Discourse Particles in EFL and PFL Course-books: Tracing Text Authenticity

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Abstract

In the present study, a corpus-based analysis of EFL and Persian as a Foreign Language (PFL) coursebooks was conducted to scrutinize the degree to which curriculum designers in each language tried to implement discourse particles in the dialogues. Applying corpus methodology to discourse in course-books dialogues, the degree of text authenticity reflected in these course-books was evaluated. The findings of our study indicated that discourse particles were relatively abundant in EFL course-books while, except for one of the PFL course-books, they were scanty in all the PFL course-books.

Keywords: Discourse particles; EFL; PFL; Course-books; Text authenticity

1. Introduction

The fervour for implementing authentic materials in foreign language textbooks has been stirred up with the advent of the communicative language teaching approach (Feng & Byram, 2002, pp.58-59). Giving precedence to communication over form, CLT rejected previous, strictly structural approaches to language pedagogy and opened the way for the use of authentic texts.

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The definition of authenticity in the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics begins: “the degree to which language teaching materials have the qualities of natural speech or writing (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p.42). Authenticity has been viewed as a multifaceted concept constituting such aspects as text authenticity or authenticity of language, task authenticity and situation authenticity. Giving learners the feeling that they are in touch with a living entity, authentic materials can convey the feeling of an involvement in real language to learners the same way as it is used by the community which speaks it (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p.347). Thereby, authentic materials humanize the textbooks and apparently engage learners and connect with their lives and consequently, help to make the language learning process a more affective experience.

It is argued that for human beings, the most important factor in learning is affect (Arnold, 1999), and this vital aspect of learning needs to be nurtured when it comes to material design. Emotions can be mirrored through the use of such linguistic elements as discourse particles (henceforth DPs) (e.g., actually, I mean, gosh) which are said to “create a network of relationships between the actual hearer and the actual speaker. They transform the dialogue into a common speech, make it become more than a simple sequence of I say/you say. The actual speaker, A, expresses that he or she not only makes his or her contribution in an authentic way but models it in such a way that it takes into account the other’s (B’s) perspective” (Weydt, 2006, p.215). Therefore, DPs demonstrate that the speaker’s “speech is conceived as amiable”. This effect can be achieved by various means and in any linguistic society (ibid, p. 209).

Being so rampant in speech, DPs are hence characteristics of the spoken discourse and “their importance in everyday talk can hardly be overstated” (Lam, 2009, p.261). It is, therefore, fair to assume that the abundance of DPs in a text can be indicative of its authenticity. The intriguing question emerging at this juncture is how and to what extent DPs are presented in teaching materials and whether these learning resources genuinely mirror naturally-occurring language.

According to Lam (2009), for foreign language learners who do not always have the opportunities to merge into a native speaking environment outside the foreign language classroom, “textbooks constitute the bread and butter of their language learning experience” (p.262). The extent to which these textbooks help language learners develop their pragmatic competence along with their linguistic competence, therefore, calls for a close scrutiny. Furthermore, McCarthy (1991) advocates using discourse analysis as a means of enriching our understanding of classroom teaching materials.

Through examinations of DPs in pedagogical settings, Fung and Carter (2007), Lam (2009) and Trillo (2002) demonstrated the wide discrepancies between EFL materials adopted in Hong Kong (Fung & Carter and Lam) and Spain (Trillo) and naturally-occurring language and they unanimously highlighted the urgent need to bring the consistent teaching of DPs to language instruction. Although these fine-grained analyses have attempted to shed some light on the implementation of DPs in pedagogical settings, it seems that they are to a great extent context-bound and the findings do not lend themselves to generalization. Moreover, EFL materials adopted world-wide apparently need to undergo discourse analyses in order to examine the degree to which these materials contribute to nurturing international learners’ pragmatic competence.

Being based on a relatively longer tradition in CLT and a more established communicative approach1, EFL materials may serve as a touchstone against which materials recently developed by curriculum designers in other languages can be measured. Therefore, the present study, aiming to analyze three EFL and three Persian as a

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1 The Doctor-Patient Communication Skills materials produced by Candlin, Bruton and Leather (1976), or the English in focus materials designed by Allan and Widdowson (1974 et seq.)
foreign language (henceforth PFL) course-books, reflects on the following questions:

1) How and to what extent are DPs presented in EFL materials and do these textbooks genuinely mirror naturally-occurring language?

2) How and to what extent are DPs presented in PFL materials and do these textbooks genuinely mirror naturally-occurring language?

3) To what extent have PFL textbook designers been successful in keeping pace with international curriculum designers?

1.1 Discourse particles: Definitions

With regard to the kinds of mental processes signalled, DPs can be classified as interjections, hesitation markers, and segmentation markers which either involve the communication partner or state the results of a cognitive process (Fischer, 2006a, p.432). Therefore, DPs “contextualize the speaker” (ibid, p.445) and make them “transparent to the hearer” (ibid, p.446). According to Fung and Carter (2007), such criteria as position, prosody, multigrammaticality, indexicality, and optionality can also be used to identify DPs.

2. Method

2.1 Data-sets

In the present study, data (dialogues) are drawn from a number of sources, namely three PFL and three EFL course-books: The PFL course books are The Routledge introductory Persian course: Farsi shirin ast (Shabani Jadidi & Brookshaw, 2010), A course in general Persian (Zarghamian, 2009) and Teach yourself modern Persian (Farzad, 2004). The EFL course-books are American headway, starter (Soars & Soars, 2002), New interchange, intro (Richards, 2000) and American English file 1 (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2008). The rationale for selecting these course-books was that the PFL course-books were the only available course-books with dialogues and since they were designed for elementary levels, we selected the EFL course-books from the same level. All the EFL course-books are in American English.

Another set of data comprises dialogues selected from Iranian (Koocheye Aghaghia, Char Divari) and American (the sitcom Friends) TV series and Persian (phone calls and face-to-face dialogues) and English (Longman Grammar Corpus) naturally-occurring conversations. Quaglio (2009) holds that it is appropriate to use television dialogues as a “surrogate for natural conversation” to study certain linguistic features (pp.148-9). Mishan (2004) has also called for the implementation of cultural products (e.g., TV dialogues) as a teaching resource. Therefore, the selected dialogues along with naturally-occurring conversations were the yardsticks against which the use of DPs in textbook dialogues was measured qualitatively.

2.2 Instrument

For the analysis of the data-sets in terms of DPs, a number of criteria taken up in Fischer (2006b), Aijmer (2002) and Fung and Carter (2007) were taken into consideration; however, the traced DPs were finally categorized based on the multi-categorical framework outlined in Fung and Carter (2007). The incentive for adopting this framework lies in the fact that different approaches to DPs vary in their focus on integratedness or unintegratedness of DPs within the host units. That is, “on the one hand, there are those items that constitute parts of utterances, such as connectives; on the other, there are completely unintegrated items that may constitute independent utterances, such as feedback signals or interjections” (Fischer, 2006b, p.8). Since Fung and Carter’s (2007) model runs the gamut from integrated to unintegrated DPs, it seemed to be the most comprehensive model we could adopt to classify the DPs we traced in our data-sets. It is worth mentioning that various terms have been used to describe DPs (e.g., discourse markers, pragmatic markers). Although Fung and Carter (2007) used the label discourse markers, following Fischer (2006b) and Aijmer (2002), DP is used as an umbrella term in the present study.
All the dialogues were first transcribed and saved in Rich Text Format for further editing and estimating the quantity of the data. The transcripts were then studied carefully, and analyzed in terms of different DPs. Since the corpora under study were of different sizes, the raw frequencies of the traced DPs were normalized to a common base in order to allow for accurate comparisons.

Since DPs are ‘multigrammatical’ (Fung & Carter, 2007), depending on the context, linguistic devices from different grammatical and lexical inventories are potential DPs. Therefore, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, ranging from highlighting all the potential DPs based on form to close examinations motivated by function in context, is used in the study. The contextual elements taken into consideration in the analyses were the preceding and following co-text, larger context (the topic of the whole dialogue, knowledge about the speaker and listener) and prosody. Other criteria suggested by Fung and Carter (2007) (position, indexicality) were also considered in the quest for DPs. To determine whether an element is a DP we also applied the ‘optionality’ test. Accordingly, removing a DP would not impair the truth condition of the proposition, but “listeners are then left without clues as to how the propositions can best be interpreted in relation to the rest of the message” (2007, p.414). Accordingly, if all the highlighted DPs are omitted from the following utterance, the stance and attitude of the speaker would not be properly signaled.

**Well actually** there’s a couple of things **really** … I need to ask you about one draft of my medieval my em history of English.

The naturally occurring dialogues and TV series were used in the second phase of the analysis (qualitative analysis), more specifically, in the intra-linguistic comparisons. The excerpts taken from these two sources served to illustrate the use of DPs in natural language and thereby demonstrating the discrepancy or conformity existing between these dialogues and the ones adopted in the course-books under the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Cross-linguistic comparisons
The data analyzed in this study revealed that DPs are a part of the pragmatic competence of both English and Persian speakers; however, the rate at which these particles occur in EFL course-books significantly exceeds the frequency of their occurrence in PFL course-books.

Table 1. Cross-linguistic comparison of DPs used in PFL and EFL course-books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>PFL Frequencies (%)</th>
<th>EFL Frequencies (%)</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>(p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Category</td>
<td>580 (3.41%)</td>
<td>802 (4.717%)</td>
<td>35.661</td>
<td>(0)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referential Category</td>
<td>210 (1.23%)</td>
<td>178 (1.047%)</td>
<td>2.639</td>
<td>(0.104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Category</td>
<td>239 (1.40%)</td>
<td>371 (2.18%)</td>
<td>28.564</td>
<td>(0)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Category</td>
<td>76 (0.45%)</td>
<td>145 (0.85%)</td>
<td>21.543</td>
<td>(0)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total DPs</td>
<td>1106 (6.50%)</td>
<td>1496 (8.8%)</td>
<td>58.455</td>
<td>(0)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total word count</td>
<td>17000</td>
<td>17000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference is significant at the 0.05 level. *p<.05

Table 1 demonstrates the contrastive frequency of the two sets of data and shows the extent to which they differ in use. The total number of DPs used in EFL course-books alludes to the fact that these dialogues approximate authentic language since Altenberg (1990, as cited in Aijmer, 2006, pp.2-3) found that ‘discourse items’ (also including greetings, thanks, apologies) accounted for 9.4% of all word class tokens. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that since greetings, thanks and apologies are not considered as DPs in our study, if subtracted from the number Altenberg proposed, the possible outcome and our total percentage would probably be closer.

Results in this table also indicate that PFL designers seldom incorporated cognitive DPs in their course-books. Since in unplanned speech this category denotes speakers’ thinking process, self-corrections and hesitations, the paucity of these particles in the highly contrived PFL dialogues is not a far-fetched result. Another notable finding is the high rate of the use of Referential DPs by PFL designers. These DPs fall within the integrated pole of the cline of integratedness. According to Fischer (2006b, p.9), “the more integrated an item is in its surrounding context, the more reference elements are retrievable from the context, the more easily it can occur in (de-contextualized) written discourse” and this argument is substantiated by the fact that most of the dialogues implemented in PFL course-books resemble written rather than colloquial Persian. The following extract from Teach yourself modern Persian can exemplify this argument:

01 Amir: ɔta:Ge mæn ku:ʃæfæ kæst.  
My room is small.

My room is very small too. But my small room is beautiful.

03 Amir: ɔta:Ge ku ku:ʃæktær væli: Gæʃæntær kæst.   
Your room is smaller but more beautiful.

Your room is larger than my room but my room is more beautiful than your room.

Although not scant in EFL course-books, almost all of the Referential DPs are of spoken type, i.e. and, but, because (or cause), and so instead of such Referential DPs as moreover, however, due to the fact, as a consequence which can mostly be found in written discourse. The following excerpt from American English File 1 serves as an example.

05 Stephen: In the middle of the night I suddenly woke up! Oh! It was two o’clock. The television was off! But how? There was no remote control, and I certainly didn’t get up and turn it off. The light was still on, but suddenly
the light went off, too. Now I was really frightened! I couldn’t see anything strange, but I could feel that there was somebody or something in the room. I got out of bed and turned on the TV again. Little by little I started to relax, and I went to sleep again. When I woke up, it was morning. I had breakfast, and I left the hotel about ten o’clock.

06 Interviewer: So the question is, did you see the ghost?

07 Stephen: No, I didn’t see the ghost, but I definitely felt something or somebody in the room when I woke up in the middle of the night.

3.2 Intra-linguistic comparisons:

3.2.1PFL course-books

A more detailed analysis of the frequency of DPs was also conducted to demonstrate the extent to which DPs are used in the course-books in each set of data separately. As Table 2 depicts, the frequency of DPs in A course in general Persian is significantly higher than the other two Persian course-books. This difference is much more considerable when it comes to the use of Interpersonal DPs. However, while Persian is replete with such Interpersonal DPs that mark shared knowledge (bebî:n, mî:du:nî: meaning look, you know), acknowledgement, agreement or confirmation (xɔb, a:ha:, bæle, dɔrɔste meaning well/OK, uh-huh, yeah, right) and the attitude of the speaker (be næzæræm meaning I think), upon closer scrutiny we found out that the mostly utilized subcategory was marking stance towards propositional meanings (xeili:, mæxsu:sæn meaning very, especially).

Table 2. Intra-linguistic comparison of DPs used in PFL course-books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CGP – RIPC</th>
<th>TYMP-CGP</th>
<th>TYMP-RIPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inter…</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>X2(p-value)</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>94-63</td>
<td>6.12(0.013)*</td>
<td>46-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refere…</td>
<td>16-27</td>
<td>2.814 (0.09)</td>
<td>35-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structura</td>
<td>33-30</td>
<td>0.143 (0.70)</td>
<td>22-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>23-0</td>
<td>20.167 (0)*</td>
<td>1-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>166-120</td>
<td>7.4 (0.007)*</td>
<td>103-166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference is significant at the 0.05 level. *p<.05

CGP: A course in general Persian, RIPC: The Routledge introductory Persian course, TYMP: Teach yourself modern Persian

However, when compared with naturally-occurring dialogues, it seems that other subcategories have greatly been overlooked in PFL course-books. The following naturally-occurring dialogue can serve as an example here (A, B, & C are classmates and dormitory roommates):

08 A: bebî:nî:d bǽfjǽhǽ (:) mæn ?eteGǽdæm ?i:ne...a::... mæn ø:ma: ... ?slǽn ?eteGǽd nædæ:ræm ke mæsælæn tu:je je ref ǽf: mæsælæn ?ælæn væz?æjæte mæn fǽrGǽ fǽr mæsælæn jæki: mesle Sǽrǽ, ja: ?u:n zæhra: <unclear> fǽrGǽ mæn ð ta:jǽf: fǽrGǽ mæn ð i:ne ke...bebîn mæn ðe refǽm ?u:n ?ængízǽf: ke bǽjǽd behǽm mida:d ?æz ?u:næ: hǽm mi:tu:næstæm behǽr bu: fǽm. jænì: vaGe?ǽn be ?i:n ?eteGǽd dá:ræm a::!: Look girls, my belief is...aaa...I and you...I don’t believe at all that well in a field say now the difference of my condition and like/or instance somebody like Sara... or that Zahra <unclear> what’s the difference between me and you? The difference between me and you is that... look, if my field would have motivated me in the way it should have, I could have excelled even them. I mean I really believe in this [emphasis added here by a DP]!

09 B: Ki: gǽfǽ ?i:na: bǽhtǽræn? Mæn bǽjǽn mî:fi:nǽm... Who’s said they are better? I sit with them...

10 A: mǽnzu:rǽm nǽti:dǽje ka:ræ dí́ge...
I mean the outcome [emphasis and clarification added here by a DP]

Her endeavour is meant

Parisa, well I’m saying the same thing. I’m saying better...not the best at all. It’s by no means genius.

That means her effort. Yea h, not genius

As can be seen, in casual conversation, speakers often express their feelings, opinions and evaluations. So, in addition to expressing stance (vægeʔæn), marking shared knowledge (bebi:nid, bebin), indicating response like agreement (ʔa:re), or marking the attitude of the speaker (mænʔeteGa:ɗæmʔi:ne) are also quite frequent in naturally-occurring conversation.

A course in general Persian was also relatively richer in cognitive DPs; however, the only cognitive DPs traced were tag questions (mæge næ?) and hesitation markers (ʔemmm). This finding stands in stark contrast to the fact that casual conversations and TV dialogues are replete with a vast variety of other subcategories of cognitive DPs. The following extract from the Iranian TV series Koocheye Aghaghiya puts on display some of these subcategories:

Well, Mr. Faramarz, what did you finally do? Can we count on you?

What should I say...hhh...emmm...do you think this job suits me?

You should decide.

I don’t know...I think this job doesn’t suit me. I mean...this job in my view requires a stubborn person who makes it hot for customers.

In this context, Faramarz wanted to decline a job offer made by his brother, Fereidoun. But this playing for time by means of hesitation markers (tfi: begem), reformulations (jæni:) and thinking process (nemi:du:naem...fekr mi:kønaem) can “serve politeness functions” (Fischer, 2006a, p.446). Results also revealed that PFL course-books seldom incorporated such DPs as /xɔb/ (well/OK), /dige/ (a DP having a majorly emphasizing function), /ha:la:/ or /ʔæla:n/ (now) and /ke/ (a DP sometimes having an emphasizing function) in their various pragmatic functions; moreover, DPs functioning primarily on the interpersonal category (e.g., /ba:ba:/, /ʔa:a:/ or /ha:/ which all have a majorly emphasizing function), while relatively rampant in casual conversation, had an extremely low representation or even no occurrence in PFL course-books. For instance, the DP xɔb has been used in PFL course-books to fulfil just one function: signposting opening and mostly closing of topics (a structural DP):

Opening:

Well, what is your problem, madam?

I have a sore throat and a headache.

Closing:

Well. Nice to meet you. I hope to meet you again. Good bye.

(A Course in General Persian)

However, while xɔb serves turn-holding or yielding function in PFL course-books, reviewing the casual and TV dialogues indicates that this DP fulfils an Interpersonal function as well. The following telephone conversation exemplifies the interpersonal function of xɔb:

22 A: ʔæl ɔ
Hello.

23 B: ʔæl ɔ ʔæmiːr xaːbe?
Hello Amir. How are you?

24 A: Gəɾbuːnet berəm mersiː.
Thank you very much.

25 B: mæn tuː mærkæzə ʔːn felæʃːjaːm. xɔb↑?
I’m at the flash memory shopping centre. OK?

26 A: xɔb.
OK

27 B: ʔæl ʃuːnzdæh giːɡaːbiː xeiliː xɔʃ keːl baː mærke træns... Now [there’s] a very beautiful 16 gigabyte with the brand trans...

28 A: trænsend. xɔb.
Transcend. OK.

As can be seen in this excerpt, in addition to the aforementioned structural (textual) function, xɔb can also function as confirmation seeker (turn 25) and indicator (the other instances with a pragmatic function). So, while xɔb can convey a spectrum of meanings from structural to interpersonal, PFL course-books have only highlighted its structural function. Our acoustic analysis also indicates that xɔb is realized prosodically in the same way (falling intonation) in almost all of its occurrences in PFL course-books.

As is the case with xɔb, such DPs as diːge, baːbaː, ʔaːː, haːlaː and ke can occupy different places on a continuum from interpersonal to structural and cognitive functions; however, PFL course-books have failed to spell out their cognitive and cohesive functions.

### 3.2.2 EFL course-books

This section details the frequency of DPs in EFL course-books based on the multi-categorical model, with examples from both TV dialogues and EFL dialogues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>AEAF-AH Frequency</th>
<th>X²(p-value)</th>
<th>AEAF-NI Frequency</th>
<th>X²(p-value)</th>
<th>AEF-NI Frequency</th>
<th>X²(p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inter.</td>
<td>284-342</td>
<td>5.37 (0.02)*</td>
<td>284-488</td>
<td>53.90 (0)*</td>
<td>342-488</td>
<td>25.68 (0)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>92-69</td>
<td>3.28 (0.07)</td>
<td>92-78</td>
<td>1.15 (0.283)</td>
<td>69-78</td>
<td>0.55 (0.458)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>167-183</td>
<td>0.73 (0.392)</td>
<td>167-180</td>
<td>0.48 (0.485)</td>
<td>183-180</td>
<td>0.02 (0.875)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>60-61</td>
<td>0.008 (0.922)</td>
<td>60-79</td>
<td>2.59 (0.107)</td>
<td>61-79</td>
<td>2.31 (0.128)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>603-655</td>
<td>2.15 (0.143)</td>
<td>603-825</td>
<td>34.51 (0)*</td>
<td>655-825</td>
<td>19.52 (0)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference is significant at the 0.05 level. *p<.05


Based on the information suggested in Table 3, the frequency of DPs in New Interchange, Intro is the highest and Chi-square analyses demonstrate that DPs functioning primarily on the interpersonal category have the most significant representation with a particularly heavy use of oh both singly and in collocation with other markers. This finding is in line with Quaglio (2009, p.158) who has demonstrated that oh is the most frequently used particle both in the sitcom Friends and naturally-occurring language (Longman Grammar Corpus). Qualitative analysis of the data at hand indicates that the DP oh has largely been utilized in its various functions. The following extracts from New Interchange exemplify some of these functions:
29 Jennifer: Excuse me. Are you Steven Carson?
30 David: No, I’m not. He’s over there.
31 Jennifer: Oh, I’m sorry.

This excerpt shows how *oh* (turn 31) serves a backward-looking function as a reception marker used for recognizing a correction (Aijmer, 2002, p.119); however, in the following extract *oh* (turn 37) has a forward-looking function and acts as an intensifier, strengthening the effect of *no* (Aijmer, 2002, p.119).

32 Pat: Great! Our clothes are dry. Where is my new blouse?
33 Julie: What colour is it?
34 Pat: It’s white.
35 Julie: Here’s a light blue blouse. Is it yours?
36 Pat: No, it’s not mine … Wait. It *is* mine. It’s a disaster!
37 Julie: Oh, no! *All* our clothes are light blue.

The use of *oh* as a forward-looking intensifying particle is illustrated in the following excerpt from the sitcom Friends as well:

38 Phoebe: Hey, have you guys seen Monica?
39 Ross: Uh, actually I think she went to the salon.
40 Phoebe: *Oh* yeah, oh, she went to the salon alright…

Another common DP used to express different functions ranging from interpersonal to structural categories is well. Upon closer scrutiny, it has become evident that in EFL course-books there is an over reliance on *well* as a DP functioning on the structural category occupying mainly an utterance initial position signposting opening and closing of topics. Of course, the role of *well* in signposting opening of topics seems to be more notable in EFL course-books. The following examples from New Interchange, Intro can clarify this point.

41 Teresa: *Well*, what do you want, Steve?
42 Steve: I want a salad and some fruit.

In turn 41 above *well* signposts opening while in turn 45 below it signals a closing of topic.

43 Tyler: How about you? What are you gonna do?
44 Mona: Well, I’m not gonna go to a restaurant, but I *am* going to go to a dance.
45 Tyler: Sounds like fun. *Well*, have a good Valentine’s Day.

In contrast, it has been observed that in the sitcom Friends *well* mostly fulfils a cognitive function (indicating a hesitation phase) and occurs in utterance medial position. The following excerpt from the sitcom Friends can serve as an example:

46 Ross: Okay, last night after you guys broke up… *so* sorry to hear about that, by the way… *well*, Charlie and I were talking, and…, *well*…

Therefore, it seems that notwithstanding their resemblance to naturally-occurring dialogues or TV dialogues, EFL course-books still overemphasize some functions of DPs and somehow overlook others.
4. Conclusion

Discourse particles, part and parcel of our pragmatic competence, are used by native speakers of every language to lubricate the wheel of conversation. It is believed that if a non-native speaker uses DPs incorrectly or not uses them at all, this may lead to misunderstandings (Aijmer, 2002, p.3). Against this background, the present study investigated the degree to which DPs were incorporated in EFL and PFL course-books. Findings indicated that while DPs were widely represented in EFL course-books, especially New Interchange, Intro, thereby reflecting higher text-authenticity, wide discrepancies are found between PFL course-book dialogues and naturally-occurring language. A conclusion that can be drawn here is that PFL course-book designers have not been successful in keeping pace with international curriculum designers and it seems that they need to take more consideration of learners’ communicative needs and find richer sources to enrich the pragmatic aspect of the course-books they design. In such cases, “television dialogue also offers a vast potential for pedagogical purposes. The increasing availability of DVDs of recent television shows can provide fairly accurate examples of the relationship between certain structural forms and their functional correlates for ESL purposes” (Quaglio, 2009, p. 149).

Although it is hard to shake off the more unconscious DPs of native language and acquire that of another, it is paradoxically quite easy to teach (at least make learners conscious of) this subtle aspect of communication, using data from casual conversation or TV dialogues. Further, the proclivity for presenting DPs from an early age can bear more fruit since children at an early age seem to be more inclined to pick the pragmatic value of linguistic elements of the languages they are exposed to; as a result of enriching their competence, ‘pragmatic fossilization’ which may lead to communication failure later in life would, therefore, be prevented (Trillo, 2002).

References