Obsolescence and innovation in discourse-pragmatic change: The view from Canada

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No results found for "discourse-pragmatic variation".
Discourse-pragmatic variation
Discourse pragmatic variation

- Straddling the boundaries of syntax and pragmatics
- Requiring reference to subjective, interactional and textual information
- Many practitioners from late 1970’s onwards
  - Sankoff, G, Dines, Schourup, Schiffrin
  - Sankoff, D., Macaulay, Laberge, Vicher,
  - Cheshire, Erman, Stenström, Aijmer, Jucker, Stubbs
  - Overstreet, Dubois, Andersen, Stenström
  - D’Arcy, Pichler, Denis …
Discourse pragmatic variation

- *Discourse* marker
  - connective functions; “sequentially dependent elements…bracket units of talk”
    - Schiffrin 1987: 31
- *Pragmatic* marker
  - “empty expressions found in oral discourse”
    - Brinton 1996:29
  - “low degree of lexical specificity and high degree of context sensitivity”
    - Andersen 2001:40
- *Discourse-pragmatic* marker
  - “syntactically optional elements”
    - Pichler 2013:4
Still to be learned?

- “There is a great deal to be learned yet, then, about the interrelations that exist between syntax and semantics, and about the way in which the syntactic structure of informal spoken language can best be analyzed.”
- 1987
- Jenny Cheshire, 1987:278
Trends

1970’s

- Early work targeted features that were sentence initial, left periphery

1980’s-2001’s

- Rise of research on all sorts of ‘markers’
  - *sentence tags, general extenders, epistemic markers, you know, you see, I don’t know* … collocations of all kinds
Dramatic change
General Extenders in Toronto

Tagliamonte & Denis 2010
Dramatic change
Utterance Final Particles
Toronto
Denis & Tagliamonte to appear

Figure 2. Binomial probability of right, you know, yeah, and eh variants by speaker age.
Left periphery

So uh. Well I really loved it. You know uh I enjoyed it.

✦William Carlsburg, 82, 2003

✦Oh, okay, well okay then I guess- I guess m-- that- that is my destination that I'd aim for. If not that, um, I don't know, I think you could stay in your house.

✦Trevor Klinke, 20, 2009
Canadian English
The Data

- 72 speakers, born and raised in Ontario, Canada

- Five communities
  - Toronto, North Bay, Temiskaming Shores, Kirkland Lake, South Porcupine

- 12 individuals/community; 24 in Toronto
  - young/middle/old
  - Male/female
  - Education; job type
How to circumscribe?

- For 21 speakers, extract every reasonably well formed clause initial utterance
- Exclude false starts
  - *you just like- you-know* you watch your step
- Exclude quotatives
  - 'Cause they were *like*- I never associated much with Timmins people
- Exclude cases with badly broken phrase structure
- Exclude *yes/no* answers to direct questions

- **TOTAL N = 9278**   **DMs = 11.6%**
## Discourse Markers [DMs]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTER RIM</th>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</th>
<th>AGREES/DISAGREES</th>
<th>UH</th>
<th>CONJ 1</th>
<th>ADV</th>
<th>DISCOURSE MARKERS</th>
<th>SLOT 1</th>
<th>SLOT 2 (rare)</th>
<th>UH</th>
<th>CONJ 2</th>
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<th>PARENTHESES</th>
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<td>so</td>
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<td>like</td>
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<td>basically</td>
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The outer rim

- *Oh okay yeah* so because you grow up with it, you just don't even hear it
- *Oh okay no* that doesn't work, go back, go back
- *Yeah oh yeah* we get into scrubbles
- *Oh yes yeah* the- the miners talked about it amongst themselves
The outer rim

- THREE SLOTS
  1. I heard what you said
     - Oh, Ah, Yeah, Gosh, Gee
  2. Acknowledgement
     - Okay, I know, yeah, no
  3. Response, agreement
     - No, yeah, yup

- 3.2% of the data
The inner rim

- *So like I guess* someone took the grocery cart.
- *Well I think* he went back
- *So I think* I’m remembering the fact
The inner rim

- ONE SLOT, four markers
  1. I think
  2. I mean
  3. I guess
  4. I believe

- 1% of the data; parentheticals
Discourse Markers [DMs]

- All items on the left periphery just below CP, excluding outer and inner rim forms
  - Yeah oh yeah well you know you were at little bit at the service
  - And so I think that wasn’t particularly difficult or anything
  - No. Like there's some stereotypes like, "Oh the Cobalt kids all do drugs"
  - And like you know the shower starts …
  - By golly we better build a railroad
  - Geez I don’t remember
DM’s overall

so well like you know I dunno anyway (s) of course you see, see you know what I mean hey boy gee look man mind you
DM’s overall

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<td>other</td>
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DM’s in apparent time

%  
0  10  20  30  40  50

like  well  you know  so  other

old  middle  young
Development of like

Node 3 (n = 2335)

Node 4 (n = 393)

Node 6 (n = 716)

Node 8 (n = 395)

Node 10 (n = 231)

Node 11 (n = 81)
Female lead, *like*
Female lead, *like*

**Node 1 (n = 2335)**
- **dob**
  - $p < 0.001$
  - $\leq 1978$
  - $> 1978$

**Node 2 (n = 393)**
- **dob**
  - $p < 0.001$
  - $\leq 1963$
  - $> 1963$

**Node 3 (n = 2335)**
- **like**
- **other**

**Node 4 (n = 393)**
- **like**
- **other**

**Node 5 (n = 773)**
- **sex**
  - $p < 0.001$
  - **F**
  - **M**

**Node 6 (n = 650)**
- **like**
- **other**

**Node 7 (n = 650)**
- **like**
- **other**
Male lag
What’s going on?

- LP DM’s are not that frequent. Even in these highly informal interactions
  - Only about 11% of all utterances
- Striking sociolinguistic embedding!
  - “socially diagnostic” Pichler & Levey (2010:26)
- Not simply a suite of discourse-pragmatic functions
- Strong indications of linguistic change in progress
  - “possibly indicative of linguistic change” Pichler & Levey (2010:26)
Multidimensional influences

- DMs do subjective, interactional and textual work.
- What do these social trends reflect?
  - Reorganization of multifunctional discourse-pragmatic systems?
    - Functions are changing
  - Lexical replacement?
    - One form replaces another for the same function
  - Grammaticalization
    - Form undergoes reanalysis
Well...

- *Well* widely known to be a marker of
  - response
  - discourse boundary
  - response utterance initiator
  - starter
  - attention getter

- What is changing, the marker or the function?
Like …

- *Like* widely reported, but often well defined function often lacking
  - Focus
    - Underhill 1988
  - Reformulation or discourse “link”
    - Andersen 2001:269, 273

- What is changing, the marker or the function?
Topic, text and discourse

- Left periphery is the “locus for topic continuity or change”
  - Traugott, 2013, Degand 2014

- Code for:
  - Type of interaction, *answer to a question, ongoing (linked) discourse*
  - Nature of the discourse, *narrative, back and forth interaction*
  - Type of turn, *new, reformulated, ongoing*
DM functions

**TOPIC**

**TURN TYPE**

**DISCOURSE TYPE**
well

![Histogram of 'like', 'well', 'you know', 'so', 'other' for 'Question' and 'Continuing' topics.]

![Histogram of 'like', 'well', 'you know', 'so', 'other' for 'Beginning of quote', 'Interaction', 'Continuing', 'Narrative' topics.]

![Histogram of 'like', 'well', 'you know', 'so', 'other' for 'Question', 'Continuing', 'New Turn', 'Reformulation' topics.]

like well you know so other

like well you know so other

like well you know so other

Beginning of quote Interaction Continuing Narrative

Continuing New Turn Reformulation

Question Continuing
SO
Interim Summary

- The DM system, like other, variable parts of grammar has many forms, but several main forms dominate.
- DM’s clearly share functions, but they are not as broadly multifunctional as previously thought.
- Some DM’s are highly correlated with certain functions.
  - *well* = initiating; *so* = continuity.
How to study it?

- “Linguistic behavior, like other behavior, is subject to statistical variation that can best be accounted for by an underlying model that is probabilistic rather than deterministic in nature.”
  
  *Gillian Sankoff 1973:82*
Logistic regression

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obsolescent
Logistic regression

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<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No post-secondary</td>
<td>[.46]</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>[.54]</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>[.46]</td>
<td>[.49]</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>[.54]</td>
<td>[.51]</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mixed effects model

Number of obs: 4151, groups: indiv, 72

Fixed effects:  

|                     | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|---------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)         | 0.040444 | 0.585325   | 0.069   | 0.944913 |
| age:discourse.1REFORMULATION |          |            |         |          |
| age:discourse.1N    | 0.019196 | 0.008227   | 2.333   | 0.019629 *|
| age:discourse.1D    | 0.010875 | 0.004920   | 2.210   | 0.027090 *|

|                     | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|---------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| age:turn.1NARRATIVE |          |            |         |          |
| age:turn.1D         | -0.025320| 0.008202   | -3.087  | 0.002021 **|
| age:turn.1I         | -0.033778| 0.009352   | -3.612  | 0.000304 ***|

|                     | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|---------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| age:answer1ANSWER   |          |            |         |          |
| age:answer1C        | -0.004644| 0.007958   | -0.584  | 0.559520 |

Signif. codes:  0 ‘***’ 0.001 ‘**’ 0.01 ‘*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1
Summary

- Once function is accounted for the trajectories of discourse-pragmatic change in apparent time reveal:
- Stability of form and function
  - *well* marks an answer to a question and the onset of quoted speech
  - *so* marks continuity, particularly in story-telling
Summary

- Sometimes pragmatic functions stable
  - “while particular forms may, in fact, be quite transient, the pragmatic functions themselves are preserved”
  - Brinton 1996:278

- In other cases, e.g. *like* the evidence suggests grammatical development
  - Incremental increase in frequency from older to younger people!
  - Female lead develops over time
  - Levelling across discourse type
  - Specialization for type of clause
Female, 87
So I didn’t make any comment to that.
So we get back to the door and he said "xx?"
I said "xxx."
He said "xxx."
So I gave him my name and I gave him my phone number.

Female, 16
Like my sister came home from Europe so everything-
Like she brought all her European clothes back,
and she has so many nice things 'cause Like I'll ask her to borrow it
and she doesn't want me to and it's like- it's upsetting.
Like it's really nice,
Like you don't find this stuff in Canada
Is there a DM structure?

A string of apparently disconnected babble…
Mark Liberman, Language Log, 09/2007
I personally believe that U.S. Americans are unable to do so because, *uh*, some, *uh*, people out there in our nation don't have maps. And, *uh*, I believe that our education, like such as in South Africa and, *uh*, the Iraq everywhere *like such as*, and, *I believe* that they should- our education over here in the U.S. should help the U.S., *uh*, or, *uh*, should help South Africa. And should help the Iraq and the Asian countries *so* we will be able to build up our future [for our children]

Grammar?

Parsed segment of an answer by Lauren Caitlin Upton, age 18, 2007 to a question at the Miss Teen USA pageant
Grammar?

Parsed segment of an answer by Lauren Caitlin Upton, age 18, 2007 to a question at the Miss Teen USA pageant
Syntax of DM’s

- Syntacticians are starting to realize that DM’s are actually systematic and patterned with their own syntactic slots
  - Interrogative and relative pronouns
  - Topics
  - Focalized elements
    - Rizzi 1997; Cinque & Rizzi 2010
- Particles
  - Massam 2006; Haegeman 2013
Syntax of DM’s

- A SPEECH ACT [SA] layer, two tiers
  1. [SA1] Attention
     - Establishes a discourse relation
  2. [SA2] Consolidation
     - Reinforces an already established relation — *linking*?
       - Haegeman 2013
The cartography of LP

ATTENTION

ADV

CONsolidation

PAR

ADV

Hesitations

Conjunction

Two DM slots

Hesitations

Adverbs
Summing up

- What do the social and discourse-pragmatic developments across these LP DMs reveal?
- The left periphery is systematic and hierarchically organized
  - “finely articulated structures” (Labov 1982:75)
  - “richly articulate and rigidly ordered” (Cinque 2006)
Summing up

- DM’s shift by “gradual micro-step development”, just like change in progress elsewhere in the grammar
  - Labov, 1972 *inter alia*; Traugott, under review

- Integration of discourse and syntax
  - “syntacticization of discourse”
    - Sankoff 1976; Massam 2006; Haegeman 2013 etc.
  - “more goes on in syntax and semantics than occasionally meets the eye”
    - Boyer 2014
Summing up

- Reorganization of multifunctional discourse-pragmatic systems
  - Some forms and functions are stable
- Lexical replacement
  - A suite of forms, most infrequent, some rare, possibly a slot of constant renewal
- Grammaticalization
  - *Like* is undergoing reanalysis
  - Watch for ongoing developments
Well you know I suppose that’s it!
So you know I guess that’s it!
Like you know I think that’s it!
Thanks to…

- The Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for research grants 2001-present

Thanks to...

- **Alexandra D’Arcy** for her foundational work on *like* in Toronto
  - *(D’Arcy 2005)*

- My post-doctoral assistant who is extracting and coded the thousands of tokens
  - *Bridget Jankowski*

- My Senior Research Assistant
  - *Nader Mohammed*