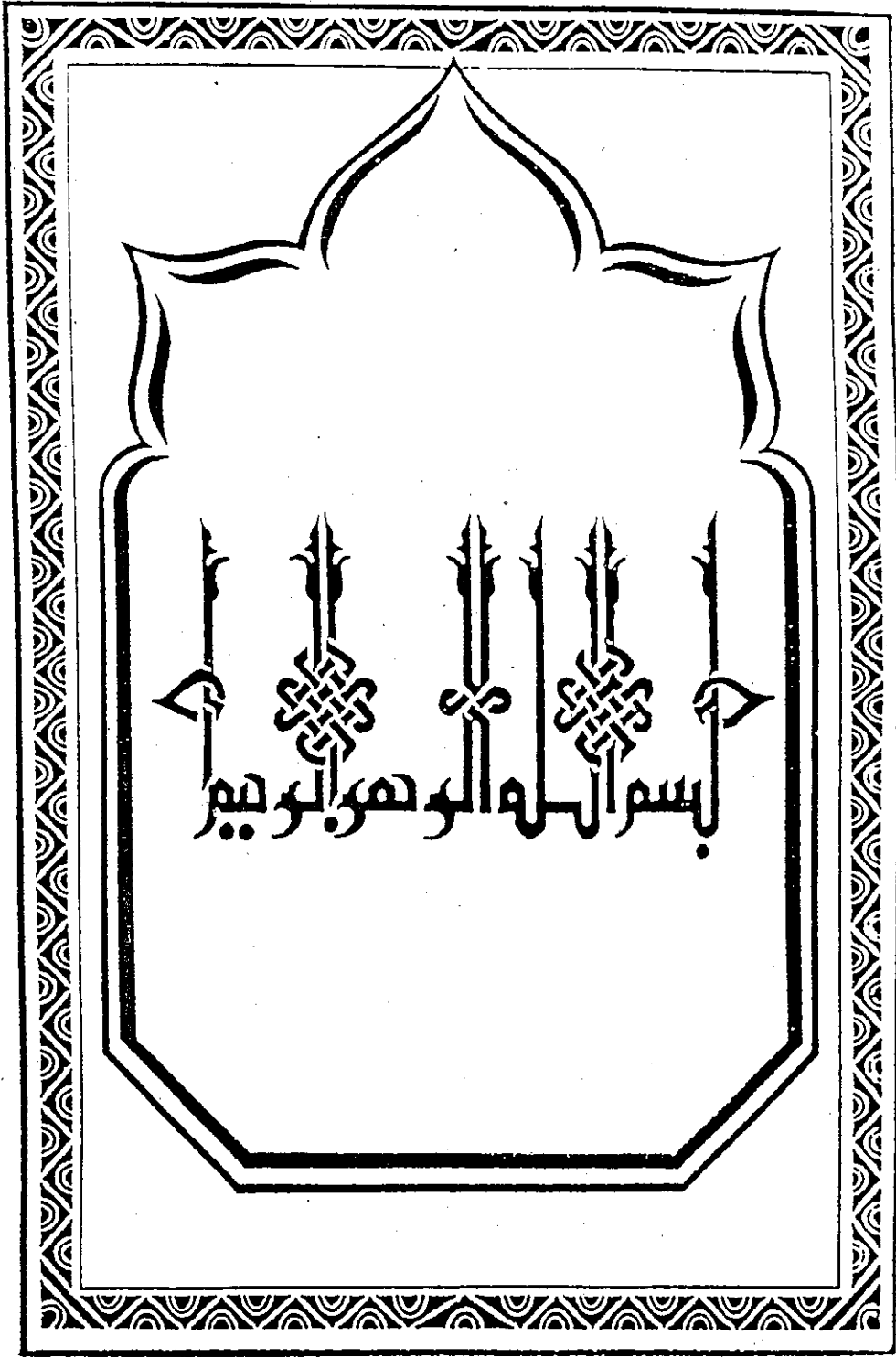
Discourse Markers:
Functions of /ja^cni/ in Educated Egyptian Arabic

This thesis
is submitted to
the TEFL department
at the English Language Institute
of the American University in Cairo
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts

by
Amani El Shimi

May 1992

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

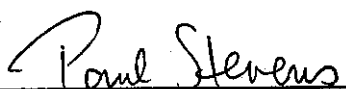
This Thesis for the Degree of Masters of Arts

by

Amani El Shimi

has been approved

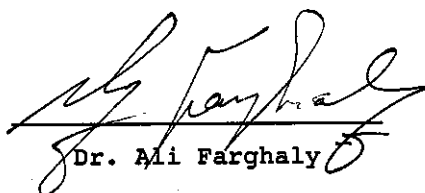
May 1992



Dr. Paul Stevens
Committee Chairperson



Prof. Saad Gamal
Committee Member



Dr. Ali Farghaly
Committee Member



Dr. Paul Stevens
Department Chairperson

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who helped make this thesis come true. I am deeply indebted to my three readers - Dr. Paul Stevens, who first suggested the topic of this research, helped me channel my interests into a feasible track, advised and supported me throughout the thesis writing stage; Dr. Saad Gamal, whose invaluable advice and critical eye helped me keep my topic rounded up and polished; and, Dr. Ali Farghaly, whose constant challenging set me onto the thesis track and kept me going.

A special thank-you goes to Dr. Fred Perry for frequently boosting my ego, and for giving me ample time for help when he had better things to do; Dr. Ahmed Youssef, of Cairo University, for his willingness to help and supervise a large part of my statistical analysis; Dr. Evelyn Hatch, visiting Professor, and Dr. Badawi, Chairman of the TAFL Department, for generously reading my preproposal and providing me with some very useful insights; Khalid El-Darawy, my brother-in-law, computer whiz, for helping me through all my computer catastrophes; Maida and Hanaan, department secretaries, for seeing that my last-minute drafts reached my readers on time; and Dr. Mahmoud Ayad, my undergraduate Applied Linguistics instructor, boss, friend, for providing me with certain qualities without which I would have been a less apt researcher.

I would also like to thank Mervat Karzoun, TEFL graduate, for providing me with some key articles for the review; Nagla Abul Fetouh and Ghada El Shimi, for generously contributing time and effort for the rating of my results; the staff of the Academic Computer center for being there when they were needed; and members of my research team - Larry Cicarelli, Mahamat Ousman, Manal El Tigi, Jenny Hopkins, Millie Bentley and Atef Salem - for caring and sharing experiences.

My deepest gratitude goes to each and every member of my family for their patience and support - my mother for taking full responsibility of my household when I was at thesis service; my father and my in-laws for their backing-up and encouragement; my brother and sister for proof-reading, printing, photocopying and stapling draft after draft of my thesis; my two-year old daughter, to whom I owe plenty of time and attention; and finally, my husband, who was always there to prompt me when I slacken, soothe me when I panic and share my joy when I was through.

ABSTRACT

This is a study in conversation analysis focusing on the analysis of the discourse marker /ja^Cni/ in Egyptian Arabic. Markers are defined as discourse deictic expressions that link together, and signal boundaries between, discourse structures. They operate on all three levels of discourse, proposed by Halliday (1970) - textual, ideational and interpersonal. Using direct observation techniques, the distribution, form and function of the marker /ja^Cni/ were examined in the language of educated Egyptian subjects on radio and television interviews. Two variables were taken into account - speaker gender and topic type. Using syntactic position and phonological form as guidelines for interpretation, seven categories of functions were identified for /ja^Cni/ in a 20,000 word corpus. Using a two tailed 'z-test', function frequencies across counterparts of each independent variable proved statistically significant. The findings were interpreted within the framework of 'deixis' and the 'Interpersonal Rhetoric' (Leech, 1983).

Transcription conventions (Adapted from Hafez, 1991):

Broad phonetic transcription rather than narrow was used for the Arabic data.
The symbols used were -

[] Square brackets enclosed each extract of phonetic transcription.

/ / Slashes enclosed phonemic transcriptions of /ja^Cni/ where phonological form was of no significance.

{ { Curly brackets marked overlapping speech.

-- Dashes indicated a pause. Length of pause is not specified.
Extra long pauses were marked by longer slashes.

--> An arrow to the left of an extract marks the position of the marker in question

... Successive dots indicate missing speech that is of no significance to the analysis

^ v → The arrows placed over syllables indicate rise, fall and level intonation respectively.

' A vertical line on the top left handside of a syllable marks primary stress.

, A vertical line on the bottom left handside of a syllable marks secondary stress.

The Arabic short vowel symbols were:

[â]	as in ħârb (war)	[a]	as in ka ^C b (heel)
[e]	as in fehem (he understood)	[i]	as in fikr (thought)
[u]	as in kul (imp. eat)	[o]	as in ōrb (drink n.)

The long vowel symbols were:

[a:] as in fa:t (he passed)	[â:] as in fâ:r (mouse)
[e:] as in le: (why)	[i:] as in ti:n (figs)
[o:] as in ko:ra (ball)	[u:] as in su:ra (picture)

The consonant symbols shared with English were:

/b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /m/, /n/, /l/, /f/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/ and /j/

The consonant symbols specific to Arabic were:

/ʔ/ a glottal stop, as in ʔa:m (he rose)
/q/ a uvular voiceless plosive, as in qanu:n (law)
/r/ a trill, as in râ:n (he left)
/x/ a voiceless fricative, as in xa:f (he was frightened)
/ɣ/ a voiced fricative, as in ɣani (rich)
/ħ/ a pharyngeal voiceless fricative, as in ħaja: (life)
/ʕ/ a pharyngeal voiced fricative, as in ʕamd (deliberate)

The velarised sounds were:

/ṭ/ as in ṭâ:r (he flew)
/ḍ/ as in ḍarb (beating)
/ṣ/ as in so:t (voice)
/ẓ/ as in ẓari:f (cute)

Lengthened consonants were represented by doubling the symbol.

OUTLINE:

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Forward

1.2 Construct Definition

1.2.1 Terminology Selection

1.2.2 Formal properties of discourse markers

1.2.3 Functional properties of discourse markers

1.3 Area significance

1.4 Review of related literature

1.4.1 The Review

1.4.2 Summary of the Conclusions

1.5 Focus of study

1.6 Value of topic and significance to foreign language learning

2 THE DESIGN

2.1 Type of design

2.2 Variable definition

2.3 Materials

2.4 Subjects

2.5 Instruments

2.6 Procedures

2.7 Data analysis procedure

3 THE RESULTS

3.1 The semantic definition of /ja^cni/

3.2 Formal properties of /ja^cni/

3.3 Functional properties of /ja^cni/

3.3.1 Extension marker

3.3.2 Subordination marker

3.3.3 Broad interpretation marker

3.3.4 Inner-negotiation marker

3.3.5 Deictic-centre marker

3.3.6 Degree of intensity marker

3.3.7 Indirect intention marker

3.4 Distribution across variables

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of functions

4.1.1 The cohesive function and deixis

4.1.2 The phatic function and the Interpersonal Rhetoric

4.2 Interpretation of variable distribution

4.3 Conclusion

4.4 Implications and further research

APPENDIX

Table 1 'Distribution across variables'

Table 2 'Results for z-test'

(Accompanying tapes at the audio-visual center, ELI)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Forward

The purpose of this study is to contribute to research describing human verbal behaviour - its features and functions. One verbal device which has gained considerable attention in recent years is the 'discourse marker' - a device whose outstanding function is to link, and signal a transition across, structural boundaries. Studies have attempted to describe where and how markers are used in a number of different languages. Hardly any such studies, however, have analysed Arabic. The present study, therefore, attempts to shed light on discourse marker use in spoken Egyptian Arabic by analysing the marker /ja^cni/ as one example of such a phenomenon.

1.2 Construct definition

1.2.1 *Terminology selection*

The term 'discourse markers' has been selected from a number of different labels assigned in the literature for elements such as "ok, well, you know, I mean, of course, and, but". Below is a display of the terms various researchers have adopted, highlighting the reasons why the term 'markers' was found preferable in the present context.

a) The term "discourse particles" (as used by Kwong, 1989; Wierzbicka, 1986; Tsuchihashi, 1983) emphasizes a feature pertaining to the physical form of the items in question. It implies that they are small in size, having little or no semantic content or morphological variation (Schourup, 1988).

b) "Clitics" are defined in phonological terms as being bound morphemes, articulated with weak stress (James, 1983, p. 195).

c) "Hedges", "boosters" (e.g., Holmes, 1990), "compromisers" (e.g., James, 1983), "epistemic modality markers" (e.g., Hjelmquist & Gidlund, 1984) and various other function-specific labels are used to group together items whose strongest function is specified by the label.

d) The term "discourse markers" (used by Schiffrin, 1985; Watts, 1989; Fraser, 1990; Maynard, 1989 and Faerch & Kasper in Fisiak (ed.), 1984 (as a subset of "gambits", defined below)) is operationally defined as

sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk (Schiffrin, 1988, p. 31).

In other words, discourse markers highlight the boundaries of, and link, propositional acts, moves, turns, exchanges or full speech events. The "unit" is not restricted.

The term 'discourse markers' has been selected as a label for items typically analysed under all of the above terms since it does not bias the definition towards any one feature specific to form, function or distribution of the items. Instead, it characterizes the linguistic devices examined as being significant at the *discourse* level.

1.2.2 Formal properties of 'discourse markers'

Markers are verbal devices (ie, not extralinguistic). They may be lexical (e.g. well) or clausal (e.g. I mean). As obvious from these examples, markers belong to different word classes, including adverbs (eg, now, then), conjunctions (e.g. and, but, so) and intensifiers (e.g. of course). What they have in common is not a syntactic property, but a semantic, cohesive one. They are distinct from interjections (e.g. oops, ow) in that, as "sequentially dependent" elements, they do not communicate a full message on their own. They form only part of a speech act. "Homophonous forms" of the items, which appear as full speech acts, are not analysed as discourse markers (Fraser, 1990, p. 389).

1.2.3 Functional properties of discourse markers

"Discourse markers" form a subset of a larger group of linguistic devices, occurring in spoken discourse, known as "gambits". These are defined as:

linguistic items whose primary function is to maintain and regulate discourse. By maintaining discourse is meant the establishment of coherence either between turns of speech or within turns of speech. By regulating discourse is meant the distribution of turns of speech among the discourse participants in terms of uptaking, turntaking, turnkeeping, turngiving, and the marking of discourse boundaries (Faerch & Kasper in Fisiak (ed.), 1984, pp. 69-70).

Markers are identified as one type of gambits used to signal

boundaries in discourse in either indicating the completion of an on-going discourse topic or phase (okay, good) or the opening of a next discourse topic or phase (well now, by the way) (p. 72).

Thus, markers establish a cohesive link and serve as a regulative strategy during conversation. Levinson (1983) suggests that the ability of markers to serve these functions is due to their *deictic* property. He states that they are discourse deictic expressions in that they indicate a relationship between the utterance that they form part of and previous discourse. Markers' ability to point backwards and forwards in discourse enables them to link together linguistic structures (the "textual" cohesive function), semantic propositions (the "ideational" cohesive function) and interlocutors' cooperative contributions (the "interpersonal" cohesive function) (Schiffrin, 1988, pp. 6-12). Cohesion, Schiffrin points out, operates on all three levels of discourse, proposed by Halliday (1970), simultaneously. Studies in the literature have variously focused on one or more levels, emphasizing the overlapping roles served by the markers.

Finally, markers only signal a structural, logical or pragmatic relationship between discourse units. They do not create the relationship

(Fraser, 1990, p. 390). The speaker selects a marker to *signal* the type of relationship he intends to convey between 'units' of discourse (eg, x and y, x but y, x so y). The *actual* relationship, though, already exists. It follows, therefore, that markers are peripheral elements that do not interfere with the syntax or semantics of an utterance. This allows them to be deleted without distorting the grammar or content meaning of a stretch of discourse. Since this would leave open, for the hearer, a wider range of interpretations with a bigger chance of miscommunication, the significance of marker use is clarified (Fraser, 1990, p. 390).

1.3 Area significance

Discourse markers tend to have a very high frequency of occurrence in spoken languages (James, 1983; Kwong, 1989). Such a phenomenon cannot be ignored. Why and how markers function in context are questions, therefore, that need to be addressed through basic, descriptive research studies.

Since discourse markers operate on several levels of communication, their analysis could be used to develop working hypotheses for studies on discourse architecture, logical cohesion and interaction principles. Moreover, they may help explain miscommunication caused by differences in marker functions on the interpersonal level of discourse, attributable to such variables as gender, status or social background. The literature review presented below highlights the aspects of discourse which studies on discourse markers have helped explain.

1.4 Review of related literature

1.4.1 The Review

The studies reviewed below have been selected so that each examines the range of functions offered by one or more markers, through qualitative research methods. The focus of each study will be defined, then the findings will be summarised, outlining their contribution to the understanding of human

communication structure and process.

Condon (1986) examined the functions of 'OK' used in goal-oriented decision-making sequences. On a voluntary basis, a number of families agreed to participate in a decision-making task where they had to negotiate a 2-week vacation plan. Each family consisted of a father, a mother and two offspring. All were educated middle-class Texans. Analysing the tape-recorded interactions for each family, Condon concluded that 'OK' appears to have two major functions. The first was to signify acceptance or confirmation of another participant's proposal. This was not a discourse marking function since it formed an entire speech act. The second function was to mark a transition at significant structural boundaries (textual cohesive function). Serving this second function, 'OK' was found to appear at three different points -

- a. at the beginning of the discourse, marking "topical" organisation,
- b. after a digression (e.g., a joking sequence) and back to a new decision-making sequence,
- c. at juncture points between each decision taken.

Contributing to the understanding of discourse structure, Condon concluded that a decision-taking speech event was composed of three consecutive units of organization - a macro-structure represented by the task at hand, several adjacent decision-taking sequences and performative speech acts, like suggesting or agreeing, within each sequence. The psychological reality of this organisation was confirmed by the fact that speakers' perception of this structure of discourse is signified by the use of 'OK' as a cohesive device at transitional junctures.

Maynard (1989) focused on the functions of the Japanese discourse marker 'dakara' on the ideational (semantic) and interpersonal levels of discourse. Logical relationships were examined between propositions in the video-taped interactions of 20 pair participants. The subjects were Japanese university students, each pair consisting of same-sex interlocutors identified as friends. They discussed topics of their own choosing. Analysis of the inter-

actions revealed that 'dakara' occurred in five significant positions:

- a. between two propositions signalling a linking cause-result relationship.
- b. between two propositions signalling that the second proposition substantiates a point made earlier.
- c. before an utterance that repeats a previous proposition for the purpose of clarification.
- d. at the beginning of a turn, where a speaker wants to present information relevant to the hearer's previous utterance.
- e. at the end of a turn where a speaker expects a response from the listener.

Maynard concluded that 'dakara' both reveals the speakers' perception of the logical connections existent between propositions and allows them to cohesively negotiate interaction. Thus both 'ideational' and 'interpersonal' functions were shown to operate simultaneously.

Another study, which helps describe discourse structures, analyses the functions of 'well' (Schiffrin, 1985). Schiffrin points out that conversational coherence is the responsibility of both interlocutors in an exchange. Both build towards and expect logically related discourse. Analysing data collected through casual interviews with lower middle-class urban residents, she was able to identify a number of structures where 'well' typically occurred. Some of these findings are presented below.

- a. In question/answer sequences,
 - i. 'Well' introduces a response that does not quite fit the questioner's expectations. Questions, Schiffrin argued, present the hearer with a number of options for responses that would cohesively follow. Yes/no questions offer 2 options. Wh-questions offer a larger set of relevant options. The structure of such sequences, therefore, dictates cohesion. 'Well' is used at the

beginning of a response that diverges from these options. It signals to the hearer that the proceeding response does not follow his/her coherence expectations because of some existent circumstances: either the respondent is not sure of the answer; or he finds the answer too complicated to explain; or that the question presupposes an inaccurate assumption.

ii. 'Well' also occurs before responses to mark introductory phrases, preceding the main point of the utterance. 'Well', therefore, demonstrates the speakers' perception of expected structural and propositional coherence.

b. 'Well' precedes requests when the relevance of the request is not very clear. Such instances include,

i. a repeated request that signifies that the previous response was not to the satisfaction of the questioner,

ii. a repeated request to prompt a reluctant respondent,

iii. to mark a request that comes in lieu of a response, asking for further clarification.

c. 'Well' also may precede reported speech of a self-evaluative remark.

These functions again highlight the cooperative efforts of conversation participants to produce coherent discourse and mark apparently non-cohesive utterances in a way that clarifies their point of relevance. 'Well', as described in this study, indicates the "interpretive link" between utterances on all 3 levels of discourse - textual, ideational and interpersonal. Schiffrin concludes that it is the deictic property of 'well' that helps relate apparently unrelated elements to prior discourse.

Peterson (1986) examined the uses of 'but' in children's narration. Sixteen girls and sixteen boys between three-and-a-half and nine-and-a-half years of age, were individually prompted to tell personal stories. Analysis

of their speech revealed that the marker 'but' served 2 macro-functions - semantic (ideational) and pragmatic (interpersonal).

a. Within the semantic category 'but' served to mark the relationship between,

- i. two contrasting propositions, whether the contrast is explicitly stated or inferred;
- ii. two propositions where the second is an unexpected entailment of the first - again the violation of the expected entailment was either explicitly stated or inferred;
- iii. two propositions where the second modifies the first with some alteration;
- iv. two propositions that signify knowledge versus reality.

b. The pragmatic category included the function of 'but' as:

- i. a narrative opener (a function specific to children);
- ii. a marker signalling a change of mind or a self-evaluative digression;
- iii. an attention-holder.
- iv. 'But' was also used between two utterances that were switched in chronological order.

There were developmental differences in the type of functions used by the children. The older children showed more instances of using 'but' to signify an inferred relationship between the propositions. They also demonstrated more uses of 'but' to signify the contrast between their state of knowledge about something and the reality of it. No developmental differences were noted for the pragmatic uses. Peterson concluded that pragmatic functions of conversation are acquired very early in life. Since her pragmatic category included both conversational negotiative functions and structural marking functions (e.g., changing focus and marking misordered time), then one can

infer that the organisation of conversation structure and the manipulation of hearer cooperation, are also aspects of communication that develop early in life.

Holmes (1990) identifies the range of functions served by a number of discourse markers (I think, you know, of course, sort of). The data she analysed came from various sources of natural conversation - casual interactions between friends, dinner-table exchanges and TV interviews. Equal amounts of speech were analysed for equal numbers of male and female subjects. Form, function and distribution of the markers were investigated. The major thrust of this study focused on the interpersonal level of discourse.

'I think' was found to have three phonological forms indicating different functions:

- a. Utterance-initial 'I think' with fall-rise intonation indicated the speaker's uncertainty of the truth of his/her proposition.
- b. Utterance-final 'I think' with falling intonation served two functions: one was to indicate uncertainty, the other was to soften a directive speech act.
- c. Utterance-initial 'I think' with level intonation had a boosting effect, emphasizing speaker confidence.

'You know' served two broad categories:

- a. Functions that stressed the speaker's certainty. These include-
 - i. expressing confidence that the hearer already knows the information being presented, or that he knows the type of thing the speaker is referring to;
 - ii. expressing confidence as to the truth of the information being stated.
- b. Functions that stressed the speaker's uncertainty. These include-
 - i. eliciting "reassurance" from the hearer when expressing private information;
 - ii. as an excuse for "linguistic imprecision".

'Of course' served the following functions:

- a. with falling intonation it served as a "socially-distancing" marker, which could be rephrased as "as everyone knows" (p. 170);
- b. with level intonation in initial position, it served as a social "solidarity" marker which could be rephrased as "as you might deduce given our shared attitudes" (p. 170).

'Sort of' was identified as:

- a. a "hedge" lessening the force of an utterance;
- b. a linguistic imprecision signal.

All the markers analysed in this study, served the function of indicating some kind of propositional imprecision (ideational function). At the interpersonal level, they either encouraged hearer participation, or they expressed the speaker's attitudes. Holmes noted that, in general, women use both confidence-expressing and solidarity markers more than men do. This study offers some useful suggestions concerning the possible effect of certain variables (such as speaker role, level of speech formality and gender of participants) on the type of functions used.

The final study found significant for this review, examined the functions of the Cantonese discourse marker 'la' in spontaneous speech (Kwong, 1989). The corpus of data consisted of 20 hours of taped data taken from telephone conversations, radio programmes, family and friends' chat, and various other casual conversation exchanges. The subjects were varied in sex, age and level of education. 'La' was found to serve a variety of distinct but related functions:

- a. In structures relating to description, the marker was used to highlight the assumption that "common understanding" was being negotiated and established. Kwong gives two paraphrases that identify what the speaker means when he is using this function - "you-know-what-I-mean" and "I-know-what-you-mean" (p.70).

- b. 'La' was also used to elicit hearer agreement with the speaker's proposition.
- c. 'La' was used in utterance-final position when the statement made was laying out some common background information on which a succeeding sequence was to be based.
- d. 'La' was used after every item in a list, to signal continuity.

In conclusion, 'la' was seen as a verbal device used to negotiate "common understanding" between speakers. Its use indicates that the speaker assumes the topic being discussed is common knowledge. The marker lays the ground open for hearer agreement or disagreement.

1.4.2 *Summary of the conclusions*

One can conclude, from the contexts identified for each marker examined above, that markers do in fact contribute to the understanding of text organization, propositional relationships and interaction regulation. Each of these three aspects of discourse covers a range of topics that studies in discourse markers have shed light on. Markers have been used for turn-taking purposes, for politeness purposes and cooperation. They have been used for bracketing textual boundaries, for regulating adjacency sequences and for negotiating the degree of propositional truth-value. Studies underlining differences attributable to moderating variables have contributed to gender-specific language research, language developmental studies and speech event structural organization. Condon (1986, p. 75) points out the privilege offered by discourse marker analysis, stating that

It is important that we are able to take advantage of the possibility that the distribution of certain very small units of talk can be associated with the operation of a more general abstract system.

1.5 Focus of study

The present study analyses the functions of the discourse marker /ja^cni/, occurring in the spoken Arabic of educated Egyptians. This particular marker has been chosen since it has a remarkably high frequency of occurrence. A pilot study was carried out to identify and count the various Egyptian discourse markers occurring in one-and-a-half hours of television interviews. Among the markers found were the following (the English translations are near equivalents):

- /t̤ab^can/ : of course
- /ilhaʔi:ʔa/ : as a matter of fact
- /ja^cni/ : I mean
- /walla:hi/ : well
- /t̤ajjib/ : ok

/ja^cni/ occurred 106 times followed by /t̤ab^can/ which occurred 36 times. Although this was only a rough survey using a relatively small sample of speech, the marker /ja^cni/ clearly stood out. For this reason, /ja^cni/ has been selected for in-depth functional analysis. The present study has focused on the following questions:

- a. Where does /ja^cni/ occur in Egyptian Arabic interview exchanges?
- b. What functions does it serve in these contexts?
- c. What phonological form characterises each function?
- d. Holding constant age, level of education, speaker role and gender of listener, do sex or type of topic discussed have an effect on the type of functions used most?

1.6 Value of topic and significance to foreign language learning

The value of this research lies in the fact that it draws generalizations from natural data. Since it is exploratory in nature, it aims to

provide a tentative, descriptive framework of a language phenomenon that is widely used. By looking at the different uses of the marker /ja^cni/, speakers' realization of discourse organization may be examined. This area has rarely been researched in Arabic.

In terms of foreign language learning, the analysis of /ja^cni/ functions is not considered directly significant. However, marker analysis in the native language of foreign language learners could offer a rich data base through which structural and propositional relationships could be compared across languages. Such comparisons could serve to pinpoint sources of interference for the learners. Variation in marker functions across languages could also serve this purpose. House (1984), using a data base of German and English conversational devices, found that students often translate a native-language marker to an equivalent that serves some, but not all, of its functions, this being a significant source of error. The findings of the present study, therefore, may help contrastive analysts identify some areas of interference for Egyptian foreign language learners.

CHAPTER 2

THE DESIGN

2.1 Type of study

This research is classified as a qualitative, exploratory study, using direct observation techniques for the analysis of the discourse marker /ja^Cni/ in spoken Egyptian Arabic.

2.2 Variable definition

Dependent variable:

1. The number of /ja^Cni/ occurrences per identified function

Independent variables:

1. Sex
2. Topic formality

Moderating variables (held constant):

1. Age range : adult
2. Dialect : Cairene
3. Education : literate
4. Speaker role : interview guest
5. Listener gender : female

2.3 Materials

Radio and television interviews provided natural speech for data analysis. The speech samples were selected to represent language of the educated middle-class. (This variety of language could be the most significant for future contrastive analysis studies.)

Badawi (1973, reviewed in Stoetzer, 1977, p. 301) identifies two levels of colloquial Arabic used by educated Egyptians:

- a. /^ca:mmijjat al mu@aqqafi:n/ - high standard colloquial: the language used by the educated for social, political and other serious discussions,
- b. /^ca:mmijjat al mutanawwiri:n/ - middle standard colloquial: the everyday language of the educated.

The topics discussed on the interviews were of two types, selected to represent each level of colloquial register (The distinction, however, between both levels of colloquial was not absolute. The interviews merely represented strong tendencies):

- a. topics related to social, environmental or political problems (e.g. drug abuse, fire emergencies or traffic problems). These represented the more formal variety of educated speech - 'high standard colloquial'.
- b. topics related to entertainment (e.g. interviews with singers or actors). These represented the more casual variety of educated colloquial speech - 'middle standard colloquial'.

Samples of speech of equal length (5000 words/group) were examined for each of the four groups specified below:

- a. Male guests on entertainment interviews
- b. Female guests on entertainment interviews
- c. Male guests on social interviews
- d. Female guests on social interviews

Thus, a total corpus of 20,000 words was examined. A word was operationally defined as:

Any cluster of morphemes that could be meaningfully uttered with a pause before and a pause after.

This definition excluded incomplete words and hesitation markers such as /ea/, /mm/ and /hhh/.

2.4 Subjects

The subjects examined were all obviously educated adults speaking Cairene Egyptian. There were 8 female and 9 male guests on entertainment interviews; 12 female and 11 male guests on social interviews.

2.5 Instruments

The main observer analysed the dependent variable; and, two other raters, trained during a pilot study, served as referees to reduce observer bias. Phonological form and syntactic position served as guidelines for interpretation. During the pilot study an observation form was developed to tabulate the various functions of the marker /ja^Cni/. This was used as a preliminary instrument during the major study, developed and modified throughout the analysis.

2.6 Procedures

The selected interviews were audio-taped on C-60LN cassette tapes. The main observer listened to the data, categorising the function of each /ja^Cni/ occurrence and noting its phonological form and syntactic position. Frequency per function for each variable (gender and topic type) was then tabulated. Using the categories identified, the two raters of the study defined the functions for a random sample of 150 /ja^Cni/ occurrences (out of a total of 325). After each of the first 10 occurrences, the raters and the main observer stopped to discuss their choices and agree upon the most appropriate function. The raters, then, felt familiar with the type of contexts /ja^Cni/ could occupy, and were able to define the functions more accurately and at a much faster rate. Out of the next 140 occurrences, 128 were agreed upon, yielding a 91% agreement value. The problem functions were then resolved by discussion. They were mostly occurrences with overlapping functions, so the strongest, most obvious function was chosen for the tabulation. The main ob-

server then compared frequencies within and across each variable for the functions defined.

2.7 Data analysis procedure

Within each functional category, the frequencies were compared across gender, then across topic. The differences were tested for statistical significance using a two-tailed 'z-test for proportions'. The 'Pearson chi-square' test was used to measure interaction amongst the two variables.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESULTS

The research questions proposed in the introduction above formed the basis of the analysis:

- a. Where does /ja^Cni/ occur in Egyptian Arabic interview exchanges?
- b. What functions does it serve in these contexts?
- c. What phonological form characterises each function?
- d. Holding constant age, level of education, speaker role and gender of listener, do sex or type of topic discussed have an effect on the type of functions used most?

3.1 The semantic definition of /ja^Cni/

The word /ja^Cni/ is a verb in the present tense form for the third person singular. Its literal interpretation is x "means" y; or "what I mean" by x "is" y, where x and y represent "units of talk" (Schiffrin, 1988, p. 31). The first interpretation denotes the semantic meaning of a lexical item or statement; the second denotes the speaker meaning, or 'intention', for using a lexical item or statement. Either sense is communicated by the marker. Thus, both an ideational and an interpersonal relationship are conveyed by the use of /ja^Cni/.

3.2 Formal properties of /ja^Cni/

3.2.1 *Syntactic form*

The data revealed that /ja^Cni/ could occur in the following two syntactic forms:

- a. Complete utterance: This is a speech act that communicates an entire message and, therefore, could stand alone meaningfully. Two

functions were identified for this form, each illustrated below. Near equivalents of /ja^Cni/, in each context, have been used (between brackets) for the English translation:

i. (ex. 1) A: [Cagabak elfelm
 --> B: ja^Cni]

 A: did you like the film?
 --> B: (not so much)

In this context the marker is pronounced with rising intonation on the final syllable - [ja^Cni]. The middle consonant is sometimes given longer duration. It was interpreted as "not exactly" or "not so much".

ii. The second use of /ja^Cni/ as a complete utterance is illustrated by:

(ex. 2)

A: [we fi: mawqif ta:ni -- e: --
 mahebbej bardu a^Ci:ju kti:r --
 e: -- en nnana atsedom fe sadi:q {e:
 B: {we
 fe^Clan nasal
 A: ja^Cni ---- nasal -- basse hejja di
 ddinja]

 A: and there's another incident -- er --
 that I don't like to experience often
 -- er -- to be betrayed by a friend
 {er-

B: {and did it really happen?

A: (kind of) ---- it did -- but this is
 how the world is

Pronounced with falling intonation and a final devoiced syllable - [ja[^]C_{ni}] - this form was interpreted as "yes, but I am reluctant to talk (about this topic)". Both phonological features contributed to such an interpretation.

The interpretation of both these forms - the speaker's 'intention' in this context - are not explicitly stated but have become characteristic of the intonation and phonological form of the term /ja^Cni/ in such pragmatic contexts. Thus, such occurrences carry a full message - an entire speech act. Since markers are characterized as "sequentially dependent" elements (Schiffrin, 1988, p.31), then these two forms of /ja^Cni/ cannot be defined as markers. Such occurrences were, therefore, excluded from the analysis.

b. An incomplete utterance: This forms part of a speaker's speech act that could not stand alone meaningfully. In this form /ja^Cni/ served two macrofunctions:

i. A head verb: This formed the main verb of the utterance and could not be deleted,

(ex. 3)

--> [madrasa ja^Cni elmaka:n elli bnet^Callem fi:]

--> school (means) the place in which we learn

ii. A discourse marker: This formed a peripheral element that could be deleted without grammatical distortion.

Only occurrences of the second macrofunction of incomplete utterances were found significant for the purposes of this study and were, therefore, extensively analysed to cover the range of functions served by the marker.

3.2.2 Phonological form and distribution of the marker

Two major intonational patterns were identified for /ja^Cni/:

[ja^Cni] [↑] [→] rise-level for initial position, and

[ja^Cni] [↑] [↘] rise-fall for final position.

The final vowel was sometimes lengthened - [ja^Cni:] - where the speaker "filled-in" time while formulating preceding utterances. The medial consonant was sometimes lengthened - [ja^Ci:] - for emphasis. The first syllable of all occurrences carried primary stress. Weak forms of the marker were [jeni], [jə] and [ja^C], used mainly in initial position by female speakers on entertainment interviews. Where form or position of the marker is specific to function, it will be specified in the functional definitions below.

3.3 Functional properties of /ja^Cni/

Below is a display of the various categories defined for /ja^Cni/ functions, each illustrated by examples from the data.

3.3.1 *Extension marker*

/ja^Cni/ frequently occurred to 'bracket' supporting propositional acts, expressed after the main point is uttered. The presence of a discourse marker linked and highlighted a referential relationship. The supporting acts, or *extension*^s, were of various types, reflecting the propositional relationship 'intended' by the speaker. These included elaborative, explanatory, exemplifying, justifying, or any form of supplementary, information related to the main point. Some examples are given below:

- a. *Elaboration*: The propositional act subsequent to /ja^Cni/ continued the main idea of the speaker, giving more details of his intended message,

(ex. 4) [ħatta amri:ka -- nagid innâhârdâ hejja
 bitħa:rib ilmoxâddâra:t ezzai - ^Can târi:g
 --> moħarbeta fi: dewal -- al is- alenta:g -- ja^Cni
 ma teħdarħ ennâhârdâ - mu- mu- munfarida ennaha
 teħfel ^Cala nafsaha wet^Ca:leg elmoħkela - la:zem
 jebħa fi: târa:bot we fi: ta^Ca:won]

*even America -- today how does it fight drugs -
 by fighting through the -- er- es- producing
 --> states -- (so) today it cannot close up on
 itself and solve the problem single-handed -
 there must be unity and cooperation*

/ja^Cni/, above, heads the elaborative propositional act, developing the speaker's ideas.

b. Explanation: The extension clarified or explained some point in the preceding discourse,

(ex. 5) [ħatta fawzi moni:b da ka:n ĵoħletu fe lħaja:
 lmasraħnejja - enno -- nosħa tanja mel usta:z ^Cali
 --> kkâssâ:r - ja^Cni je^Cmel âdwâ:r ^Cosmâ:n ^Cabd
 elbâ:set - we jusboħ weħħo zaiħħ ekkâssâ:r ma kaan
 bejusboħ weħħo - tipikal ekkâsâ:r]

*this Fawzi Moneeb's role in the world of theatre -
 was that he was -- a duplicate of Mr. Ali El-Kassar -
 --> (so) he would play the roles of Osman Abd El-Baset -
 and he would have his face made up in the same way
 as El-Kassar had his face made up - typical El-Kassar*

What follows /ja^Cni/, in this context, explains what the speaker means by "duplicate".

c. Exemplification: After the statement of the main point, /ja^Cni/ linked an illustrative extension that gave one example out of several available,

(ex. 6) [elʔara:jeʔ ʔelli hejja - betku:n natga -
ʔan ʔari:ʔ ʔamd - dijjan bejebʔa li:ha
mâzâ:her muhaddada - ʔala sabi:l ettañdi:d
we bneʔdar nerfa^C ʔajjena:t men maka:n elʔa:dis --
--> ja^Cni ʔanʔu:l ʔo:dit no:m -- ma mubarrir
lewgu:d banzi:n aw wogu:d kirosi:n fi:
mawa:d moñtâriqâ]

*fires that are - a result of - deliberate setting off
- have distinctive features - and we can analyse
--> samples from the burnt site - (so) let's say a
bedroom -- why would there be benzene or kerosine
in the fire remains*

d. Entailment: /ja^Cni/ linked a logical inference or a conclusion derived from previous discourse,

(ex. 7) [tâ[^]ʔan ʔadreték ʔe: ʔelʔika:ja di bteñsâl law in
--> elbe:bi bejku:n walad -- ja^Cni fi: tafreʔa mabe:n
elwalad we lbent]

*of course er this happens if the baby is a boy --
--> (so) there is discrimination between boys and girls*

e. Justification: This is when the supporting act gave evidence or support for the main topic,

(ex. 8) [telefizjo:n dafa^Ct gomroko - talat tala:f wo xomsomi:t
--> genee welwâsl fge:bi bsañi:h ja^Cni/

a television for which I paid customs - three thousand
 five hundred pounds and the receipt is really in my
 --> pocket (for sure)

Extensions may occur within one speaker's utterance or across speakers. So speakers who request extensions may also initiate their utterance with /ja^Cni/, highlighting the relationship between the main point and a potential extension,

(ex. 9) A: [tâb fi: p̂xtâ:ʔ baʃarejja w p̂xtâ:ʔ ʃe:r baʃarejja ...
 ʔadretak kallema^Canha
 --> B: ja^Cni ʔadretak toʔsodi lʔhari:ʔ el^Camd
 A: el^Camd welʃe:r muta^Cammed]

 A: OK there are human mistakes and nonhuman mistakes ...
 could you tell us about them
 --> B: (In other words) do you mean deliberate fires?
 A: Both deliberate and nondeliberate

Speaker B's question is initiated by /ja^Cni/ to signal the probable, expected extension,

OK, there are human mistakes and nonhuman mistakes ... (in other words) deliberate fires and nondeliberate fires - could you tell us about them."

Speakers' questions that initiate a topic, may also be responded to with initial /ja^Cni/, marking the logical extension,

(ex. 10) A: [t̂aʒabbâlti lxâbâr ezzai
 --> B: ja^Cni ana ma^Cajjatti ʃ sa^Citha]

 A: how did you take the news
 --> B: (well) I didn't cry then

B's response in such an example is considered an extension because it is syntactically similar to the second proposition in,

I received the news [somehow] - (well) I didn't cry then

/ja^Cni/, in this example, would be subclassified as an explanation marker.

3.3.2 Subordination marker

/ja^Cni/ sometimes introduced, or marked the termination of, a parenthetical expression, so that utterances that did not develop the main point, but were minor deviations, were bracketed as 'subordinate' expressions. Parenthetical statements were usually transitions, other discourse markers (e.g., [wâllâ:hi, elñâ?i:fa, fe^Clan, tâbcân]), terms of address, adverbial modifiers or side comments. Some examples from the data are presented below:

As an adverbial modifier,

(ex.11) --> [ana ^Camaltelo -- ja^Cni lamma btade:na ne{ta?al ma^C ba^Cd - ^Camalna
e: -- awwel o?nejja ?anna:ha fñaja:to - ka:nit men ta?li:fi/

--> *I wrote him -- (that's) when we first started together - we did er --
the first song he sang in his life - was my writing*

As a side comment,

(ex. 12) A: [tâb da ma bej?âssar} ^Cala ñaltik esseññijja wennafsejja

--> B: mejja fe lmejja - ja^Cni ña?u:l leñadreték ña:ga - ana
masalan marra roñt leddokto:r we ?olte lo .../

A: *doesn't this affect your physical and mental state?*

--> B: *exactly - (you know) I'll tell you something - I went to a doctor
once for example and told him ...*

3.3.3 Broad interpretation marker

When a transition was made from a lexical description level to a broader, characterizing level, using expressions such as 'et cetera' or 'and things like that', /ja^Cni/ was sometimes used to mark the boundary,

(ex. 13) --> [sâdi:q we zami:l ... we [^]abbe w [^]axxe wkul [^]na:ga ja^Cni]

*a friend and a colleague ... and a father and a
brother and everything (that is)*

Another example for this function is,

(ex.14) [eddu:na kama:n e: -- elle: - mâ^Crâf] elmedwa di lle
^Candena ^Cala tu:l -- mâ^Crâf] ja^Cni [^]na:ga zaijje keda]

*they also gave us -- the - I don't know that horseshoe
that we've always got -- I don't know (you know)
something like that*

3.3.4 Inner-negotiation marker

When within a proposition a speaker stuttered, made a false start or paused to think, /ja^Cni/ sometimes occurred to signal a pragmatic transition from a stage of inaccurate expression to a stage of modification. The marker was sometimes elongated to fill-in time while the speaker thought of the most precise expression or meaning - [ja^Cni:]. The term inner-negotiation marker suggests that /ja^Cni/ does more than fill-in time; it communicates a message that the listener picks up and either waits for the speaker or attempts to find him the right expression,

(ex.15) [elmâsrâh la:zem je[?]u:l kelma - ~~Ma~~tta law ka:nit elkelma di -
n[^]fallâ nokta - basse hejja kelma - waxda ba:lik - li:ha ma^Cna -
--> je- jerawwâ el- elmu[?]a:hid jefakkâr fi:ha jedhak je -- ja^Cni: --
ma troh] menno keda ma jeb[?]a: ella: - elnaga:t hajfa]

 theatre has to say something - even if what it says is - even
 a joke - but it's something - see what I mean - it has meaning - pe-
 --> people can go home and think about it laugh je- -- (I mean) --
 it won't be just forgotten it shouldn't be er -- things shouldn't
 be trivial

Sometimes as inner-negotiation marker, /ja^Cni/ came after a speaker has paused to think, but straight before his new expression. In other words, it told the listener "here is what I mean",

(ex.16) --> [tâb^Cân errâ?je l^Ca:m mâ^Czu:r le'lenno: -- ja^Cni ja:jef
 enne di masa:ʔel xâti:ra geddan]

 of course the public cannot be blamed for their opinion
 --> because er -- (well) they find these issues very important

3.3.5 Deictic centre marker

When /ja^Cni/ was used within a statement that was not an extension of a prior point, it tended to modify the certainty of the proposition. By removing /ja^Cni/, it was found that such statements sound like *established facts*. The marker added the connotation "I think" or "that's my opinion" so that established facts become *speaker facts*. It pivoted the statement meaning to the speaker and not to the world,

(ex. 17) [elʔaʔi:ʔa ʔee mâzâ:her ramada:n fe mat^Cam xa:n elxali:li
 târtâbet bemâzâ:her ramada:n fel ʔaħja:ʔ eʃʃa^Cbejja --
 we menha ħaj xa:n elxali:li elli howwa bna^Ctaberu ħajje
 ja^Cbi - basse malja:n aga:neb -- we di bteddi e: -
 --> jemken ʔe za:tejja âktâr lelmaka:n ja^Cni]

 actually Ramadan customs in Khan El-Khalily restaurant are
 bound to Ramadan customs in the lower class areas

-- one of which is Khan El-Khalily which we consider a lower class region - but full of foreigners -- and this gives er -- more personality to the place (that is)

3.3.6 Degree of intensity marker

As a booster, /ja^Cni/ occurred before an expression that the speaker intended to give intensified force. In this context, the marker was usually pronounced with middle consonant lengthened for emphasis - [ja^C:ni],

(ex. 18) --> [elxidma legtimaccejja di - ja^C:ni xedmet errosol]

--> social service is - (very much) the service of prophets

(ex. 19) --> [e^hna wa^htena ka:n fi: f^hraa^h kiti:r - humma ja^C:ni ma^hruzi:n fi tarbejet el wela:d welmada:res ...]

--> during our days there was a lot of free time - they are now (absolutely) implanted in bringing up the children and in schools ...

As an attenuator, /ja^Cni/ sometimes occurs in statements commenting on either the speaker's merits or another person's demerits (the listener's or a third party's). As with the deictic centre marker, the function was tested by deleting /ja^Cni/. Without the marker, such statements sound either boasting or offending, respectively. To avoid that effect speakers use /ja^Cni/ to attenuate the force of the utterance,

(ex. 20) [ethara^hmt men enn ana amassel ma^hsr kti:r besabab
--> e: - el esaba^h:t el- elle ^Cane:t menha kti:r ja^Cni]

I was often deprived of representing Egypt because of er - the injuries th- that I frequently suffered from (that is)

Considering that a player's injuries are regarded, in this context, as a sportsman's merits, /ja^Cni/ was used to mitigate the strength of the statement. An example that illustrates attenuating the statement of demerits is,

(ex.21)A: [tâb kâdretak tefâssâr be?e: etteha:m enneqâ:bâ we tabre?at
elmafkama

--> B: ... tab^Can ele:- -?a^Cda:? enneqâ:bâ e: e: e: - ja^Cni
ma jefhamu:} fe tafsi:r elqâwani:n zaijj elquda:}

A: *How would you explain your conviction by the syndicate
and your nonconviction by the court?*

B: ... of course er -- members of the syndicate er er er -
--> *(I mean) would not understand the law as well as the judges do*

3.3.7 Indirect intention marker

When a speaker's proposition communicated his intention indirectly, /ja^Cni/ was sometimes used to signal the disguise. This category would include statements of disagreement, sarcasm and euphemism,

(ex. 22) - to indirectly express disagreement:

A: [dokto:ra maña:sen nefred enn ezso:g bejgi:b e: lezogto
masalan hedejja whejja fkol hdejja mahejja:} ^Cagba:ha
?e: hal mumkin inne kolle t̂arâf enno ja:xod ettaraf
?etta:ni we jenzelo ma^C bâ^Cd jegi:bo lhedejja walla -
^Consor elmufag?a bjentehi]

--> B: [... mumken ja^Cni teb?a tenzel ma^Ca: basse hejja
lfekra kâdretak elhedejja er tafserha nnafsi we waq^Câhâ
nnafsi bjeb?a âzrâf law fi:ha ^Consor elmufag?a/

A: *Doctor Mahasen supposing that the husband for example
gets his wife presents but every time she does not like
them er is it possible for each partner to take the other
and go to buy a present together or - would that spoil*

the surprise

- > B: ... it's possible (in a sense) that she goes with him but the idea is that a present has a more pleasant psychological effect and psychological impact if there is an element of surprise involved.

Speaker B's response in effect disagrees with what speaker A proposes.

An example illustrating sarcasm could be:

(ex. 23) A: [ʔolte e: lamma ttahamak elbâ^Cd betahri:b vedjo mel mâ^htâ:r
fi reñlet ezzama:lek]

- > B: [wâllâ^h:hi: -- ja^Cni eza ka:n ettahri:b hajkallefni arba^Ct ala:f
gene: gomrok - jeb^ʔa lwa:ñed Najbâttâl tahri:b/

A: what did you say when some people accused you of smuggling a video past customs during Zamalek's trip?

- > B: Well -- (I mean) if smuggling is going to cost me four thousand pounds customs - then I'm going to have to stop smuggling

Speaker B, in the above context, means to say "I paid four thousand pounds customs for the video, therefore I couldn't have smuggled it in." He says that indirectly by using sarcasm to express his offense. /ja^Cni/ brackets the indirect expression.

An example of /ja^Cni/ used to introduce a euphemistic expression (indirectly expressing a negative attitude) is,

(ex. 24)--> [ezzâ^h:hir enne nna:s ja^Cni axlâqejjatha ba^ʔet me^j mazbu:ta]

- --> apparently people's morals (---) have become not quite right

The speaker uses the negative "not" with a positive expression to express a strong negative attitude. /ja^Cni/ marks the disguised intention.

These are seven categories of functions identified for the discourse marker /ja^Cni/ in the spontaneous speech of educated adults. During the frequency tabulation, subfunctions within each category were not taken into consideration. Below is an investigation of frequency differences across gender and topic type.

3.4 Distribution across variables

Table (1) in the Appendix illustrates the frequency of /ja^Cni/ functions across gender and topic type. There was a total of 325 /ja^Cni/ occurrences in the 20,000 word corpus. Most were 'extension markers', 'subordination markers' or 'inner-negotiation markers'. However, since /ja^Cni/ occurs to "bracket" various syntactic structures, it would only be appropriate to compare its frequency across functions if each frequency was calculated in proportion to the total number of times each syntactic structure occurred. Assuming, for example, that a frequency of 66 occurrences, serving function 'x', was a higher frequency of occurrence than 12 occurrences of function 'y', clouds the possibility that syntactic structure 'x' occurs 100 times, while structure 'y' occurs only 12 times (i.e. 66% : 100%, respectively). Therefore, since the frequency of occurrence of each syntactic structure has not been counted, no comparisons could be made across functional categories. Within each separate function, differences across variables were compared to test for significant tendencies. Each frequency value was converted into a proportion of the total group-corpus (5000 words) and the proportions were compared. A two-tailed 'z-test for proportions' was used to determine the statistical significance of the differences. Table (2) in the Appendix tabulates the levels of significance for each variable, across each of the functions. Those values that exceeded 1.96, or that were lower than -1.96 were considered significant differences at the 0.05 level of estimated error.

The statistically significant tendencies were:

- i. Female speakers generally used /ja^Cni/ more often than male speakers to mark 'extensions', 'subordinations', 'inner-negotiation' and 'deictic-centre'.

ii. Speakers on entertainment topics generally used /ja^cni/ more often to mark 'subordination'.

To test for the interaction of variables, the 'Pearson chi-square' test was used, yielding nonsignificant differences for all functions.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of functions

4.1.1 *The cohesive function and deixis*

In section 1.2.3, it was stated that markers have a deictic property that enables them to link together linguistic structures, semantic propositions or interlocutors' cooperative contributions. The referential property, characteristic of deictic elements, constantly relates the speakers' utterances to prior linguistic and pragmatic contexts, to form a meaningful, cohesive exchange. Consider, for example, a situation where a marker is used to head a sentence that is not preceded by related discourse - the listeners' interpretation would be to expect some form of prior context (invented example):

Three people A, B and C have just arrived at a party and are standing together. A fourth person D walks in, at a distance, dressed in a blue suit. A, looking across towards D but addressing his two companions, says:

--> A: [ja^Cni badleto zarʔa]

--> (so) his suit is blue

B smiles, but C looks at D and says,

C: [ento kotto metrahniin]

Had you bet on it?

In this context, B's smile is the pragmatic response to A's statement, suggesting that A's propositional and pragmatic intention have been 'uptaken'.

C's question suggests that he cannot see the relevance of A's statement but that he can sense that it is related to some prior discourse that took place between A and B in his absence. It is the presence of the marker /ja^Cni/, together with intonation on the rest of the utterance, that leads him to such an expectation. Had the marker been missing, the interpretation of A's statement would have been less obvious. Such a situation demonstrates the speaker's awareness of a deictic feature inherent in a word such as /ja^Cni/, a feature that relates an utterance to an existing context. Below is a brief investigation of how some of the above functions specified for the marker /ja^Cni/ clearly demonstrate deictic cohesion.

As an 'extension' and 'subordination' marker, /ja^Cni/, operating on the textual plane, signals coordination between the main point, in a stretch of talk, and supplementary information (see ex. 4-11). In a sense, speakers realise a hierarchical structure in spoken discourse where the main point is presented first followed by supplementary information, in the same way as informative written texts start with a topic sentence and are developed through a series of statements that elaborate or support the main point. The markers serve as verbal punctuation marks, in the spoken context, illustrating the speakers' consciousness of this structure of discourse. They may be equivalent to a colon in a sentence or a lexical transition in a paragraph.

On the ideational plane of analysis, /ja^Cni/ as an extension marker, links two propositions that share a 'logical connection'. The fact that the second proposition is related to the first in a meaningful way is signalled by the deictic property of /ja^Cni/.

Deictic cohesion on the interpersonal plane for the first function is illustrated when speakers negotiate 'meaning' amongst themselves, extending topics across speakers or requesting elaborations (ex. 9-10). The marker /ja^Cni/ is used as a link between turns.

As a broad interpretation marker /ja^Cni/ invites the listener to widen the scope of meaning of a term, so that the interpretation moves from a restricted lexical level, to a characterizing level (ex. 13-14). This textual transition from one level to the other is signalled by the use of /ja^Cni/. The two levels are distinct but related.

/ja^Cni/ as an inner-negotiation marker was used as a strategy to hold

the listener while the speaker sorted out his information. On an interpersonal level, /ja^cni/ communicated to the listener that his cooperation was expected in either waiting for the speaker, or suggesting some form of 'repair'. These are examples of how particular functions highlight the effect of deixis on discourse cohesion and reveal aspects of discourse structure.

4.1.2 The phatic function and the Interpersonal Rhetoric

The phatic component of the functions, working alongside the cohesive, could be adequately explained within the framework of the Interpersonal Rhetoric (IR) (Leech, 1983, p.16). This consists of a set of principles responsible for meaningful, fruitful conversation. Each of the /ja^cni/ functions above will be discussed below in terms of the various principles of IR.

Those functions that fell under 'extension marker' could be interpreted in terms of the first of the IR principles - The Cooperative Principle. This is composed of four maxims proposed by Grice (1975 cited in Leech, 1983, p.7) which place "moral or ethical" constraints on language use (p.9). Briefly they specify the following:

Quantity: Give the right amount of information: ie

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required.
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true: ie

1. Do not say what you believe to be false
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Be perspicuous: ie

1. Avoid obscurity of expression
2. Avoid ambiguity
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

So a speaker may be either certain or not of the truth of his utterance; he may be giving either enough or inadequate information; he may be relevant or not, clear or not, etc. The hearer on the other hand usually expects adherence to the maxims. In the data examined here, the marker /ja^cni/ was sometimes used as a boundary marker between a speaker's main point and his at-

tempt to develop it in terms of the maxims (the extension). That is, it was used to "indicate for recipients just how the utterance so prefaced matches up to cooperative expectations" (Levinson, 1983, p.162). Speakers used /ja^Cni/ to introduce an exemplifying or an explanatory expression. Both these functions show how the speaker attempts to abide by the maxim of manner - "avoid obscurity of expression". When /ja^Cni/ was used to introduce an elaboratory phrase, it showed how the speaker attempts to abide by the maxim of quantity - "make your contribution as informative as is required" (see examples in results section).

These extension functions illustrate a transitory stage from inaccuracy of information and expression to total maxim fulfilment. It is a stage that indicates that the cooperative maxims do, in fact, have psychological reality in the minds of the speakers. They may not be conscious of the maxims at work, but general adherence to them is ultimately sought and expected. The fact that listeners request extensions when they are not provided, further substantiates the fact that the maxims do describe an existing phenomenon expected and negotiated between interlocutors.

The 'subordination marker', signalling a tie between secondary comments and the main idea, is an attempt to abide by the maxim of relevance. Fulfillment of the maxim of manner is signalled by the use of the broad-interpretation marker, which highlights a speaker's attempt to characterise a continuous list of information within a defining set, thus avoiding "unnecessary prolixity". It is also fulfilled by the inner-negotiation marker, which signals an attempt to "avoid obscurity of expression" and "ambiguity".

The quality maxim states "do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence." In response to that maxim, speakers tend to add /ja^Cni/ to a large number of their statements, as a deictic-centre marker. Carrying the notion of speaker intention, the marker establishes a statement as speaker-oriented and not as an established general truth. In other words, it adds a connotation equivalent to "I think", avoiding the need for "adequate evidence".

As a booster, /ja^Cni/, pronounced with medial consonant lengthening, adds force to a statement or a lexical expression, giving a hyperbolic effect. Sometimes the boosted term is itself hyperbolic,

(ex. 25) --> [xolok ja^Cni malaaʔiki]

--> whose manners are (absolutely) angelic

Such a strategy may be quite safely interpreted in terms of the Interest Principle (Leech, 1983, p.146) which states,

say what is unpredictable, and hence interesting

Both the phonological sound-effects and the boosted expression contribute to this effect. Attenuator /ja^Cni/, occurring in statements that comment on either the speaker's merits or the listener's demerits, adjusts utterances to follow the "approbation" and the "modesty" maxims, described below:

- *The approbation maxim states: 'minimise dispraise of other, maximise praise of other'; and,*
- *The modesty maxim states: 'minimise praise of self, maximise dispraise of self' (Leech, 1983, p. 132).*

The last function identified for /ja^Cni/ - the indirect intention marker - serves as a strategy for three distinct purposes, illustrated in the data - disagreement with speaker, sarcasm and euphemism (ex. 22-24). The speaker's real intention, in these contexts, is normally presented in disguised form to avoid offending the listener. Indirect disagreement is a strategy that aims to follow the maxims of Politeness described by Leech (1983, p.132). In particular speakers attempt to abide by the 'agreement maxim' which states,

- a. *Minimise disagreement between self and other*
- b. *Maximise agreement between self and other*

Therefore, when agreement is stated, followed by a 'but' extension, the first 'indirect' intention is often prefaced by /ja^Cni/.

Sarcasm is often expressed in indirect terms to avoid 'dispraise of other', following the "approbation maxim" (Leech, 1983, p.132); and euphemism is often sought, preferring 'pleasant topics of conversation to unpleasant

ones' - "the Pollyanna principle" (p. 147). Both these indirect expressions of intention are often marked by /ja^Cni/.

4.2 Interpretation of variable distribution

The results of the statistical analysis, measuring variability, indicate that women make use of /ja^Cni/ as a marker more often than men. In particular, they use it more often to signal boundaries between their main point of focus and supplementary or parenthetical information; to signal propositional or linguistic processing; and, to signal their stand-point when making assertive statements.

What this suggests is that females make (or need to make) a conscious effort in following their line of discourse (functions 1 & 2). Their use of a verbal organiser, instead of pausing or just assuming listener understanding, suggests that women (the educated variety) either attempt to help listeners 'see' the connections between their 'units of talk'; or, that they make a conscious effort to produce coherent, cohesive discourse when talking in public.

Using /ja^Cni/ to hold the listener, while the speaker does some mental scanning for the 'best thing to say' and the 'best way to say it', suggests that females attempt to keep the listener 'on-line' with their thinking process - a factor that may call for cooperation on the listener's part (whether in waiting or participating).

Using /ja^Cni/ as a deictic-center marker, sets a gravitational pull towards the speaker. Speaker 'meaning' is expressed and, therefore, the listener is directed towards speaker empathy. Epistemic facts are more public, distancing the listener from the speaker's point of view. Females, therefore, attempt to attract the listener to their ideational orbit, seeking listener cognitive and affective understanding more than men.

What all these differences suggest, is that females involved in semi-formal conversation exchanges, seek as well as provide means for participant involvement and understanding. Their use of a verbal device - /ja^Cni/ -enables them to maintain cooperation and solidarity between themselves and the listeners. Men, it seems, seek such factors to a lesser degree.

The statistical analysis also revealed that entertainment interviews have more 'parenthetical statements' than serious interviews. This is a natural trait in relaxed conversation since, speakers tend to digress more often when the topic of conversation is more open-ended. Where the point of focus is more defined, discussing a particular social problem, the probability of deviating off line is naturally less.

4.3 Conclusion

The study has focused on defining the functions of /ja^cni/ in spoken discourse, using syntactic position and phonological form as contextualisation cues. It has revealed that /ja^cni/ is used to serve a number of functions that were mainly "maintaining" or "regulating" - "cohesive" or "phatic" devices. The deictic element inherent in the marker /ja^cni/ is responsible for the first macrofunction; the literal meaning - "speaker intention" - is responsible for the second.

Significant differences have been found across variables. Females were found to be rather more interpersonally-oriented participants of a conversation, while males were more ideationally-oriented. So that, the men's main goal was to communicate the message; the women's goal was to achieve successful interaction. These were mere tendencies, however, not established standpoints.

Differences across topic have revealed that more speakers on serious topics - usually more "academically-oriented" or, at least, well-read in a particular field - tend to produce less subordinate information. Less personal anecdotes, side-comments, and other discourse markers are used, since all these elements provide a more personal, relaxed atmosphere, not fit for the discussion of social troubles.

4.4 Implications and further research

Since such a wide scope of functions has been defined for the marker /ja^cni/, its tendency to pervade an Egyptian speaker's foreign language may be

explained. Foreign language learners often have to 'inner-negotiate' their meaning, plan and express their intention. /ja^cni/, therefore, provides an easy, helping tool, before various foreign equivalents are acquired.

Further research would be useful in contrastive analysis studies examining conversation devices. They may shed light on points of interference and on differences in gender or topic-type tendencies in other cultures. Studies on gender-specific language devices may substantiate or develop female tendencies suggested in the present study. As well as this, it would be interesting if other variables were tested for marker variance - such as age, dialect or education. Studies focusing specifically on Arabic discourse structure have been especially rare, but would provide an excellent database for cross-cultural conversational structure studies. Generally, qualitative research in conversation analysis provides a rich datapool for studying human communication behaviour.

Appendix

TOPIC	GENDER	Extension marker	Subordinat. marker	Broad Interpret. marker	inner negotiat. marker	deictic center marker	degree of intensity marker	disguised - intention marker
ENTERT	M	20	12	1	8	2	8	3
ENTERT	F	46	31	2	29	11	3	2
SERIOUS	M	25	3	1	13	1	1	
SERIOUS	F	34	6	3	36	15	6	2

Table 1
" Distribution across variables "

	Extension marker	Subordinat. marker	Broad Interpret. marker	inner negotiat. marker	deictic - center marker	degree of intensity marker	indirect - intention marker
Topic Variability	0.630	4.727	- 0.378	- 1.299	- 0.558	0.944	1.134
Gender Variability	- 3.150	- 3.059	- 1.134	- 4.765	- 4.277	0	- 0.378

Table 2

Results for 'z-test'

REFERENCES:

- Badawi, E. M. (1973). Mustawayat al-^Carabiyva al-mu^Casira fi misr. Cairo: Dar El Ma^Carif. (Reviewed in Stoetzer, W. (1977))
- Condon, S. (1986). The discourse functions of 'OK'. Semiotica, 60, 73-101.
- Faerch, C. and Kasper, G. (1982). Phatic, metalingual and metacommunicative functions in discourse: Gambits and Repairs. In: Enkvist, N. ed. (1982) Impromptu speech: A Symposium publications of the Research Institute of the Abo Akademi Foundations, no. 78, pp. 71-103.
- _____ (1984). *Ja und? - og hva' sa?* - a contrastive discourse analysis of gambits in German and Danish. In: Fisiak, J. ed. (1984). Contrastive Linguistics: Prospects and Problem, Berlin: Mouton Publishers (pp. 69-105).
- Fraser, B. (1990). An approach to discourse markers. Journal of Pragmatics, 14, 383-395.
- Grice, H. P. (1975), 'Logic and conversation'. In Cole, P. and Morgan, J. L. (eds), (1975), Syntax and Semantics, Vol 3: Speech Acts, New York: Academic Press. In Leech, G. N. (1983).
- Hafez, O. M. (1991). Turn-taking in Egyptian Arabic: Spontaneous speech vs. drama dialogue. Journal of Pragmatics, 15, 59-81.
- Halliday, M., A. (1970). Language Structure and Language Function. In: Lyons, J. ed. (1970). New Horizons in Linguistics. Middlesex: Penguin Books (pp. 140-166).

- Hjelmquist, E. & Gidlund, A. (1984). Planned ideas vs expressed ideas in conversation. Journal of Pragmatics, 8, 329-343.
- Holmes, J. (1990). Hedges and boosters in women's and men's speech. Language and communication, 10, 185-205.
- House, J. (1984). Some methodological problems and perspectives in contrastive discourse analysis. Applied Linguistics, 5, 245-254.
- James, A. (1983). Compromisers in English: A cross-disciplinary approach to their interpersonal significance. Journal of Pragmatics, 7, 191-206.
- Kwong, L. (1989). The Cantonese utterance particle LA and the accomplishment of common understanding in conversation. Papers in Pragmatics, 3, 39-87.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). Principles of Pragmatics, New York: Longman.
- Levinson, S. (1983). Pragmatics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maynard, S. (1989). Functions of the discourse marker Dakara in Japanese conversation. Text, 9, 389-414.
- Peterson, C. (1986). Semantic and Pragmatic uses of 'but'. Journal of Child Language, 13, 583-590.
- Schiffrin, D. (1985). Conversational coherence: The role of 'well'. Language, 61, 640-667.
- _____. Discourse Markers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Schourup, L. (1988). Review of "Discourse markers". By Deborah Schiffrin.
Language, 64, 633-637.

Stoetzer, W. (1977). On levels of contemporary Egyptian Arabic. Der Islam,
54, 301-304.

Tsuchihashi, M. (1983). The speech act continuum: An investigation of
Japanese sentence final particles. Journal of Pragmatics, 7, 361-387.

Watts, R. (1989). Taking the pitcher to the 'well': Native speakers'
perception of their use of discourse markers in conversation. Journal
of Pragmatics, 13, 203-237.

Wierzbicka, A. (1986). Introduction. Journal of Pragmatics, 10, 519-534.