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《绝望主妇》中填充型话语标记语语用功能
分析

A Pragmatic Analysis of Filler Type Discourse Markers in
Desperate Housewives

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Abstract

Discourse markers (DMs) are very common in daily communication, and they can usually guide or constrict the understanding of utterances. The last three decades has witnessed a large number of studies in this field. Many famous scholars, both at home and abroad, have done extensive research on the use of DMs, which helps lay the foundation for comprehensive studies of DMs from cognitive and pragmatic perspective. However, most studies focus on the features of discourse markers as a whole, or on a specific discourse marker, but the analysis of DMs as a type as a group does not have the same attention. Therefore, this research attempts to analyze the three typical filler type DMs *well*, *you know*, and *I mean*, from a pragmatic perspective, tries to compare and contrast their pragmatic functions in utterance producing and understanding, so to facilitate the studies of this type of DMs and discourse analysis. The main analysis is carried out in two parts.

The previous two chapters intend to construct a theoretical framework for analyzing the filler type DMs. Starting with the definition of DMs, Chapter One presents a review of previous studies on DMs, such as its formation, properties, and classification. The survey of the former researches leads us the possibilities for the present study. Chapter Two lays down the theoretical framework of the study, on the basis of coherence, relevance theory, and politeness theory.

The second part consists of Chapter Three, Chapter Four, and Chapter five, which are devoted to a detailed analysis of the similarities and differences of the three typical filler type DMs. Chapter Three introduces the methodology and data collection. The pop TV series, *Desperate Housewives* (season one), is chosen to build up corpus of 660 target DMs. Chapter Four carries out a qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The frequency of the three typical markers is counted, and specific patterns coming together with each marker are explored. Chapter Five discusses the results of the data analysis. The three typical filler type

markers can all carry out the following five pragmatic functions: interpersonal, repairing, turn management, monitoring and organizing, but in different ways, and finally leading to different understanding of the utterances.

Through the detailed study of the similarities and differences of the three typical filler type markers in *Desperate Housewives*, better understandings of this type of DMs are achieved, which contributes to the further researches of DMs more or less. Since the use of DMs belongs to individual verbal behavior, and is subjected to social or linguistic changes, some areas still call for further research.

Key Words: filler type DMs; pragmatic functions; relevance theory; politeness theory

摘要

话语标记语的使用是日常交际中的普遍现象，在话语理解过程中常常起到引导和制约的作用。过去 30 年见证了话语标记语研究的丰硕成果，很多国内外知名学者对话语标记语的使用进行了深入、细致的分析研究，从语用和认知角度为全面认识话语标记语奠定了基础。然而，大部分研究或是概述话语标记语的整体特征，或是着重某个特定话语标记语的分析，而对一类话语标记语的研究甚少。本文旨在从语用角度分析 3 个典型填充型话语标记语 *well*, *you know*, 和 *I mean* 的语用特点，对比其在话语产生和理解过程中的语用功能的异同，进而能更好的研究此类话语标记语和会话分析。本文的中心论述分为两大部分。

第一部分为论文的前两章，主要探讨话语标记语的理论框架。第一章首先讨论了话语标记语的定义，形成，特质和分类，进而回顾并评论了国内外话语标记语的主要研究成果。第二章阐释了全文的理论基础，包括话语连贯性，关联理论和礼貌理论，并在此基础上搭建了研究的理论框架。

第二部分包括了论文的后三章，具体展开对三个典型填充型话语标记语 *well*, *you know*, 和 *I mean* 语用功能的对比分析。第三章描述了研究方法和语料收集。本文选取了热播美剧《绝望主妇》（第一季）作为语料来源，并建立了包括 660 个典型话语语在内的语料库。第四章对所收集的语料进行定量和定性分析，计算了 3 个典型话语标记语的出现频率，找出了每个话语标记语的特定使用模式。第五章提出数据分析结果。填充型话语标记语表面上都能填充话语，并且都有人际维护功能、信息修正功能、话轮转换功能、话语监测功能和话语连贯的语用功能，但是在执行这些功能时不经相同，各有特点，引导和限制听话人产生不同的理解。

本文通过对《绝望主妇》中 3 个典型填充型话语标记语的对比分析，深化了对这一特定种类话语标记语的认识，丰富了话语分析的研究。当然，话语标记语的使用常带有主观性，并且容易受到多种社会、语言因素的影响，还需要更多进一步的探讨。

关键词：填充型话语标记语 语用功能 关联理论 礼貌理论

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Introduction

The present thesis intends to provide a pragmatic analysis of the filler type discourse markers (DMs) in *Desperate Housewives*. This chapter presents the rationale and objectives of the present research, briefly illustrates the methodology and outlines the overall structure of the thesis.

1. Reasons for the Study

The last three decades has witnessed a great enthusiasm in the study of the kind of lexical expressions which are named afterwards as DMs, and the studies have yielded a rich harvest. A large number of academic papers on this topic come out, and different viewpoints and various approaches are presented. Then why are people so interested in DMs? What benefits can people reap from it?

First, it belongs to the task of linguists to know about the DMs. People find that in our daily communication, and also in the written text, the appearance of the kind of lexical expressions does not affect the truth condition of an utterance, but certainly plays a role in understanding the following discourse segments. They meet challenges when paraphrasing the expressions, and even when a native speaker is asked what these words such as *well*, *you know*, or *I mean* actually mean, we are more likely to receive a description or an illustration of their functions, rather than a straight definition. It is this elusiveness of these expressions that stimulate people's interests in further study.

People also encounter many difficulties in the actual use of these lexical expressions. The most common problem is how to precisely understand the utterance with DMs, since the relations indicated by the DMs are so vague that any carelessness might lead to a misunderstanding.

Then the translation of these markers is also a headache. This task is notoriously difficult due to their non-truth conditional property and no contribution to the conceptual representation. Also it is a headache for the foreign language teachers and learners. It seems that the use of DMs is a unconscious process undergoing in the mind of the native speakers. Even the native speakers themselves can not tell exactly when and how a certain DM should be used, let alone the language learners in a

non-native learning environment. With some attention we can find that the utterances and writings of foreign language learners are full of mistakes caused by the misuse of DMs, which are grammatically correct, yet practically unacceptable.

To make the concept DMs clear, to further detect the pragmatic functions of DMs, and to solve the problems in the actual use of DMs, the author starts the study of DMs analysis.

2. Objectives of the Study

Lexical items such as *oh*, *yeah*, *well*, *you know*, and *I mean* are quite common in language use, and have long been miscalled interjections or pragmatic connectives. After years' study, they are included in a new category named discourse makers (DMs for short). Many linguists have done studies on this area, either DMs as a whole or just one or several particular ones. (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1990, 1995; Blakemore, 2002; Fuller, 2003). Being typical examples of this category, DMs like *well*, *you know*, and *I mean* share many common grounds, one of which is that they can fill in certain place of the discourse without remarkable change of the propositions or the relationship between segments. Based on this point, some researchers classify them as filler type DMs (Phillips, 1995), and their actual use and functions have aroused animated discussion. The purpose of this study is to achieve an overall understanding of the three typical filler type DMs from a pragmatic perspective, including their features and functions, patterns and the actual uses by native speakers through the popular American soap opera *Desperate Housewives* (season one), so to provide some hints for oral language learning and second language teaching for both language teachers and students.

3. Methodology of the Study

The present study, methodologically speaking, mainly relies on the quantitative and qualitative study of the three typical filler type DMs *well*, *you know*, and *I mean* in the transcripts of the American TV series *Desperate Housewives* (season one), and the similarities and differences in the use of the three markers are explored. In regard to data analysis, it combines both quantitative and qualitative approach. In mathematics, axis x and axis y combine to locate the position of a specific point in

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