DISCOURSE MARKERS IN THE SPOKEN ENGLISH OF UZBEK LEARNERS: PATTERNS OF USE AND TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract. Discourse markers such as well, so, you know, I mean, actually and anyway organise spoken interaction, signal speakers' attitudes and help listeners follow talk. Learner corpus research shows that non-native speakers use a narrower range of discourse markers than native speakers, overuse some (often and and so) and underuse interpersonal markers such as well and you know. Uzbek learners of English have not been studied in this respect, although Uzbek has a rich system of its own markers, such as xullas, endi, ya'ni, demak, -ku and -da. This article reviews research on discourse markers in native and learner English, compares the functions of common Uzbek and English markers, and predicts typical patterns in Uzbek learners' spoken English. Discourse markers, it argues, are rarely taught because they are associated with informality. The article proposes a teaching sequence based on noticing in authentic recordings, functional categorisation and practice in interactive tasks.

Keywords: discourse markers, spoken English, learner language, pragmatics, fluency, Uzbek, speaking instruction

O‘ZBEK TALABALARINING OG‘ZAKI INGLIZ NUTQIDA DISKURS MARKERLARI: QO‘LLANISH XUSUSIYATLARI VA O‘QITISHGA OID XULOSALAR

Annotatsiya. Maqolada o‘zbek talabalarining og‘zaki ingliz nutqida diskurs markerlaridan (well, so, you know, I mean) foydalanish xususiyatlari ko‘rib chiqiladi. O‘zbek tilidagi xullas, endi, ya'ni, demak, -ku, -da kabi birliklar bilan ingliz tilidagi markerlar funksional jihatdan qiyoslanib, talabalar nutqidagi ehtimoliy xususiyatlar va ularni o‘qitish ketma-ketligi taklif etiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: diskurs markerlari, og‘zaki nutq, o‘quvchi tili, pragmatika, ravonlik, o‘zbek tili

ДИСКУРСИВНЫЕ МАРКЕРЫ В УСТНОЙ АНГЛИЙСКОЙ РЕЧИ УЗБЕКСКИХ СТУДЕНТОВ: ОСОБЕННОСТИ УПОТРЕБЛЕНИЯ И ВЫВОДЫ ДЛЯ ОБУЧЕНИЯ

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается употребление дискурсивных маркеров в устной английской речи узбекских студентов. Проводится функциональное

сопоставление узбекских маркеров (xullas, endi, ya'ni, demak, -ku, -da) с английскими, прогнозируются особенности речи учащихся и предлагается последовательность обучения.

Ключевые слова: дискурсивные маркеры, устная речь, язык учащихся, прагматика, беглость, узбекский язык

INTRODUCTION

Listen to an advanced Uzbek student describing a holiday in English, and then to a native speaker telling the same story. Both may use correct grammar and good vocabulary, yet they sound quite different. The native speaker begins Well, actually, it was a bit of a disaster, inserts you know to check the listener's understanding, and moves on with anyway. The learner may link everything with and and then, end with so, and fill pauses with silence or with Uzbek endi. Much of the difference comes down to discourse markers.

Discourse markers are small words and phrases that do not change the propositional content of an utterance but organise it and show how the speaker relates to it and to the listener [1, 2]. They are frequent in speech and important for both fluency and politeness. Even so, they are rarely taught explicitly, partly because they are seen as informal or "filler" words, and partly because textbooks focus on written grammar.

Research on learner corpora has documented how learners use discourse markers [3, 4]. Uzbek learners, however, have not been studied from this angle. This article reviews the research, compares Uzbek and English markers, predicts patterns in Uzbek learners' English and proposes a teaching sequence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining and classifying discourse markers

Schiffrin [1] analysed markers such as oh, well, and, but, so, because, now, then, I mean and y'know in conversation, showing that they work on several planes of talk at once: they connect ideas, manage turns and express attitudes. Fraser [2] defined discourse markers more narrowly as expressions that signal a relationship between the segment they introduce and a prior segment. Aijmer [5] studied a group of English discourse particles (now, oh, ah, just, sort of, actually) in corpus data and showed that each has a cluster of related pragmatic functions.

Fung and Carter [4] proposed a functional classification that is useful for teaching: interpersonal markers (marking shared knowledge, attitudes and responses, e.g. you know, well, I think, really), referential markers (marking relationships between ideas, e.g. because, but, so, and), structural markers (organising talk, e.g. now, first, anyway, so as a topic shift) and cognitive markers (showing thinking processes, e.g. I mean, well, sort of).

Learner use

Fung and Carter [4] compared Hong Kong secondary students with British speakers and found that learners used referential markers (and, but, because) frequently but used interpersonal and cognitive markers far less. Müller [3] studied German learners and found differences in the frequency and range of functions of so, well, you know and like. Hellermann and Vergun [6] showed that adult beginners who did use markers such as well and you know had mainly acquired them through contact outside the classroom, not through instruction.

Teaching

Carter and McCarthy [7] included spoken grammar, discourse markers among it, in their reference grammar and argued that learners need to understand spoken norms, even if they do not adopt every feature. Fung and Carter [4] recommended teaching markers through authentic spoken data and awareness-raising tasks.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study combines a functional contrastive analysis with a teaching proposal. Uzbek discourse markers frequent in conversation were identified from reference grammars and the author's knowledge of spoken Uzbek and classified using Fung and Carter's [4] functional categories. English equivalents for each function were identified from the literature. Differences in inventory and function were used to predict patterns in Uzbek learners' spoken English. A teaching sequence was then designed. The predictions are hypotheses to be tested on a spoken learner corpus.

RESULTS

Uzbek markers and their functions

Table 1. Common Uzbek discourse markers and closest English functional equivalents (illustrative)

Uzbek marker	Main functions	Example	Closest English equivalents
xullas	Summarising, concluding, returning to the point	Xullas, biz kech qoldik.	so, anyway, in short
demak	Drawing a conclusion	Demak, ertaga uchrashamiz.	so, then
ya'ni	Reformulating, clarifying	Ertaga, ya'ni shanba kuni.	I mean, that is
endi	Hesitation, softening, topic shift, mild disagreement	Endi… bilmadim.	well, now, you see
-ku	Marking shared knowledge, mild emphasis	Aytdim-ku!	you know, after all
-da	Marking obviousness, softening an explanation	Vaqt yo'q-da.	you see, well
mana	Presenting, drawing attention	Mana, ko'rdingizmi?	here, look, see
aytgancha	Introducing a side topic	Aytgancha, kecha kim keldi?	by the way

Uzbek, as the table shows, is well equipped for interpersonal and cognitive functions. Many of them are particles or clitics (-ku, -da) attached to words, rather than separate words. This matters for transfer, because learners who express shared knowledge with -ku in Uzbek have no grammatical slot for it in English, and may simply omit the meaning.

Predicted patterns in Uzbek learners' spoken English

1. Overuse of referential markers. As in other learner groups [4], Uzbek learners are likely to rely on and, but, because and then, which are taught early and appear in written texts.

2. Underuse of interpersonal markers. You know, well, I mean and actually are likely to be rare, because their Uzbek counterparts are often particles (-ku, -da) without a word-level equivalent, and because textbooks rarely present them.

3. Overextension of so. So may be used as a general equivalent of xullas and demak, both for conclusion and for topic closure, and sometimes at the end of turns as a hesitation device (It was difficult, so…).

4. L1 markers in English speech. Under pressure, learners may insert endi or xullas into English utterances, especially at hesitation points and topic transitions.

5. Silent pauses instead of fillers. Where English speakers use well or um to hold the turn while planning, learners may pause silently, which listeners can perceive as lack of fluency.

A teaching sequence

Stage 1: Noticing in authentic speech. Learners listen to short recordings of natural conversation (podcasts, interviews, unscripted video) with transcripts. They highlight discourse markers and guess their functions.

Stage 2: Functional categorisation. Using Fung and Carter's [4] four categories, learners sort the markers they found. The teacher adds a comparison with Uzbek: which Uzbek marker would you use here? This makes the functional parallels visible (ya'ni → I mean; aytgancha → by the way; -ku → you know).

Stage 3: Controlled practice. Learners insert appropriate markers into short dialogues from which markers have been removed, and compare their choices with the originals.

Stage 4: Interactive tasks. In storytelling and discussion tasks, each learner receives two or three marker cards (well, actually, anyway) and tries to use them naturally. Partners note when the markers were used and whether they fitted.

Stage 5: Reflection. Learners record a two-minute monologue at the start and end of the sequence and compare the range of markers used.

Register guidance

Learners should know that markers such as you know and like are informal and can sound excessive if overused, while well, actually, I mean and anyway are acceptable in most spoken registers, including academic discussion. The goal is a natural range of markers, not a high count.

DISCUSSION

Part of what separates Uzbek learners' spoken English from native-like speech, then, is a missing layer of interpersonal and cognitive signals. Uzbek speakers use these signals constantly in their own language, but because many of them are particles rather than words, they are not transferred into English. Discourse markers can therefore be taught not as something new, but as a way of saying in English what learners already do in Uzbek.

Discourse markers also contribute to perceived fluency. Markers such as well and I mean give speakers time to plan while keeping the turn, which can reduce silent pauses. Since many speaking tests assess fluency and coherence, this also has practical value for students.

The predictions still have to be tested. A small spoken corpus of Uzbek learners' English, for example recordings of picture-story narration and paired discussion, compared with comparable native speaker data, would show which markers learners use, with what frequency and in which functions. It would also show how often Uzbek markers appear in English speech.

CONCLUSION

Discourse markers are central to natural spoken English but are seldom taught in Uzbek universities. Comparison with Uzbek shows that learners have rich interpersonal and cognitive markers in their first language, many expressed by particles, which may not transfer into English. Uzbek learners are therefore likely to overuse referential markers and so and to underuse well, you know, I mean and actually. A teaching sequence based on noticing in authentic speech, functional comparison with Uzbek, controlled practice and interactive tasks can help learners develop a more natural and fluent spoken English.

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