

Discourse marker *well*: A linguistic key to the well-being of human interaction

Ryo Takamura

1 Introduction

Discourse markers are what Traugott (1995a: 6) refers to as “an independent breath unit carrying a special intonation and stress pattern”. This means that short expressions such as *well*, *and*, *but*, *so*, *then*, *still*, and *y’know* are usually recognized as discourse markers. Discourse markers do not have any propositional meaning, but they convey a speaker’s attitude and contribute to discourse management. Since the publication of *Discourse Markers* (Schiffrin 1987), the study of discourse/pragmatic markers has drawn a lot of attention from scholars in many linguistic fields (e.g. applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, historical pragmatics). Accordingly, as there are a number of studies on discourse markers, scholars have not been able to come to a consensus on an appropriate definition. However, most discourse markers are similar in that they were not originally used for marking discourse, but rather, they are from different parts of speech (adverbials, conjunctions, parentheticals etc.). In this paper, I will analyze the discourse marker *well*, considering not only its pragmatic/sociolinguistic characteristics, but also its syntactic features, which seem to be influential in its use as a discourse marker.

1.1 Approach

As discourse markers are pragmatic items that are contrary to semantic items

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such as “dogs” or “cats”, they always need to be analyzed in context. To that end, I will use discourse analysis approach. Schiffrin (1985: 642) points out that “*well* has no inherent semantic or structural properties [...] its meaning is based solely on its context of occurrence”. On the other hand, Brinton (2017: 5) argues that discourse markers “are no longer thought to be semantically empty fillers, completely devoid of meaning”, and she goes on to say “the discourse marker *well* retains little if any of its propositional meaning of adverbial/adjectival *well*” (Ibid.). Indeed, many functions of “well” as a discourse marker rarely convey “being well”, rather this marker often marks an upcoming dispreferred response (Sacks 1987). There must be some reason, however, why “well” came to be chosen as a discourse marker. Therefore, I also consider the linguistic features of “well” from syntactic and semantic perspectives.

1.2 Definition

Schiffrin (1987) provides two definitions of discourse markers: operational and theoretical. First, she operationally defines discourse markers as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (Ibid.: 37). The notion of “brackets” originally derives from Goffman’s (1974) term, which marks “the boundaries of units not only of talk, but of social life and organization in general” (Schiffrin 1987: 36). Second, as a more theoretical definition of discourse markers, Schiffrin adds “contextual coordinates” (Ibid.: 327). This means that discourse markers “index an utterance to the local contexts in which utterances are produced and in which they are to be interpreted” (Ibid.: 326). According to Onodera (2004: 16), “index an utterance” means “index the containing utterance,” that is, the utterance in which a marker is used. Thus, the main function of contextual coordinates is the indexical function. Indexicals stand for deictic features. Deictics are divided into two directions: “proximal” and “distal.” The

context to which markers index an utterance includes both “participants” and “text” (Schiffrin 1987: 324). For example, the discourse marker *well* indexes in contextual coordinates both speaker (proximal) and hearer (distal), and both prior (anaphoric) and upcoming (cataphoric) texts. In this paper, I basically follow this definition.

Brinton (2017: 9) presents a comprehensive list of the characteristics that define a discourse marker. The terminology and pragmatic markers Brinton employs are interchangeable with discourse markers in this paper.

Phonological and lexical characteristics

- (a) Pragmatic markers are often “small” items, although they may also be phrasal or clausal; they are sometimes phonologically reduced.
- (b) Pragmatic markers may form a separate tone group, but they may also form a prosodic unit with preceding or following material.
- (c) Pragmatic markers do not constitute a traditional word class, but are most closely aligned to adverbs, conjunctions, or interjections.

Syntactic characteristics

- (d) Pragmatic markers occur either outside the syntactic structure or loosely attached to it.
- (e) Pragmatic markers occur preferentially at clause boundaries (initial/ final) but are generally movable and may occur in sentence-medial position as well.
- (f) Pragmatic markers are grammatically optional but at the same time serve important pragmatic functions (and are, in a sense, pragmatically non-optional).

Semantic characteristics

- (g) Pragmatic markers have little or no propositional/conceptual meaning, but are procedural and non-compositional.

Functional characteristics

- (h) Pragmatic markers are often multifunctional, having a range of pragmatic

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functions.

Sociolinguistic and stylistic characteristics

(i) Pragmatic markers are predominantly a feature of oral rather than written discourse; spoken and written pragmatic markers may differ in form and function.

(j) Pragmatic markers are frequent and salient in oral discourse.

(k) Pragmatic markers are stylistically stigmatized and negatively evaluated, especially in written or formal discourse.

(l) Pragmatic markers may be used in different ways and in different frequencies by men and women.

If the *well* that is examined in this paper is truly a discourse marker, then it should fulfill the above conditions.

Here, I present three instances of *well* as an adverb, adjective and a discourse marker. These are the examples from Stubbs (1983: 69):

(1) He was ill, but is *well* again now. [adjective]

(2) He is *well* qualified. [adverb]

(3) *Well*, what shall we do? [discourse marker]

Well in Example (1) is an adjective. In this case, *well* is used in a way semantically opposed to “ill”. Hence, he did not feel good, but now he is fine. In Example (2), *well* only modifies the following adjective (or verb for past participle), so that it is an adverb. These uses of *well* directly affect the truth values of their host sentence. However, consider Example (3). For example, when a teacher finishes his small talk before his class and utters this sentence, the marker in Example (3) is analyzed as a topic change. The statement “what shall we do?” is still grammatically acceptable if the speaker omits *well* although

it sounds awkward and abrupt. Therefore, *well* in Example (3) is a discourse marker.

2 Review of literature

Discourse markers have been studied over three decades since the appearance of *Discourse Markers* (Schiffrin 1987). At first, they were called “mystery particles” (Longacre 1976). These days, the terms “discourse/pragmatic markers” are more popular. But many terms (e.g. pragmatic markers, discourse/pragmatic particle, boosters, conjunction etc.) are still used. Dér (2010) found 42 different English terms that referred to discourse markers. However, there is no consensus on these terms among scholars. Ajimer and Simon-Vandenberg (2003: 2) illustrate the difference between discourse markers and pragmatic markers:

Discourse marker is the term which we use when we want to describe how a particular marker signals coherence relations. Pragmatic markers as we see them are not only associated with discourse and textual functions but are also signals in the communication situation guiding the addressee’s interpretation. The term as we are using it can also be defined negatively: if a word or a construction in an utterance does not contribute to the propositional, truth-functional content, then we consider it a pragmatic marker.

Likewise, Beeching (2016: 5) claims that pragmatic markers are used “to highlight their interpersonal rather than textual usages, though recognizing that pragmatic markers have procedural meanings”. In fact, discourse markers are used mainly for the coherence of discourse (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 2009).

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However, discourse/pragmatic markers do not always indicate the same group of expressions. For conditions to be judged as pragmatic markers, on the one hand, Brinton (2017) defines them as often being “small items”. On the other hand, Fraser (2009) classifies pragmatic markers into four categories: “Basic Pragmatic Markers”, “Commentary Pragmatic Markers”, “Discourse Markers” and “Discourse Structure Markers”. Fraser writes that relatively long expressions such as “returning to my previous topic” can be considered an example of a pragmatic marker. Contrary to the term “pragmatic markers”, Fraser includes many semantic expressions, some of which seem to be rarely used in naturally-occurring language. Therefore, what the term refers to varies from scholar to scholar even with the same label. In fact, Aijmer et al. (2006: 102) points out “a proliferation of terms must be avoided”. In this paper, I consistently use the term, discourse markers, which include both textual and interpersonal functions.

As far as I know, Lakoff (1973) is the first work to deal with *well* as a discourse marker. Her analysis is restricted to the instances of *well* in the utterance-initial position as a response to a question. She points out that “*well* is used in case the speaker senses some sorts of insufficiency in his answer” (Ibid.: 463). Likewise, some scholars show an interest in the utterance-initial *well*. Owen (1981) argues the importance of analysis on the discourse marker *well* in conversation. Owen also pays attention to the instances of *well* in adjacency pairs:

- (4) A: ... Because some records are rather expensive, aren't they?
 B: *Well*, they all are in a way.

(Ibid.: 109)

Owen observes that *well* is “used to preface a second pair-part which is also a face-threatening act, as a strategy for signaling that a face-threat is about to occur” (Ibid.: 110). The marker in the second pair-part begins an indirect

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discourse marker *well* (see Ajimer 2013; Beeching 2016; Müller 2005; Svartvik 1980; Schiffrin 1987; Takamura 2018 etc.), in this article I will mainly investigate *well*-prefaced responses that indicate a speaker's different view to an addressee, revealing how important discourse markers are in interactions.

3 Syntactic and Semantic features of *well*

Though many of the discourse markers originally derive from adverbs (e.g. *indeed*, *in fact*, *besides* in Traugott 1995a), *well* is a clause-internal adverb as in "Elin plays the piano very well". This change from an adverb to a discourse marker is known as "grammaticalization" (Traugott 1995a). Traugott (2010c: 97-98) provides two current views of "grammaticalization". First, "grammaticalization as reduction," sometimes referred to as the "narrow" or "traditional" approach. This view characterizes a reduction of structure and form, and an increase in dependency. Typical recent definitions in this view are: "a diachronic change by which parts of a constructional schema come to have stronger internal dependencies" (Haspelmath 2004: 26) and "grammaticalization of a linguistic sign is a process in which it loses its autonomy by becoming more subject to constraints of the linguistic system" (Lehmann 2004: 155). Second, "grammaticalization as expansion," also referred to as "expanded view of grammaticalization" (Onodera 2011: 615). This view allows scope expansion. Such expansion has been exemplified by the development of discourse markers. Traugott suggests a cline for the development of discourse markers: Clause-internal Adverb > Sentence Adverb > Discourse Marker. For example, *indeed* has gone through a historical process to be a discourse marker. She clarifies four stages of the development of *indeed* (Traugott 1995a: 7-9).

Stage 0: Full lexicon	<i>deed</i>	13th Century
Stage 1: Adverbial phrase	<i>in dede</i>	14th and 15th Century
Stage 2: Sentential adverb	<i>in dede</i>	16th Century
Stage 3: Discourse marker	<i>in deede, indeed</i>	17th Century

In the process of grammaticalization, *indeed* became syntactically free and what was used in a clause has come to be used in the initial position of an utterance. Thus, the scope this lexical item modifies has expanded.

A groundbreaking grammar book entitled *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* compiled by Quirk et al. (1985) has thoroughly studied adverbials. Quirk et al. (1985) introduce two ways of investigating adverbials: their semantic roles and syntactic positions. Adverbials as semantic roles has seven meanings as follows: space, time, process, respect, contingency, modality and degree. Each of them has further detailed roles (see Ibid.: 479). Adverbials have four subcategories such as adjunct, subjunct, disjunct and conjunct and they appear in different positions in a sentence. Adjunct and subjunct are the elements that are integrated in a clause, compared to disjunct and conjunct, which are peripheral ones in a sentence (Akimoto 2017: 77). As mentioned, many discourse markers derive from adverbials. For example, *actually*, also used as a discourse marker, is an adjunct and a disjunct. Aijmer (1986: 121) claims that this adverb in its adjunct form appears in positions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9, and as a disjunct in 1, 5 and 10 in the following sentence.

↓ she ↓ is ↓ not ↓ as pretty ↓ as ↓ she ↓ might ↓ have ↓ been ↓
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Actually is a typical adverb that forms the adjective “actual” plus a suffix ‘-ly’ and it is relatively syntactically movable in a sentence. Moreover, a disjunct,

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peripheral in a sentence, has some potential functions in discourse marker usage. According to Crystal and Davy (1975: 88), we can regard *actually* as a connective indicating the relationship between preceding and upcoming contexts.

On the other hand, *well* as an adverb is related to the adjunct and subjunct. I will briefly review the two concepts. An adjunct resembles other sentence elements such as subject, complement and object. For example, unlike the other adverbials, an adjunct can be the focus of a cleft sentence:

- (6) Hilda helped Tony because of his injury.
- | | |
|---|-----|
| It was <i>Hilda</i> that helped Tony because of his injury. | [S] |
| It was <i>Tony</i> that Hilda helped because of his injury. | [O] |
| It was <i>because of his injury</i> that Hilda helped Tony. | [A] |

And an adjunct has subcategories, one is obligatory and the other is optional. Consider the following instances:

- (7) (a) *He lived.
(b) He lived *in Chicago*.

The above sentence (a) needs an adjunct after the verb *live* otherwise this sentence does not seem to be acceptable. On the other hand, *well* as a manner adverb which is one of the semantic categories of adjunct is optional.

- (8) Koichiro speaks Chinese well.

A manner adverb is usually paraphrased by *in a ... manner or in a ... way* with its adjective base in the vacant position. Therefore, the sentence (8) can be paraphrased as:

(9) Koichiro speaks Chinese in a good manner.

Next I will introduce another use of *well* as subjunct. Subjunct plays a subordinate role in comparison with other clause elements. This adverb is used as an intensifier indicating the meaning of degree.

(10) Riku knows contemporary architecture well.

Well in sentence (10) shows the extent to which Riku knows contemporary architecture. Therefore, this element can neither be the focus of a cleft sentence, nor paraphrased as “in a good manner”. However, these manner and degree uses are related meanings of “good” (Greenbaum 1969: 5).

Two instances of *well* commonly appear in the end position of a sentence. So unlike *actually*, the sentence does not allow *well* as an adverb to move to its initial position. This concludes that *well* mainly appears in ⑦ in the diagram below. However, in the case of the passive voice, *well* can move to ⑥.

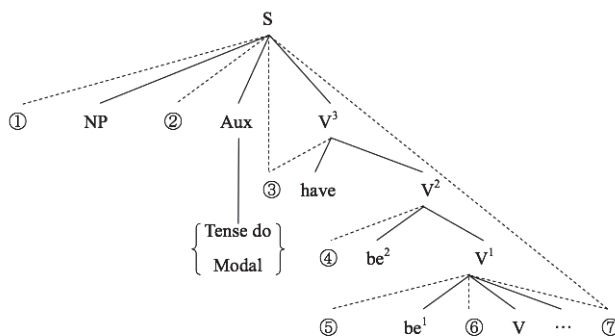


Fig. 1 Positions where adverbials can function (Okada 1985: 140)

This follows that *well* does not have the function of a sentence adverb, and this

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does not correspond to the cline that Traugott suggests. It is necessary, therefore, to discover why *well* has been recruited as a discourse marker used as an utterance-initial.

4 Data Analysis

Discourse markers are distinct features of spoken language, and this view is strongly supported by scholars (e.g. Schiffrin 1987; Brinton 2017). In this paper, I use The Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English. This corpus contains 60 discourses whose length is approximately 20 minutes. One discourse has from two to four participants and has different social backgrounds such as age, gender, institutional, intimacy so forth. I chose 20 discourses among them, and I found 525 occurrences of *well*. However, this number may contain adverbs and adjectives.

Example (11) is a conversation among three friends who are preparing dinner together, recorded in Southern California. Roy and Marilyn are a married couple, and Pete is a friend visiting from out of town. All participants are in their early thirties.

Example (11)

- 1 Marilyn: .. Mm.
2 .. Hey that carrot's good.
3 Roy: ... It's got –
4 .. it's really [pretty –
→5 Pete: [**Well** that's good].

Well in line 5 marks an agreement with what Marilyn said “that carrot’s good”. However, in contemporary British English, Beeching (2016: 53) claims that “*well*

is never used to imply full acceptance of a situation but partial agreement". The discourse marker *well* in this example is close to its propositional meaning "good". Thus, discourse marker use changes according to the variety of English. At least, in American English, *well* has a function to show full agreement.

In fact, as reviewed in previous studies, this marker is frequently used for introducing an unexpected response unlike Example (11). Let us consider Example (12):

Example (12)

- 1 Sharon: And I give stickers to the kids,
 2 (H) and the ones that got good gra=des,
 3 that got one hundreds, and ninety-eights, and ninety-sixes,
 4 I put their papers up on the board.
 →5 Kathy: **Well**, there are other things you can do besides um,... (TSK)
 6 um, you know, you can make up goodies.
 7 You don't have to spend money on goodies.

The discourse marker *well* in line 5 marks Kathy's act of an objection to Sharon's conduct of "giving stickers to the kids". This marker introduces the speaker's opposite view to that of the addressee's. This marker can be paraphrased as *but* in this case (Cf. Carlson 1984: 44), however, *well* first acknowledges Sharon's view (but does not give an evaluation whether it is good or not) and then mitigates the upcoming face-threatening act, which saves the addressee's positive face. In contrast, *but* does not convey any acceptance, but directly denies the addressee.

Example (13)

- 1 Carolyn: (H) They're just giving –I think,

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2 it sounds, like, to me,
3 they're giving you a lot of sh=it for no @reason.
→4 Sharon: (H) .. **Well** they really are picking on the fact that I'm new,
5 like,.. y- --.. uh, It's really annoying.

Well in line 4 marks an elaboration of what Carolyn said in line 3 “they’re giving you a lot of shit for no reason”. It is because Sharon thinks that she is a new teacher in school. This use is true of the “insufficiency” suggested by Lakoff (1973). Lakoff writes that when *well* is used, a hearer or a speaker infers and fills in lacking information to make the conversation relevant. Therefore, in Example (13) Sharon feels some insufficiency in the interlocutor’s thoughts, so she gives a true reason and elaborates their knowledge or information.

Next, Example (14) is a conversation between a couple who are lying in bed and they are talking about a book of death, which Pamela seems to be very interested in.

Example (14)

1 Pamela: ... [I haven't read the book so I don't know,
2 Darryl: [Yeah but I do know, it it's an awfully, it's it's] an awfully
3 presumptuous thing,
4 Pamela: but (H)],
5 Darryl: to sit down and write a book about [2death,
6 Pamela: [2d- --
7 Darryl: when you haven't died2].
8 Pamela: It has, it2] has, it has stories in there from, (H) from the Zen=
9 an=d, .. f- it just pools on other different --
→10 Darryl: [**Well** the Zen can be bullshit too].
11 Pamela: [% .. different sources].

- 12 Darryl: I mean, [whoever wrote the book of Zen wasn't dead either.
 →13 Pamela: [*Well* <F it .. might all= be bullshit F>,
 14 Darryl: @(Hx)]
 15 Pamela: but, you g- you g- you've gotta] pull these ideas from your
 16 environment,. (H) Th- th- %the things I know most,
 17 about life and death come from .. from= .. my g=randmother.

There are two occurrences of *well* in Example (14) and both of them function in different behaviors. Pamela is interested in death, while in contrast Darryl is negative about this issue. After Pamela explained the account of death suggested in *Zen* (one of the schools of Buddhism), *well* in line 10 marks a criticism. On the other hand, *well* in line 13 marks a partial agreement and *but* in line 15 starts a true objection. Carlson (1984: 44) claims that “in the context of an argument, *well* is often accompanied or replaced by the conjunction *but*”. The combination of *well* plus *but* is often seen in this corpus.

The following example is also from the same discourse as Example (14).

Example (15)

- 1 Darryl: [That's why you're interested in death?
 2 Pamela: (H) n- and,
 3 Darryl: @@]
 4 Pamela: I just] think it's <MRC so damn weird MRC> we're here.
 →5 Darryl: ... Yeah?... Yeah, *well* it i=s.
 6 Pamela: And, and I was constructed, ... inside of some w=oman's
 7 w=omb, ... (H) and I was [... burped out],

Pamela's remark that living is “so damn weird,” seeks agreement from Darryl. However, “Yeah?” in line 5 in a rising intonation does not mean that Darryl takes

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Pamela's remark seriously, but rather, in a contemptible way. With this first "yeah", he intended to yield a turn to her, but she did not take her turn immediately. Therefore, after a lengthy pause, Darryl again accepted Pamela's thought with the second "yeah" in a more positive sense. *Well* following this second "yeah" in line 5 shows a reluctant agreement.

Except for Example (11), the discourse marker *well*, contrary to its literal meaning, does not mean "good" at all. Then, it is questionable why *well* is used in these situations in which "good" is not concerned.

Example (16) is an instance of repair (or other-repair). Montoya is a professor and Frank is his student. This talk is a part of the lecture. In line 10 Frank answers Montoya's question. However, "blacks" is not the appropriate or expected answer so Montoya repairs this to a more proper expression "minorities" in line 11.

Example (16)

- 1 Montoya: I mean uh,
2 if .. one looks at what, uh, Jesse Jackson is doing,
3 vis a vis.. who.
4 The major league?
5 Baseball teams and all that?
6 Football= and all that?
7 What's his underlying argument.
8 What's his criticism.
9 That there're not ... sufficient numbers of= .. what?
10 Frank: Blacks.
→11 Montoya: *Well* he says minorities. He's smart.

Other-repair is close to the elaborative function like Example (13) but repair

does not add any information. However, in hearing *well*, the addressee infers that what he/she said will be wrong or changed in some points.

Let us examine the next instance. *Well* in Example (17) is an answer to a question. Rebecca is a lawyer and Rickie and Arnold are a couple.

Example (17)

- 1 Rebecca: You guys newly married?
 →2 Rickie: *Well* [just a year]
 3 Arnold: [A year] two days ago.

Unlike other examples presented, lines 1 and 2 are a question and answer pair so a binary choice is expected. However, this marker in line 2 marks an introduction of an indirect answer to a preceding question posed by Rebecca. Rickie answers positively but she does not commit too strongly. There seems to be some possible reasoning. For example, the couple does not know whether a year of marriage is “newly” or not. Besides, marriage is a personal issue so Rickie may want to avoid this kind of topic. This marker leads to an upcoming indirect answer. Compared to responding with “yes” or “no”, inserting *well* before the answer shows a roundabout way. Thus, *well* is used when respondents diverge from the options for coherence offered to them by a prior question (Schiffrin 1987: 107).

In this section, we have examined seven examples of *well*, and each of them differs in its function. However, there seems to be a shared feature behind all of these usages. In the following section, I would like to suggest that *well* acknowledges the addressee for an interpersonal purpose.

5 Discussion

One of the most important reasons why *well* has come to be used as a discourse marker signaling an unexpected and unfavorable answer, depends on politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987). As a list in Brinton (2017) suggests, lexical items that are now used as discourse markers still remain some of their syntactic and semantic features. In the case of *well*, this adverb and adjective describes a good evaluation where the speaker's subjectivity is reflected. Therefore, the discourse marker *well* has lost its propositional meaning, but it exploits its form meaning "well" to modulate the interpersonal relationship.

In Example (12), Kathy's act of "giving an alternative idea" risks threatening Sharon's positive face as a teacher. In this case, *well* first acknowledges Sharon's practice of "giving stickers to kids," and it also moderates the following illocutionary force. In Example (13), Sharon elaborates Carolyn's assumption and gives her a more plausible reason. This instance is closely related to Example (12) where *well* facilitates the following utterance, which may contain a face-threatening act (FTA). There are two tokens of *well* in Example (14). The first instance of *well* in line 10 has undergone semantic bleaching, and introduces a criticism. However, this act is still mitigated by *well*. On the other hand, *well* in line 13 accepts Darryl's remark in a neutral way first, but the thing Pamela wants to say comes after *but*. Although their interchanges are disputable and contain many FTAs, *well* contributes to the maintenance of their rapport. In Example (15), *well* is used as a reluctant agreement, which is opposed to the speaker's willingness. In sum, *well* is used to fill in a disparity between speaker and hearer. Following a positive politeness strategy, "avoid disagreement" is a robust motivation for the participants in conversation (Brown and Levinson 1987: 113). In Example (16) this marker reflects an act of repairing the preceding expression. A direct correction may threaten the student's face, especially in a class where

other students are present, so *well* acknowledges the student's answer, but it also politely repairs the answer to one that the professor expects. This is because the problem is not the incorrectness of the information, but the expression itself. The professor does not completely deny the student's answer. Lastly, *well* in Example (17) avoids the direct answer because Rickie is not sure if a one-year marriage matches Rebecca's expectation of "newly married." Therefore, the speaker attempts to make her contribution as relevant and coherent as possible to the question.

From a traditional perspective, discourse markers are to be thought of as connective functions linking discourse segments. For example, Fraser (1999: 931) defines discourse markers as follows:

a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. With certain exceptions, they signal a relationship between the interpretation of the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior segment, S1. They have a core meaning, which is procedural, not conceptual, and their more specific interpretation is 'negotiated' by the context, both linguistic and conceptual. There are two types: those that relate the explicit interpretation conveyed by S2 with some aspect associated with the segment, S1; and those that relate the topic of S2 to that of S1.

The discourse marker *well*, on the one hand contributes to discourse structuring, and serves to maintain a good rapport between participants on the other hand. Therefore, we can say discourse markers are not only for making an interaction coherent, but also for making an interaction *polite*. In fact, scholars point out that sociolinguistic features need to be taken into account in discourse marker studies (e.g. Beeching 2016; Brinton 2017).

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Based on these results and the above discussion, I would like to provide a tentative answer to the question posed in Section 3, “why *well* has been recruited as discourse marker?” In the case of *indeed*, its unrestrictive syntactic position allows it to be used as a sentence adverb, and finally a discourse marker. However, *well* signaling “good” must have developed in a different way, that is, an interpersonal modulation. For this reason, *well* was, with pragmatic force, dragged to the initial position of an utterance to convey “acknowledgement” or “token agreement”. If *well* is omitted when conveying an opposite or unexpected opinion, not only the message itself but also the speaker will come across as awkward and impolite.

What we have discussed so far is also essential for pedagogical and EFL settings. Scholars have highlighted the insufficient use of the discourse marker *well* among Japanese learners of English compared to native speakers (e.g. Hays 1992; Shimada 2014). The lack of this discourse marker may prevent learners from maintaining discourse management and succeeding in communication (Cf. Wierzbicka 1991). Furthermore, Svartvik (1980: 173-174) points out the importance of the discourse maker *well* in an interaction between non-native and native speakers of English:

If a foreign learner says five sheeps or he goed, he can be corrected by practically every native speaker. If, on the other hand, he omits a well, the likely reaction will be that he is dogmatic, impolite, boring, awkward to talk to etc, but a native speaker cannot pinpoint an ‘error’. Yet inappropriate use of particles like well may have more unfortunate consequence for communication success than elementary grammatical errors.

Other scholars also emphasize the use of this marker, for example, Aijmer (2011) remarks that “[e]ven learners who use *well* frequently may not be aware

of the interpersonal function of *well* and how important it is to establish and maintain good relationships in communication” (Ibid.: 250). After all, as Hasselgren argues “communication, and especially conversation, as we know, is about much more than transmitting information. It is also about face saving, politeness, friendliness, gelling, bonding – in short being nice!” (Hasselgren 2002: 122). These important suggestions should not be ignored but incorporated more in English education in Japan.

6 Conclusion

Discourse markers do not have propositional meanings but they are closely related to their original parts of speech. This paper revealed that *well* as a discourse marker leads to an upcoming unfavorable message, but using *well* at first mitigates its illocutionary force. This is because “well”, originally meaning “good”, exploits its form to acknowledge what the addressee said.

Discourse markers are usually considered to be “connectives”, and these items contribute to logically making a connection between prior and upcoming segments, both in spoken and written languages. Indeed, these markers serve to create coherence between discourse segments; however, discourse markers should also be considered an interactive item to aid participant’s rapport. In particular, the discourse marker *well* functions as a modulator in communication.

Lastly, these findings on the discourse marker *well* should not be interpreted only for academic purposes, but they also should be applied to pedagogical settings. Takamura (2019) presents an approach to learning discourse markers by taking advantage of movies that share similarities with naturally occurring language. For students who do not have experience abroad, movies are one of the materials they can easily access and learn audio information.

In this paper, we could not examine the prosodic features of each instance of

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well. However, *well* as a discourse marker is pronounced in various manners (e.g. rising, falling, rising-falling, falling-rising, and level) even among the same function (Cf. Takamura In press). Although this paper mainly focused on *well* as an interpersonal function, *well* as a discourse structuring function may be related to the form “well”. This issue will be handled in the future.

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Transcription Conventions

Symbol	Meaning
..	short pause
-	truncated intonation unit
[]	overlap single
[2 2]	overlap 2nd
@	laugh pause
(H)	breathe (in)
(Hx)	exhale
,	continuative
.	terminative
<F word F>	forte
=	lag (prosodic length)

wor-	truncated or cut-off word
%	glottal stop or creak
<MRC MRC>	marcato: each word distinct and emphasized.

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