INTERVIEWS: A LOOK INTO NATIVE SPEAKERS' SPEECH MARKERS, OR DISCOURSE MARKERS?

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ABSTRACT: Based on Speech Production and Genre studies, I supply real data and describe informal interviews with native English speakers collected in the Speak up Magazine, a publication dedicated to Brazilian English speakers. Speech markers, or also known as discourse markers, which are used to signal different functions in conversation and commonly used by native speakers (NS) comprising the patterning of natural talk were highlighted. I show that in informal interviews in English, NS use, although not always, the discourse markers 'you know' and 'I mean' to give a continuum in the flow of speech and to maintain a connection with the interlocutor. Finally, I discuss the value of fluency features that do not normally contribute with additional lexical information and present the contributions of this study to the teaching of English as a foreign language, to didactic material production in real contexts, and for social relations.

KEY-WORDS: interviews – discourse/speech markers - genres

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ENTREVISTAS: UM OLHAR NOS MARCADORES DA FALA DE
FALANTES NATIVOS, OU MARCADORES DO DISCURSO?

RESUMO: Com base nos estudos de Produção Oral e Gêneros, apresento
dados reais descrevendo entrevistas com falantes nativos de Inglês coletados
na revista *Speak up*, uma publicação dedicada a falantes brasileiros.
Marcadores da fala, ou também conhecidos como marcadores do discurso
são destacados, os quais são utilizados para sinalizar diferentes funções na
conversação e comumente empregados pelos falantes nativos representando
o padrão natural da fala. Mostro também que nas entrevistas informais em
Inglês, os falantes nativos usam, embora nem sempre, os marcadores do
discurso 'you know' e 'I mean' para dar uma continuidade no ritmo da fala
e para manter uma conexão com o interlocutor. Finalmente, discuto o valor
de traços de fluência que normalmente não contribuem com informação
lexical adicional e apresento as contribuições deste estudo para o ensino da
Língua Inglesa como língua estrangeira, para a produção de material didático
em contextos reais e para as relações sociais.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: entrevistas – marcadores do discurso/fala – gêneros

1 INTRODUCTION

This study is part of a research project focusing on research
interviews that can be face-to-to face, by telephone, or computered
assisted. Interviews are produced for research questions and surveys
or can be found in more informal contexts such the ones described
in the present work. For instance, in the book of Converse e Presser
'*Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire"*, a
guidance on question writing, the author describe experiments on
this art and share the view 'that it is not only a question of intuition,
but on the contrary, it's a rigorous experiment. This book comprises
interesting aspects in relation to experiments designed for a general
public, mainly in face-to-face and telephone interviewing more than
written questionnaires (Converse e Presser,1986: 5 -7).

In a social discourse analysis perspective, Fairclough (2003)
considers an interview a conversational social practice, independently
if in written or oral mode with specific characterizations. This
recursive social practice can be deconstructed according to different

approaches. In the theoretical conception of genre, it may be emphasized two main features: a) a typical structure and b) tactics that emphasize individual strategies made by the producer to achieve his/her intentions. Fairclough (2003:104) also differentiates "types of research interviews both in terms of the distribution of speech functions (statements, questions, demands, offers) between interviewer and interviewee and in terms of how interview questions are realized in grammatical mood (declarative, interrogative, imperative)." Taking into consideration these conventions and strategies, this study verifies how Native Speakers (NS) answer interviews questions in an informal context.

As oral interviews demand speech functions, one may consider different perspectives of analysis, not only the Genre Theory, but also educational psycholinguistics, cognitive and social psychology are some of the grounds of much of recent work. Especially in relation to speaking processes in the teaching of speaking in second and foreign language classrooms two major pedagogical trends have influenced this area. The first is focused on controlled and accurate production of speech, and the second on non-controlled activities - communicative approach. These two perspectives, unfortunately, could not accomplish the complex task of developing speaking skill in contextualized and socially orientated perspectives. However, some discourse analytical approaches have been emerging in recent years, foregrounding the analysis of naturalistic native speaking, which has somehow been influencing speaking theoretical perspectives. Systemic Functional Linguistics, Conversation Analysis, Pragmatics and Speech act theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis are some of the most published theories in literature (Burns, 1998).

According to McCarthy (1991), Discourse Analysis is important to Speaking, since it analyzes the way people use language, and for that reason, it can help language teachers and materials writers to create systematic speaking skills programs, whose goal is to design activities that will generate output as close as possible to naturally occurring talk. It can, as well, supply real data, which encompass the rich detail and patterning of natural talk. As an example of tactics that emphasize individual strategies made by the producer to achieve his/her intentions are the discourse markers, a special characteristic of native speaking and widely used to signal many different functions

in conversation. All languages seem to have a finite set of lexical items to signal functions such as shared knowledge (e.g. English 'you know') and other interactive and structural functions (McCarthy 1998: p. 59).

Halliday (1994) when analyzing linguistic structures defines 'you know' as "explanatory comment coming" and 'I mean' as "I will restate it in another way". Crystal and Dereck (1969) named them "parenthetic type", which may be embedded in the main clause or may occur in sequence with it.

Speech or discourse markers, 'you know' and 'I mean', in a psycholinguistic view, also receive labels such as: lexical filled pauses or voiced pauses, and polywords. Chafe (1980, as cited in Towell, R. Hawkins, and Bazergui, 1996) points out that pauses have to do with decisions related to what to talk about next, or to difficulties the speaker is having in deciding not *what* to verbalize, but *how* to verbalize something he already has in mind.

Based on this theoretical background, in the first part of this article I present previous research related to speech production. Second, a genre perspective of discourse markers is going to be described by applying the studies by McCarthy (1998). Third, real data of five native English oral interviews are described according to Hatch (1992). And finally, I report the students' opinions about their reading activity using the five interviews.

1.1 Speech production

Because of the variability feature of oral discourse analysis, investigators first created unit definitions based on traditional grammatical approaches. Particularly, oral data from both native speakers (NS) and non–native speakers (NNS), which have a fragmentary nature, raise discordance in definition of units of analysis and, consequently, application (Foster, Tonkyn & Wigglesworth, 2000). These studies were not sufficient to validate criteria of analysis and so theorists started to consider other features of discourse analysis, such as the interactional (turns), functional (moves), and intonational (tone and utterance) (Crookes,1990).

Riggenbach's (1991) research is an example of studies in Speech Production that uses conversational data and includes

interactive features in the examination of L2 speech production. (Fortkamp, 2000). Olynak, d'Anglejan and Sankoff (1990) also assessed first and second language oral fluency in the recorded conversations by focusing on hesitation, which they termed speech markers. Their hypothesis was that frequency of occurrence of these speech markers would be an important component of oral fluency. Some of their results were that, contrary to what was expected, the high-fluency speakers used more speech markers than the low-fluency speakers in general and the speech markers tended to occur at the end of a speech unit (Fortkamp, 1999). In Riggenbach (1991) it can also be found that NS hesitations occur in predictable places, at clauses or phrase boundaries, and that fluent L2 speakers tended to produce lexical filled pauses (e.g. 'y 'know').

Apart from the many problems still to be solved in this area, it seems that proposals of definitions of speech markers and of units of speech production as that of Olynak, d'Anglejan, and Sankoff (1990), Riggenbach(1991), Foster et al.(2000) and the clustering of units proposed by Crookes (1990) lead to clarification and advances in consensus concerning the analysis of units of spoken discourse.

Moreover, some results from L2 Speech Production Theoretical and Instructional studies in recent years show that L2 speech production has been measured by means of temporal variables and hesitation phenomena, both categories being composed by several sub-measures, many times interrelated and referred to by different labels (e.g. disfluency markers, speech markers, fluency markers, repair phenomena) (Fortkamp, 2000).

Levelt (1983, as cited in Lickley and Bard, 1996) points out three main phases of disfluency: (a) original utterance, (b) the editing phase (e.g. 'I mean'), and (c) the continuation (it includes repair and repetition). Spontaneous speech may contain many disfluency markers, as the speaker hesitates in midutterances to alter something in the preceding speech, to repeat, or just to consider how to continue (Lickley and Bard, 1996). In the next section, two approaches of speech markers, one from a Speech Production perspective and the other from a Discourse analysis perspective are described to elucidate some speech markers concepts. Some evidence is that in speech data of NS a great deal of hesitation and repair does in fact occur as it could be observed in the interviews described in this paper.

1.2 Speech markesas as hesitation phenomena

Riggenbach (1991, p. 426) examines some fluency features that she calls "hesitation phenomena" such as: micropause, hesitation, unfilled pause, and filled pause. The three first are connected with silence phenomena, while the latter, as she calls "voiced fillers", do not normally contribute with additional lexical information.

Filled pauses are subcategorized in other three: (a) nonlexical - e.g. 'uh, um' - fillers that are not recognized as words and that contain little or no semantic information, (b) sound stretches vowel elongation of .3 seconds or greater, indicated with colons, e.g. 'okay', and (c) lexical – fillers, or discourse markers that are considered words but contribute with little or no semantic information.

1.3 Discourse marking anda speech genre

Discourse markers are unconscious and seem to display an automaticity characteristic of the more routinized aspects of speech (McCharty 1998). And where spoken discourse lacks a normal distribution of markers can create problems of comprehension as well as may sound unnatural. They are helpful items, lexically simple, and often familiar from their basic semantic meaning. However, much work remains to be done in relation to how and when native speakers use markers. It is premature to teach the set of markers as lexical formulae. However, the raising of awareness of their wide-spread role in spoken language might be a positive tentative (McCharty, 1998).

 Everyday social talk interactions are still open to some investigation, as for instance, how we recognize the relevant linguistic features of a genre, how participants orient towards the genre and how they show their recognition. However, well-studied spoken genres such as those of service encounters and narratives (Halliday, 1987), and Register studies (Biber, 1988) related to aspects of variation use and to the influence of linguistic choices. Thompson's (1997) study also shows the relationships between speaker and audience. This must have significant implications for models of teaching spoken language (MacCarthy, 1998).

In speech patterning the studies go from macro-structures of

discourse to lexico-grammatical patterns, pauses, and hesitations. To Bygate, (1998) the identification of such genuine discourse norms is an important background to the development of a language pedagogy and McCarthy (1998) complement that any stretch of conversation is without discourse markers.

Riggenbach (1991) also states that fluency features have different impact on perceptions of fluency, which can vary from culture to culture or from community to community and that further research is necessary to sort out those which are variable and culture dependent, and those which are universal.

From a social and behavioral sciences perspectives, the lack of interdisciplinary cooperation showing interest in the information speech transmit about the speaker over and above the linguistically encoded meaning results in fragmentation of research in this area. This aspect results in fragmentation of research efforts and a great terminological confusion, a lack of comparability of theoretical and operational concepts and a compilation of the research findings (Scherer and Giles, 1979).

Genre perspective is not commonly connected with studies of speech markers as the latter concerns oral production and hesitation phenomena while the former with how people interact socially through the language. But, the scrutiny of a genre may help to check what tactics native speakers use in a specified genre and in the raise consciousness of how the target language is used. Hatch (1992, p.239) poses a question related to genre pedagogical perspectives, which is a very relevant aspect for this analysis: since English has been classified as a subject prominent language, "if adult speakers use topic-comment structures frequently in spontaneous talk, should learners be discouraged from using such form?"

Besides, we could conclude that speech markers, against expectations, are frequently used by high-fluency speakers and this aspect may help NNS in their socio-interactions as lexical fillers may be used to give pace to their answers and to reorganize their thoughts when using a second language.

2 METHOD

The data consist of interviews from a Brazilian magazine for English speakers. Each interview is related to different topics and

released by five different subjects. The discourse markers "You know" and "I mean" were highlighted each time they appeared in the interviewers' speech.

The transcriptions were typed the way they were collected from the magazines in order to maintain the characteristics of the source. Although a transcription based on conversational analysis or phonological and phonetics should also have been relevant, this small-scale study focused only on the texts' genre. Characterized in this way, further research could be done taking into account phonological aspects.

Some constrains of data collection were found. One is that features such as, eyes gaze, hand movements and others related to non-verbal features were not considered, since the interviews are not face-to face.. The second is the small amount of data and subjects.

Conventions related to overlaps (...) and pauses (,) were used in the transcriptions. But different length of pauses, repetitions and other hesitation features do not appear in the magazine transcriptions.

2.1 Oral interviews data description

A good perspective of analyses for oral interviews is Systemic Functional Linguistics in the textual metafunction of the language, considering Theme and Rheme (Halliday 1994; Butt et al.2001; Siqueira 2000). For instance, in English survey questions one can mark the theme using a stronger intonation or marking (changing the normal position to highlight what he wants to know from the interviewed.

Oral interviews are characterized by using topic-comment structure to introduce a new topic, shift the focus, or shade into a new topic. This aspect leads to the use of clause markers for subordinated or embedded clauses (e.g. if, that, because, cause) (Hatch, 1992). Ex. What medicines, if any, did you take or use during the past four weeks?

At the same time, the lexical fillers 'you know' and 'I mean' appear in the middle of the speech to pace the dialogue; a re-starting of a sentence or clause, to conform more to what someone wanted to say. The lexical filler 'And' is another marker to indicate a transition-relevant place, although it is not analyzed in this paper.

The clause markers ' I mean' and ' you know'are highlighted in the three next stretches of data collection:

a) SU: Is it the "Dead White Male'syndrome that you were talking about before?
Marian Keyes: Certainly, it was. Absolutely, **I mean, you know**, they do these posters of Irish writers for the tourists and they are all men and they are all, well mostly, dead. But not anymore, there's been a huge rejuvenation and, **you know**, it has to do, I think, with the fact that we've come of age as a nation. **You know**, we're confident young country now, whereas we weren't before. (see Appendix)

b) Tristan Ashnman asks some London teenagers whether they are worried - or surprised - about many successful pop groups don't actually play their own music.
First girl: It surprises me that groups like (the) Spice Girls were manufactured because, in many things, like their movie, they... it was put across that they weren't. It doesn't really worry me because, **I mean**, if they do good music and if they kind of put it out on the audience, that's fine with me. (see Appendix)

c) SU: Is there such a thing as a home advantage in sailing?
Matt Hayes: No, not really. **I mean,** the thing is that the...people that you're sailing against, the competitors, **I mean**, these sailors are so good that they'll work out the harbour. And the other thing is, **you know**, at least you know it's safe to drink the water! (see Appendix)

I only transcribed those stretches where they appeared. The speech marker 'you know' was more frequently used. In the data analyzed, 17 (seventeen) 'you know' markers and 7 (seven) 'I mean' markers were counted. In example (a) the interviewed used two lexical filler one after another, pacing even more her speech. They were present in most of the speeches described in the interviews confirming the findings in the literature research that they are frequently used by high-fluency speakers. This aspect suggests that lexical fillers are a characteristic of NS's informal conversational

interaction in a fluent level.

Although controversial opinions about what English we are talking nowadays, and 'how desirable is it for the students to break away from a standard native speaker model?' a conclusion is that, 'consciousness or self-awareness of cross-linguistic influence plays a great role in the success of L2 acquisition' (Goldstein,2006:4). That is, by knowing more about languages particularities both teachers and learners will be able to make a more effective use of this phenomenon. Besides, in instructional and pedagogical contexts, observing how NS use language in real context may be a good strategy for English language learners to improve fluency or automaticity and transferability of features from one language to another. However, real language, mainly informal, brings another problem in the learning environment. Is it convenient to present latches, overlaps, gaps, and hesitation phenomenon? There are still some doubts about how to teach discourse markers features to NNS.

3 DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Conclusions in speech production research have shown that what changes in students' fluency is the rapidity with syntactic and discourse knowledge being accessed for on-line speech production. Theorists in this area suggest further work to determine if proceduralization affects all types of L2 knowledge equally (e.g. knowledge of lexical phrases). It is also argued that the increase in mean length of run is mainly attributed to the proceduralization of different kinds of knowledge, including procedural knowledge of syntax and of lexical phrases. Studies in this direction are also concerned with questions of automaticity and transferability of features from one language to another and whether these features can be taught. One of these features, the speech markers, tend to occur at the end of a speech unit, a transitionally relevant place, which reveals a functional purpose.

In addition, there are still unanswered questions related to pedagogical orientations about teaching ready-made formulae or pattern language. However, the spoken genre perspective can help

to answer some of these questions, since the natural and pattern language used in the conversational situation would seem to be the most useful and least artificial kind to teach foreign students (Hatch, 1992).

Only as a conscious awareness of how the discourse markers appears in informal interviews, I presented the five interviews to pre-intermediate English learners and discussed some points that could contribute to discourse markers instructions. According to the 30 students who read the interviews, the two discourse markers were not noticed in the general comprehension of the text. Only after the teacher asked them what was the meaning and purpose of them in the sentences they were aware of this recursive tactic. Only one student said she has already heard them when watching films, but no one answered have already used them in their speech.

At last, to reinforce the importance of this study, a considerable amount of research on communicative language teaching has proposed real-world activities to teach a foreign language and at the same time building critical thinking, such as the use of tasked-based activities or projects applying questionnaires (Kagnarith, Theara, Klein, 2007).

Results are limited to the particular speech genre of informal interviews and to the small amount of data. Subjects were chosen from different cultural backgrounds and with different accents of English to confirm the frequency of the same type of discourse markers or filled pauses. As previously stated, since the accurate representation of sounds is not the focus of this analysis, phonological and phonetic transcription of data were not included. I could observe that some subjects' stretches were characterized by the use of discourse markers while others were not. The transcriptions were only of those stretches where discourse markers, 'you know' and 'I mean', were present.

4 FINAL REMARKS

In conclusion, in informal interviews in English, people use in general, although not always, the discourse markers 'you know' and 'I mean' to give a continuum in the flow of speech and to

maintain a connection with the interlocutor. This aspect can help the studies of discourse as well as how people produce speech in different situations.

We finalize this work by pointing out other perspectives that can contribute to research in speech production studies. The first is the sociological perspective, in which the concepts of discourse marking deals essentially with production and perception of communicative and informative signs, and so it is part of a general theory of semiotics.

The second is related to typologies of talks derived from work in systemic functional linguistics that can also be a helpful device, depending on learners' needs and the program type. Also, physical characteristics such as age, sex, physique and even state of health and psychological markers (personality and affective states) should be considered in more detailed proposals of analysis.

The selection of spoken genres for instructional purpose may enhance speech activities as they can be presented and discussed according to their cultural and social purposes. For particular speech functions, for example, this perspective can draw learners' attention to how people interact and negotiate their positions in informal interviews. This culture aspect and its interference in the English instructional context is another important aspect to be explored and it raises some other questions: At what level of proficiency the NNspeaker starts unconsciously use speech markers. Is it valuable to include them in a curriculum?

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW ONE
Gwyneth Paltrow an American actress describes what it was like to play Viola, a character with no real biographical basis.(American

accent) (Speak up, N.144 p.16)

Gwyneth Paltrow: You just let, **you know**, the writing dictate that kind of thing. It was really clear to me from reading the script who she was and....cause her actions really illuminate pretty specifically who she is and what she wants. She's a very special person...

SU: Was Viola something of a victim?

Gwyneth Paltrow: Yeah, **I mean,** she is in many ways a victim of her time, but that is the very thing which allows her to go on and create a new life, and in a new world, and **you know**, sometimes through huge obstacles, that's the only time people are able to progress, and whether it's to form a new culture and society, or, **you know,** they need something to....to fight against, and she obviously, **you know**, at the end of the movie ends up in a new world with a new life to create, and she's been given the circumstances from which to work off of, **you know**, to fight back from.

INTERVIEW TWO

Matt Hayes skippered the Australian Sailing team in the 1996 yachting Olympics in Savannah. (Australian accent) (Speak up, n° 144 p.9)

Matt Hayes: Things are just starting to heat up now. **I mean**, we've got two years to go. **I mean,** you look around and everywhere in Sydney you look there's construction going on, there's athletes and competitors from all over the world coming down under, **you know**, there's a real buzz in the air. There's a real sort of, **you know**...everyone's really happy and confident and excited about the whole thing.

SU: Is there such a thing as a home advantage in sailing?

Matt Hayes: No, not really. **I mean,** the thing is that the...people that you're sailing against, the competitors, **I mean**, these sailors are so good that they'll work out the harbour. And the other thing is, **you know**, at least you know it's safe to drink the water!

INTERVIEW THREE

Marian Keyes a novel writer was asked whether she had noticed a change in the world of Irish publishing. (Irish accent) (Speak Up, n°177 p.21)

Marian Keyes: **Yes, a huge change.** You know, **Ireland is very famous as a country,** you know**, where wonderful writers have**

come from but they're all...well, until recently, they have all been men and an awful lot of them are dead. And suddenly there's this huge upsurge in young Irish people writing and women, Irish women, writing, which was unusual. You know, **we have almost no history of women being published. And suddenly there are lots and lots of us. And it's wonderful!**

SU: Is it the "Dead White Male'syndrome that you were talking about before?

Marian Keyes: Certainly, it was. Absolutely, **I mean, you know**, they do these posters of Irish writers for the tourists and they are all men and they are all, well mostly, dead. But not anymore, there's been a huge rejuvenation and, **you know**, it has to do, I think, with the fact that we've come of age as a nation. **You know**, we're confident young country now, whereas we weren't before.

INTERVIEW FOUR

Tristan Ashnman asks some London teenagers whether they are worried - or surprised - about many successful pop groups don't actually play their own music. (Speak Up, N 170 p.18)

First girl: It surprises me that groups like (the) Spice Girls were manufactured because, in many things, like their movie, they... it was put across that they weren't. It doesn't really worry me because, **I mean**, if they do good music and if they kind of put it out to the audience, that's fine with me.

SU: Do you mind being exploited by record companies?

Boy: No, I don't really mind because the music's good, but, like, the old people that, **you know**, are like actually making the pop groups, I don't mind about them because, **you know**, you never see them or anything, so I don't care what they do.

INTERVIEW FIVE

SU: The founder of Redheads UK redism group, Andrew Tidmarsh (Midlands accent), answers the question if it isn't an exaggeration to compare the prejudice suffered by redheads with that suffered by ethnic minorities. (Speak Up, N.170 p.21)

Andrew Tidmarsh: Well, I think at school when I was about five or six it did affect me because people see you as being somehow different from the rest of the group. And you sort of do...if you are

like me, you're tall and skinny, red hair is not the thing to have because people do...they use as the butt of everyone's jokes, and it's a bit harsh at that age, especially 'cause it does affect you for, **you know**, the rest of your life, potentially.