AN INVESTIGATION OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN PERSIAN MALE-FEMALE CASUAL CONVERSATION

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By

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ABBREVIATIONS

DM	Discourse Marker
CA	Conversation Analysis
DA	Discourse Analysis
CC	Casual Conversation
M	Male
F	Female
GA	Graduate Assistance
CSAE	Corpus of Spoken American English
CANCODE	Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English
PSLC	Persian Spoken Language Corpus
COLT	Corpus of London Teenage English language
S1	Segment 1
S2	Segment2
AS	Action Structure
IDS	Ideational Structure
ES	Exchange Structure
PF	Participant Framework
INS	Information Structure
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
SOV	Subject+ Object+ Verb
SRA	Social Research Association
GPA	Grade Point Average
H0	Null Hypothesis
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
P	Probability level
CT	Coherence Theory
RT	Relevance Theory

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

.-Full stops mark termination (whether grammatically complete or not) or certainty, which is usually realized by falling intonation.

, -Commas are used to make long utterances readable and usually correspond to silent beats in the rhythm.

? - Question marks are used to indicate questions or to mark uncertainty.

! - Exclamation marks indicate the expression of counter- expectation, e.g. surprise, shock, amazement, etc.

CAPITAL LETTERS -Words in capital letters are used conservatively to show emphatic syllables.

“ ” - Quotation marks capture the marked change in voice quality that occurs when speakers directly quote or repeat another’s speech.

( ) - Empty parentheses are indicative of non- transcribable segments of talk.

(happy) - Words within parentheses are used to indicate the transcriber’s guess.

--Hyphen marks false starts when a speaker rethinks loud and rephrases what s/he was saying before completing the first version.

… - Three dots are used to mark intervals within and between utterances (i.e., hesitations)

[ ] - Square brackets mark the intervals between turns(i.e., pauses) .For pauses exceeding three seconds in length, the length of pause is specified in seconds.

== - Double equals sign is used to represent four types of overlap as follows:

- Simultaneous/Concurrent utterances. The symbol == is placed before each of the simultaneous turns/utterances.

-Overlapping utterances. The point at which the second speaker begins talking is shown by == preceding the point in the first speaker's turn.

-Contiguous utterances. There is no interval between adjacent utterances produced by different speakers. The symbol== is placed at the end of one speaker's line and at the beginning of the subsequent speaker's turn.

- Concurrent conversations. It refers to extended passages of dialogue between two or more participants that occur SIMULTANEOUSLY with other passages of dialogue going on between other participants.

(Adopted from Eggins and Slade, 1997, p. 2-4)

SATU KAJIAN TERHADAP PENANDA WACANA DALAM PERBUALAN SANTAI LELAKI-PEREMPUAN PARSI

ABSTRAK

Kajian terhadap wacana perbualan telah meningkat secara mendadak sejak beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini (Stenstrom, 1994; Tannen, 1984, 1991). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa ciri yang dahulunya dikenali sebagai sifar, melimpah-ruah dan lewah kini dianggap sebagai aspek penting dalam komunikasi interpersonal. Elemen linguistik ini yang disebut penanda wacana menjadi tumpuan penyelidik yang amat berminat untuk mengkajinya kerana peranan elemen ini dalam "menandai kekoherenan wacana dan potensinya untuk mengindeksi hubungan sosial" (Bolden, 2008, p. 102). Brinton mendefinisikan penanda wacana sebagai "item pendek fonologikal yang makna rujukannya tiada atau sedikit sahaja tetapi memenuhi tujuan pragmatik dan tatacara berbahasa (2008, p. 1). Kajian ini cuba mengkaji wacana lelaki-perempuan Parsi dalam interaksi silang gender dengan memfokuskan jenis, kekerapan kemunculan dan fungsi penanda wacana dalam wacana lisan. Kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif digunakan untuk mengenal pasti dan menentukan fungsi penanda wacana dalam bahasa Parsi. Dialek tertentu yang dituturkan oleh penduduk di Tehran, ibu negeri Iran merupakan fokus utama kajian ini. Pengelasan perduaan Brinton (1996) diadaptasikan sebagai kerangka teoretis dalam mendefinisikan fungsi penanda wacana interpersonal dan teks dalam bahasa Parsi. Dalam kajian ini, 34 jenis penanda wacana telah dikenal pasti dan ditentukan fungsinya dan didapati bahawa *na/na baba* merupakan penanda wacana yang menduduki tempat teratas dalam senarai kekerapan. Walau bagaimanapun, inventori

penanda wacana bahasa Parsi yang dicadangkan ini mungkin mengundang cabaran kepada pengkaji lain yang bercadang untuk mengkaji penanda wacana dalam wacana bahasa Parsi. Tambahan pula, fungsi penanda wacana bahasa Parsi yang dikenal pasti dalam kajian ini perlu diperinci demi menyediakan spektrum fungsi penanda wacana yang bersepadu. Dari segi kedudukan dalam wacana, didapati bahawa kedudukan asal penanda wacana bahasa Parsi ialah kedudukan awal. Dalam kata lain, penanda wacana bahasa Parsi cenderung hadir di permulaan wacana. Hasil analisis data yang lain menjurus kepada jumlah dan kadar penanda wacana yang digunakan oleh penutur lelaki-perempuan Parsi. Sebagaimana yang diduga, nisbah penanda wacana dalam wacana perempuan lebih tinggi berbanding dengan lelaki (138 vs. 116) dan hal ini menunjukkan penutur perempuan cenderung untuk menggunakan penanda wacana sebagai peranti untuk membantu mereka dalam memenuhi keperluan komunikasi. Walaupun ketidakharmonian dilihat dalam jumlah penanda wacana antara kedua-dua kumpulan gender, keputusan ujian khi kuasa dua ($p=0.157>.05$) menunjukkan bahawa hal ini tidak signifikan secara statistik. Dari segi penggunaan penanda wacana bagi tujuan teks atau interpersonal, analisis kualitatif dan kuantitatif menunjukkan bahawa perbezaan gender adalah signifikan. Hasil ujian khi kuasa dua $P=0.02<.05$ secara statistiknya cukup signifikan untuk ditekankan. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa perempuan Parsi amat mementingkan keperluan interpersonal mereka manakala lelaki pula memberi keutamaan kepada teks wacana mereka. Rumusannya, perbezaan wacana lelaki-perempuan Parsi dari segi penggunaan penanda wacana merupakan perbezaan jenis fungsi, bukan perbezaan secara kuantitatif, yakni gender penutur merupakan faktor yang dianggap mempengaruhi penggunaan penanda wacana.

Kata kunci: Penanda wacana bahasa Parsi, perbualan santai lelaki-perempuan, fungsi teks, fungsi interpersonal

AN INVESTIGATION OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN PERSIAN MALE-FEMALE CASUAL CONVERSATION

ABSTRACT

Studies on spoken discourse have dramatically increased in recent years (Stenstrom, 1994; Tannen, 1984, 1991). The findings show that the features which were once called 'empty', 'superfluous' and 'redundant' are now considered as a crucial aspect of interpersonal communication. These linguistic elements called discourse markers (henceforth DMs) have been of great interest to researchers who are keen to study situated language because of their role in "demarcating discourse coherence and their potential for indexing social relationships"(Bolden, 2008, p. 102). Brinton defines DMs as "Phonologically short items that have no or little referential meaning but serve pragmatic or procedural purpose" (2008, p. 1).The present study is an attempt to investigate Persian men-women discourse in cross-gender interactions by focusing on the type, frequency of occurrence and function(s) of discourse markers in oral discourse. The qualitative and quantitative methods are employed to identify DMs and to specify their functions as they occur in Persian language. The particular dialect spoken by people living in Tehran, the capital of Iran, is the focus of investigation. Brinton's (1996) binary classification is adopted as a theoretical framework in defining the functions Persian DMs have at the interpersonal and textual levels. Altogether 34 types of Persian DMs are identified and their functions are specified in this study among which *na/na baba* (no) occupies the top rank in the frequency list. However, the

proposed inventory of Persian DMs invites some challenging comparisons from the researches that plan to study DMs in Persian discourse. Furthermore, the specified functions for Persian DMs in the current study need to be elaborated in order to provide a unified functional spectrum. In terms of DMs positions in discourse, it is observed that the default position for Persian discourse markers is the initial position. In other words, Persian DMs have strong tendency to appear at the beginning of discourse. Another reading of the data pertains to the number and proportion of DMs employed by Persian male-female speakers. As it is inferred, the ratio of discourse markers in the women's discourse is higher than the men's (138 vs. 116) which accounts for the female speakers' inclination to employ discourse markers as helpful devices in fulfilling their communicative needs. Although the disharmony is observed in the number of discourse markers in two gender groups, the results of the Chi-square test ($p=0.157>.05$) indicates that it is not statistically significant. In terms of discourse markers usage for the textual/interpersonal purposes, the qualitative and quantitative analyses yield significant gender differences. The results of the Chi-square test shows $P=0.02<.05$ which is statistically significant enough to be emphasized. It indicates that Persian women are mainly concerned with their interpersonal needs while men care for the textuality of their discourse. In sum, the difference between Persian men-women discourse in terms of DMs usage is of functional type rather than quantitative where the gender of the speaker does seem to be an influencing factor in DMs usage.

Key Words: Persian discourse markers- male-female casual conversation- textual function- interpersonal function.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Gender enters in our day-to-day life so smoothly that we take it for granted and accept it as a natural part of our lives, something that needs no explanation. The development of gender roles often begins as early as infancy. It manifests itself in all aspects of our social life. The traces of gender can be found in our way of speaking, the use of humour, conflict situations and so on. It is embedded so strongly in our actions, beliefs and desires that it appears to us quite natural. In general, gender is among those variables that need to be taken into account in order to explain the patterns of language usage.

As Goffman (1977, p. 316) points out even walking into a public toilet does gender,

"……toilet segregation is presented as a natural consequence of the difference between the sex-classes when in fact it is a means of honouring, if not producing, this difference." About half a century after Simon de-Beauvoir's (1952, p. 267) well-known statement "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman", Deborah Cameron (1995, p. 43) argues that "One is never finished becoming a woman or a man." In a similar vein, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 30) opine that "As we age, we continue to learn new ways of being men and women."

Gender gains its existence in relation to such social categories as language, which is considered as a fruitful resource for gender manifestation. Coates (1993, p. 166) opines that "Learning to be male-female means among other things is learning to use gender- appropriate language". Men and women adopt different linguistic behaviours

in speech situations. These different ways of speaking account for the differences between men and women. As we talk, we use linguistic resources to present ourselves as a particular kind of person. Language helps us to project on other's attitude or stance, to change the flow of talk and to affect our interlocutor. Hence any aspect of language, i.e. tone and pitch of voice, intonation patterns, choice of vocabulary, pronunciation and even grammatical patterns can signal gendered aspects of the speaker's self- presentation. The assumption that gender affects discourse has been investigated widely by scholars (Holmes, 1986; Lakoff, 2004; Tannen, 1990). The folk linguistic assumptions such as; women are more talkative than men (chattering women), or men interrupt women more, have been among the controversial topics in gender studies .The so-called stereotypes about how women and men use language have been challenged via focusing on different facets of language, for example from different syntactical, phonological and lexical uses of language (Trudgill 1998) to aspects of conversation analysis such as topic control, interruption(West and Zimmerman, 1975), minimal responses, tag question and hedges (Coates, 1993; Hillier, 2004; Maltz and Broker, 1982) and other interactional features.

The relationship between gender and discourse, invites a reaction towards the question of 'to what extent the gender of the speaker affects the choice of such linguistic items as discourse markers?' Because of the functions discourse markers have in expressing the speaker's stand in conversation, creating coherence at local and global level among discourse segments, establishing interpersonal relationships between interlocutors and creating connection between what has already been said and what is going to be said, discourse markers (henceforth DMs) have recently

become a concern in discourse analysis, especially spoken discourse (Brinton 1996; Fraser, 1999; Schiffrin, 1987). Indeed, focusing on the type, frequency of occurrence and function(s) of DMs offer a new perspective towards investigating the discourse difference in cross-gender interactions. Thus, the distributional pattern of DMs use as well as their functions in the interpersonal and textual domains could be investigated by analyzing the casual conversations that take place among Persian male-female speakers. Given that the majority of studies that have been conducted on the relationship between gender and language n Persian context, dealt with such aspects of language as pronunciation (Asgari, 1996), the effect of gender on the selection of lexical items (Farsian, 1999), gender and politeness (Amoli Mosavi, 1989), gender and power (Mahdi Pour, 1999), the effect of gender on language learning (Rahmatian and Atrashi, 2007) and interruption among Persian couples (Eftekhari, 1999), the researcher opines that the study of discourse markers will offer a refreshing perspective on the analysis of Persian conversation. The findings of this study will benefit those who are interested in gender studies and conversation analysis in the Persian context in one way or another.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

To answer the question of 'what factors contribute to the differences in men's and women's discourse', some researchers suggest that the differences are biological in nature (Bishopand Wahlsten, 1997; Baron-Cohen et al., 2005). The validity of the biological accounts of gender differences in linguistic behaviour as they are not verified by scientific evidence can be considered as the "Achilles' heel" of this approach. The most recent research on men/women brain size in Spain shows that

men's brain is 11% bigger than women's (News, 2012). However, there is no evidence to show that there is a relationship between brain size and men/women's linguistic behaviour. Others attribute the difference in men-women linguistic behaviour to nurture, i.e., the effect of such as environmental factors as education, society and culture (e.g. Lakoff, 2004; Cameron, 2007) and still others (e.g. Tannen, 1990) are convinced that differences are a matter of free choice, a tendency to prefer certain form where variation exists, selecting one speech style rather than the other. Taking into account the third approach, the researcher aligns with Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (2003) who argue that although gender performances are available to everyone, with them comes constraints on who can perform which personae with impunity. Apparently, we are not free in our choice and depending on when, where and under what circumstances an interaction is taking place, we are forced to choose specific speech styles, so the preference of one style to another might be a void reason for the difference between men's and women's discourse.

The studies on the differences between men's and women's speech style cover a wide range of areas in different languages, particularly in English. Early studies on gender focused on women's speech to explore those features which are believed to constitute women's language and to attribute their use to the uncertainty, unassertiveness and powerlessness of female speakers (Lakoff, 2004). The publication of two influential books, Thorne and Henley's *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* (1975) and Dale Spender's *Man Made Language* (1981) shifted the focus away from Lakoff's (1975) proposed features of women's language as the markers of females' uncertainty. They suggest that these features should be read in a different way when looked at in the context of real, mixed-sex interaction. In her book *You Just Don't*

Understand, Tannen (1990) introduces a new trend of thinking which leads to a paradigm shift in gender studies, as the powerful/powerless taxonomy is substituted by the competitive/co-operative dichotomy.

Recently, studies on spoken language in real-life contexts increased dramatically. As a result, some of the features previously considered 'empty', 'superfluous' and redundant- such as *sort of, y'know* and *well* (Goddardand Meanpatterson, 2000, p. 98) now are considered as crucial aspects of interpersonal communication. These expressions called 'discourse markers' (Schiffrin, 1987) or 'pragmatic expressions' (Fraser, 1999) have been of "substantial interest to researchers studying situated language use because of their role in demarcating discourse connections as well as their potential for indexing social relationships" (Bolden, 2008, p. 102). While some studies deal with a whole range of DMs (e.g. Schiffrin, 1987), others concentrate on individual ones (e.g. Blakemore, 1989; Ostman, 1983). The most detailed account of DMs comes from Schiffrin (1987) who adopts a sociolinguistic approach towards the markers and the discourse within which they function. She explains the behaviour of DMs on five different levels of talk. However, the scope of studies on DMs is not limited to English. It encompasses some European and Asian languages as well, to name a few, Hansen's investigation of the discourse particles in spoken standard French (1998), Setton's study of DMs in German (2005) and Bazzanella's exploration of Italian DMs (1990). In the Asian context, Mieko Kimura Philips' much recent study on DMs in Japanese conversations (2007) and Onodera's exploration of Japanese Discourse Markers (2004), Gurbuz's comparative study between Turkish and English DMs (1995), Yilmaz's (2004) pragmatic perspective towards three DMs in casual Turkish conversation and Wouk's (1999) study on two

Indonesian pragmatic particles are among the researchers on DMs in non-English languages. Thus, further studies in this area would make the linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of DMs wider, the results of which in turn contribute to the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural researches as well.

Assuming that all languages make use of DMs or similar devices, the main concern of the present study is to answer the questions 'which lexical items are used as DMs in spoken Persian and what functions do they have in general and in men-women's discourse in particular. In the Persian context, Dabirmogadam's (2002) comparative study between *but* from English and *amma* (but) from Persian is the only available documented study the researcher had access to. Though, some scholarly works have been conducted on DMs in a Persian context, the main concern of these studies has been the use of English DMs by non-native, Iranian students among which are the studies by Jalalifar and Hashemian (2010), Jalalifar (2008), Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2007) and Bahrami (1992). In their most recent research, Jalalifar and Hashemian (2010) investigated the frequency and functions of English DMs *uh*, *well*, *you know* and *I mean* in Iranian students' discourse in interviewing setting. In his earlier study Jalalifar (2008) investigated the frequency and type of English DMs in the descriptive composition of 90 Iranian EFL students. Another study by Bahrami (1992) attempted to find out the effects of English DMs on the reading comprehension of Persian EFL learners. Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2007) emphasize on the facilitative effects of using English DMs on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL students. Bearing in mind that study on Persian DMs has been relatively under-researched, the present study aims to conduct an empirical

analysis of Persian DMs used by Iranian men-women in casual, daily conversations in order to fill the void.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The present study pursues the following aims:

1. To identify the commonly used lexical items that function as DMs in Persian casual conversation.
2. To investigate the discoursal functions of Persian DMs in the interpersonal and textual domains.
3. To examine the distribution of DMs used by male-female speakers in Persian casual conversation.
4. To specify the predominant discoursal functions of DMs in Persian male-female casual conversation.

1.4 Research Questions

In line with the objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the commonly used DMs in Persian casual conversation?
2. What are the discoursal functions of Persian DMs in the interpersonal and textual domains?
3. What are the distributional patterns of DMs used in Persian male-female casual conversation?
4. What are the predominant discoursal functions of DMs utilized by Persian male-female speakers in casual conversation?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In previous approaches to Persian language, the main concern of linguistic investigations has been largely syntax, morphology and phonology (Ganjavi, 2007; Riazati, 1997; Sedighi, 2005; Tehranisa, 1987). Bearing in mind that in the arena of Persian language the analysis of casual conversation between men and women are either rare or non-existent, this study could be regarded as pioneering as it fills the existing gap with particular regard to the study of Persian DMs.

While the role of DMs in natural conversation has attracted considerable attention from linguists working with English, this subject has largely been ignored in Persian discourse. The study is in fact the first of its kind in terms of conducting a detailed analysis of Persian DMs. In this sense it would be regarded as novel and may pave the path for further research in this field. In addition research on the functions and distributional patterns of DMs will broaden our knowledge of their discourse behaviour in language in general and contribute to the already growing cross-linguistic body of work on DMs thus encouraging the need to carry out more research on DMs in other languages.

The contribution of the present study to sociolinguistics and discourse analysis is inevitable. The empirical study of DMs to investigate their significance in everyday language usage as well as their interpersonal functions in expressing the attitudes and feelings of the speaker/hearer could provide us with a deeper understanding of preferred linguistic behaviour among males and females in casual conversation in a particular language community. In addition, the study could have pedagogical implications by enlightening learners about the interpersonal functions of DMs in

informal settings. It is commonly accepted that DMs are under-presented in language education programmes (Chapeton, 2009). Learning such items enables learners in making their language sound more natural, more confident and fluent in expressing themselves. Furthermore having the knowledge of Persian DMs contributes to a better understanding of their correct usage in order to communicate successfully with native speakers of Persian. As Wierzbicka (1976) opines, the consequences of the misuse of DMs could be more detrimental than basic grammatical mistakes. Svartvik illustrates the essential role DMs play in the pragmatic competence of the speaker when he says that "If a foreign learner says five 'sheeps' or he 'goed', he can be corrected by every native speaker. On the other hand, if he omits 'well' the likely reaction will be that he is dogmatic, impolite, boring and awkward to talk to, but a native speaker cannot pinpoint an error"(1980, p. 171).

In the development of research areas that deal with human languages, building a modern corpus is essential. There are many structured corpora for English and other languages (e.g. CANCODE, COLT). However such collection has not been constructed systematically for the Persian language. Therefore, the recorded conversations would be used as the Persian Spoken Language Corpus (PSLC) available to those researchers working on Persian oral discourse for other purposes.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

This section is allocated to a brief definition of the terms and concepts that pertain to the present study. It is instructive to note that these terms are discussed in detail in the second chapter.

Gender/Sex Dichotomy

It is often difficult to understand exactly what is meant by the term ‘gender’, and in what sense it differs from the closely related term ‘sex’. While sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that are defined for men and women, gender refers to the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society constructs for men and women and which are considered appropriate for them (World Health Organization). Consequently, sex is a fixed concept which does not change across societies while gender is in a state of flux and varies from one society to another.

Casual Conversation

As the basic form of social interaction, casual conversation is not confined to a specific context of interaction or to the fulfilment of a particular task. It “encompasses a vast array of rules and practices” (Heritage, 1998, p. 3). It is “unpredictable in the sense that very little of what we say, the actions we perform or the order in which we do things is determined in advance” (p. 5). Despite its apparently aimless and trivial content, casual conversation (hereafter CC) is a highly structured and functionally motivated activity (Eggins and Slades, 1997). The central paradox of CC is that the significant interpersonal work that CC achieves, as interactants enact and confirm social identities and relations, is disguised by the apparent triviality of it. However, the evidence of analysis suggests that CC is anything but trivial, having a highly ordered structure (Schegloff, 1974). And what

makes the detection of clear generic structure difficult for CC is not its chaotic nature but rather the fact that it is structured in a different way. Being motivated by interpersonal goals, CC contributes to the construction of social identity. Thus the primary inclination for an informal chat is to extend the interpersonal relationships that bring people together rather than just to kill time.

Eggins and Slade (1997, p. 19) define CC as "a sort of talk which is NOT motivated by any pragmatic purpose." They consider CC as "a critical linguistic site for the negotiation of such important dimensions of our social identity as gender, social class membership, generational location, sexuality, ethnicity and sub cultural and group affiliations" (p. 6). Apparently it is through talk that the social identities such as 'friends', 'strangers', 'male', 'female', 'bossy', 'effusive' are registered. Following are some discriminating characteristics of CC specified by Eggins (1997):

1. CC is highly egocentric.
2. CC contexts reveal far more open-ended exchange type.
3. In CC interactants rarely ask questions to which they already know the answer.
4. CC provides context for multitude topics.
5. It is usually produced under online conditions which make the speakers monitor themselves constantly and concurrently arguing their thoughts.

Discourse Markers

Quirk et al. (1985) refers to DMs as "apparently useless and meaningless items" (p. 178-79) and argue that although these items play no role in the transmission of information, they are of considerable importance since the desire to feel that the

hearer is sharing something with one seems to be fundamental in the urge to speak. He calls them "sharing devices" and "intimacy signals". To Brinton (2008, p. 1) DMs are "phonologically short items have no or little referential meaning but serve pragmatic or procedural purpose". Blakemore's whose main concern is to define DMs on the basis of 'Relevance Theory' (cited in Muller, 2005, p. 9) as "DMs guide the hearer in finding the most relevant interpretation in the given context by constraining the number of possible interpretations." Redeker (1991) defines DMs as "linguistic expressions used to signal the relation of an utterance to its immediate context, with the primary function of bringing to the listener's attention a particular kind of linkages of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context" (ibid, p. 367-381). He sees DMs as lexical equivalents or complements for elusive gestural or intonation cues that contribute to the participant's comprehension. For Stenstrom (1994, p. 17) a conversation is "much less lively and less personal without DMs". They signal the receipt of information, agreement with interlocutor(s) and involvement in the flow of talk (ibid). Believing that DMs do not contribute anything to the propositional content in the context where they appear, Lenk (1998) states that although the propositional content of a sentence/utterance might not be altered by the addition or deletion of DMs, nevertheless they perform an important pragmatic function in the interaction. He adds that DMs are used to signal the organization and structure of discourse. The structuring functions of DMs do not correspond to the lexical meaning but to the pragmatic meaning of these items. For Levinson (1983) DMs serve as "indicators" that show how the utterance that contains them is a response to or a contribution of, some portion of the prior discourse. Defining DMs as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" Schiffrin(1987,

p.31) specifies the following properties for DMs while emphasizing that these properties are interdependent and not one of them can be understood without attention to the others.

1. They form structure.
2. They convey meaning.
3. They accomplish actions.

In sum, DMs are contextually sensitive lexical items utilized to structure discourse. They link the stretches of discourse together, mark discourse coherence (Schiffrin, 1987), restrict the scope of the hearer's interpretation of the discourse (Blakemore, 2002) and signal the relationship between the speaker and hearer as well as the relations among different parts of the discourse. Linguistic items from different class of words could function as DMs (for example: conjunctions, adverbs, verbal phrases). As a rule of thumb, DM is not a conjunction nor an adverb and/or a verbal phrase, although it can share some features of them.

1.6.1 A Working Definition of Discourse Marker

To adhere to Brinton's proposed model to define the functions DMs have in discourse, her definition of DMs will be used as the working definition in the present study. She defines DMs as "phonologically short items that have no or little referential meaning but serve pragmatic or procedural purpose" (2008, p. 1).What is at the heart of Brinton's definition and which informs the present study is that DMs act mainly in the pragmatic/metadiscourse plane of talk and have little or no propositional contribution to the meaning of the discourse.

1.7 Outline of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals mainly with the role society plays in constructing gender identity to its members and the manifestation of gender in the linguistic behaviour of the speaker which is followed by the statement of problem. The objectives of the study and the research questions are presented respectively followed by the significance of the study and the definition of some key terms. The second chapter reviews a wide range of literature carried out on the relationship between gender and language, empirical studies on DMs in English and other languages, the various inventories of DMs suggested by scholars, the distinguishing features of DMs, the functions they fulfil in discourse as well as a precise description of theoretical frameworks used for analyzing DMs in English. The main concern of the third chapter is the research methodology. It provides the reader with a comprehensive explanation of the research design, the participants, the procedures taken for the data collection and data analysis, the conceptual framework, and a review of the pilot study conducted prior to the main study. Chapter four presents a broad discussion of qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data. A summary of findings which is followed by the suggestions for future and further research on DMs in Persian language as well as the implications of the study, the limitations and delimitation of the study are discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

With an overview of previous studies on the relationship between gender and the language style utilized by each gender group, this chapter looks at the two dominant approaches towards gendered language, i.e., difference vs. dominance paradigm. It is followed by the various definitions of DMs suggested by different scholars, DMs functions and positions in discourse and the theoretical approaches towards DMs study. A review of related literature on the relationship between DMs usage and gender in English and other languages is presented next. The remaining part of this chapter is devoted to the discussion of Persian language and the common DMs used in written Persian. A summary concludes this chapter.

2.1 Lakoff's Contribution to Gender Studies

Robin Lakoff's 1975 article 'Language and Women's Place' had sparked off interest in studies on language and gender in disciplines such as anthropology, communication studies, education, psychology and sociology for over three decades. Her pioneering work argues that women have different ways of speaking from men which reflects their subordinate position in society. In her article she suggests that women's speech typically displays a range of features such as (Lakoff 2004, p. 48, 79-81):

1. Hedges of various types e.g., "*well", "y'know", "kinda*" and so on.

2. Super polite forms: Women are the experts at using euphemism; they are the repositories of tact. They do not use off-colour or indelicate expression.
3. Tag questions as the statement expressing uncertainty.
4. Question intonation in declarative statements (raising the pitch of voice at the end).
5. Speaking in italics; intonational emphasis equal to underlining words.
6. Empty adjectives such as divine, charming, adorable.
7. Hyper-corrected grammar and pronunciation (English class grammar).
8. Lack of sense of humour: women do not tell jokes well and often do not understand the punch-line of jokes.
9. The use of intensive 'so'.
10. Special lexicon: women use more words for things like colours, shopping, while men for sports, car.

Lakoff believes that using these devices makes women's language unpleasant. She goes on to posit that this kind of language renders women's speech tentative, powerless and trivial which disqualifies women from positions of power and authority. In this way language becomes a tool of oppression. Her proposal was based on two preconceptions: 1) women and men talk differently and 2) differences in women's and men's speech are the result of – and the support of- male dominance. Lakoff's claim that women tend to use more question forms than men which make them seem less assertive was challenged in Fishman's (1983) research in mixed –sex conversations where it was proven that the women asked more questions because they were often responsible for getting their male partners to open up and chat to

them. So “asking questions is not signalling uncertainty and powerlessness but as part of conversational labour women are required to perform in their social role” (Goddard and Meanpatterson 2000, p. 99).

The studies on ‘hedges’ reveal that apart from expressing uncertainty and tentativeness (Lakoff 2004), they have some pragmatic functions at discourse level as well. In essence, they act as: communication facilitators, solidarity markers, mitigator and they save face for the interlocutor. Lakoff’s description of female speech style was sharply criticized for it was based on “introspective methods” (Lakoff 2004, p. 40) where she used her personal intuitions in analyzing collected data rather than providing a systematic quantitative observation. Her exploration of women’s language was critically challenged by O’Barr and Atkins (1980). In their article ‘Women’s language or Powerless’ they describe the results of their 30 months courtroom studies. Examining the witnesses’ testimony for the ten basic speech features proposed by Lakoff as women’s language, they argue that the differences that Lakoff and others have suggested are not necessarily the result of being a woman. In other words, the quoted speech patterns are not the characteristics of all women’s speech neither are they limited to women speakers. O’Barr and Atkins further argue that these features constitute the speech of powerless speakers.

Some years later, Jennifer Coates (1986, 1996, 1998) carried out an in-depth examination of conversations in single-sex female groups to investigate how far and in what circumstances women make use of features of so-called ‘women’s language’. After analyzing a corpus of 20 recordings of naturally occurring conversations between women friends, Coates referred to ‘story telling’, ‘hedging’,

'questioning', 'repetition' and 'establishing collaborative floor' as the linguistic strategies women use in talk with friends to establish and maintain close and equal social relationships as well as to minimize social distance. She argues that the use of hedges by women is not the evidence of their unassertiveness or weakness but it demonstrates the strength of women's conversational and personal skills. She furthermore believes that hedges can be deployed for a range of positive functions:

1. They can express shades of doubt/confidence.
2. They allow us to be sensitive to other's feelings.
3. They help us in the search for the right words to express what we mean.
4. They allow us to avoid playing the expert status.

These positive functions of hedges (Coates, 1993) are among the functions discourse markers have in spoken interaction. Adopting the Systemic-Functional model as an analytical framework, Hillier (2004) compared an extract from a telephone conversation with one from a face-to-face conversation between two female speakers. The three features of 'hedges', 'minimal responses' and 'hesitations' in terms of both frequency and patterns of occurrence are explored. At the end of her study, she concludes that "The phone data shows greater use of all three phenomena than the face data" (Hillier 2004, p. 88). It means that women use a higher proportion of each feature in the phone than the face-to-face conversation which can be attributed to the differences in the mode of communication. Hillier's findings validate many of the claims made by Coates about the ways in which women friends can "work towards achieving rewarding conversational goals" (p. 91). Although Hillier's investigation throw an interesting light on aspects of talk between women friends, due to the

limitation of the scope of her study the results are not applicable to other contexts or participants, for example women in working/social situations or the interactions in cross-sex groups.

2.2Difference vs. Dominance Paradigm

Over the past years, the studies on gender and communication could be categorized under two frameworks:

1. Gender as cross-cultural difference
2. Gender as social power/dominance

2.2.1Difference Paradigm

The advocates of the difference/cross-culture approach believe that women and men speak differently because of fundamental differences in their relation to language, perhaps due to different socialization and early (childhood) experience (Tannen, 1990). Adopting Gumperz's (1982) cross-cultural perspective, the proponents of the difference model locate the cross-sex miscommunication in early sex-segregated behaviours in which boys and girls learn "genderlect" (Maltz and Broker, 1982) which is carried into adulthood and is the main reason for miscommunication between two gender groups. For the proponents of cross-gender model the difference in male-female language usage is so broad that they see it as a cross-cultural difference. Having a sociolinguistic perspective towards the differences between men's/women's speech styles, the difference approach places emphasis on the idea that women and men belong to two different sub-cultures.

For Deborah Tannen, a well- known advocate of this approach, men and women's linguistic behaviour are so different that she calls cross- gender communication as cross- cultural. In her book *You just Don't Understand* (1990) she posits that the main reason for the difference between men-women's speech is that men and women try to accomplish different things with talk. Men approach conversation as a contest. Thus, they prefer to lead a conversation in a direction in which they can take central role by for example telling a joke, displaying information or skill, which Tannen calls "report talk" (public speaking). While most women's conversation is a way of establishing community and creating connection, which she calls "rapport talk*"* (private speaking) (Tannen, 1990, p. 74-95). She believes that men approach the world as a place to achieve and maintain status while women approach it as a network of connections to seek support and consensus. Tannen is not only concerned about how people communicate and interpret in conversation, but also identifies a number of stylistic strategies they use to create rapport/intimacy. Topic choice, pacing, narrative strategies and expressive paralinguistic features such as pitch and voice quality are among the identified features suggested by Tannen who believes that the use of these features characterize a "high involvement style"(1984, p.31). She sees the style differences in conversational behaviour as the indication of equal but different modes of behaving. The various ways women make use of conversation in order to establish intimacy with others, confuses men. One of these ways is what Tannen (1990, p. 53) calls "troubles talk." She states that for women, talking about troubles is the essence of connection. I tell you my troubles, you tell me your troubles, and we are close. Men, however, hear trouble talk as a request for advice, so they respond with a solution. When a man offers this kind of information the woman

often feels as if he is trying to diminish her problem or cut her off (p. 49-53). According to Tannen (1990, p. 32-33) the miscommunication between men-women occurs when "a meta message" (individual's interpretation of how a communication is meant) is read by a receiver through his/her communication filter and not through that of the sender. She indicates that 'male as norm' view point is what has led many people to believe in the existence of the 'other' kind of language for women as opposed to two separate styles. Furthermore, she makes the point that both sexes need to understand the inherent differences in their communication styles which is the main reason for the miscommunication between them. She goes on by suggesting that if men and women have an understanding of the other's ways of talking, they are able to communicate more effectively. Tannen concludes her book by alluding to Neal Armstrong (the first man on the moon) that: "Learning the other's ways of talking is a leap across the communication gap between men and women, and a giant step towards genuine understanding (1990, p. 298)".

Tannen's style of writing has been criticized for being very impersonal and casual which is incompatible with scientific literature. She conveys her information by mixing examples from her own life with other examples from the real world. Aki Uchida's study entitled 'When difference is dominance' (1992) was among those critical responses to Tannen's book. He critiques the stance taken by the 'difference paradigm' for two main reasons: (ibid, p. 547)

1. This approach is too simple to account for the things that happen in mixed-sex conversations.

2. The dichotomization of ‘power’ and ‘culture’ as two separate, independent concepts is improper (he believes that social interactions always occur in the context of a particular society).

Tannen’s informal anecdotal style of writing is both informative and entertaining, however, it does not provide the reader with a specific framework she utilized for analyzing her data. Her analysis of the conversations relies mainly on her personal intuition rather than the use of a precise and comprehensive scientific framework.Furthermore, the experimental evidence she collected for her book belongs to American women entirely. Thus, whether the results are applicable to other societies/cultures is unclear.

In a somewhat similar vein, American anthropologists Maltz and Broker (1982) in support of their stand with regard to a two-culture model, (difference approach) argue that the main reason for the miscommunication in male-female interactions is that they learn and use ‘genderlect’ i.e., two separate sets of rules for engaging and interpreting conversation. They refer to a number of areas in which men and women use different conversational rules. The interpretation of ‘minimal responses’ is one of these areas. According to their findings (1982, p. 421) minimal responses, such as *‘yes’, ‘yeah’, ‘mmhmm’* have different meanings for men and women which lead to occasionally serious miscommunications. To women, minimal responses mean something like ‘I’m listening to you; please continue’, while men attach much stronger meaning to them, such as ‘I agree with you’, ‘I follow your argument so far’. They believe that these norms were acquired in childhood single- sex peer group interactions (e.g., through segregated educational system) rather than mixed –sex

groups and the issue is therefore one of (sub-) culture miscommunication rather than social inequality.

> Imagine a male speaker who is receiving repeated nods or ‘mm hmm’s from the woman he is speaking to. She is merely indicating that she is listening, but he thinks she is agreeing with everything he says. Now imagine a female speaker who is receiving only occasional nods and ‘mm hmm’s from the man she is speaking to. He is indicating that she doesn't always agree; she thinks he isn't always listening. (Maltz and Broker, 1982, p. 422)

Analyzing naturally occurring stories told by women and men in the New Zealand conversations, Janet Holmes (1993) explored the ways New Zealand women and men use stories in their daily interactions to construct gendered identities. At the end of her study, she concluded that men and women do gender by telling stories but in different ways. Women tell stories as a way of keeping in touch with friends while in men’s stories ‘doing gender’ involves presenting themselves as being knowledgeable and competent or, if things go wrong, as having self-awareness, being sophisticated and reflective.

2.2.2 Dominance Paradigm

The dominance model, a feminist oriented perspective, stresses that differences between men’s and women’s speech style arise because of the male’s dominance over women which persists in order to keep women subordinated to men. Associated with this paradigm are scholars such as Julia Penelope (1989), Dale Spender (1981), Deborah Cameron (2003, 2006), and Pamela Fishman (1980, 1983), to name a few. Through the social inequality and patriarchy lenses, the proponents of dominance paradigm voiced their objection to cross-gender model of the difference camp. In a speech delivered at Leeds University entitled ‘Men are from Earth, Women are from

Earth' Deborah Cameron (2003, p. 145) while addressing John Gray's book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (1992) clearly articulated the underlying premise for much of her work. She opines that "any difference in men's and women's way of communication is not natural and inevitable but cultural and political". In her latest article (2010) Cameron argues that in mixed-sex conversations, women try to "disarm potential threats by displaying a submissive or non-provocative attitude while with other women it is rational to try to form protective alliances by displaying solidarity and mutual regard. Men are 'less polite' not because they cannot use these strategies, but because in most situations they feel no need to" (p. 185). She criticizes the 'difference theorists' for seeing childhood socialization as the most important gender constructing process. She (2006) believes that all versions of the myths regarding men's/women's different speech style share some or all of the following premises:

1. Women are more verbally skilled than men.
2. Language and communication matter more to women than to men.
3. Men's goal in using language is to get things done while women's is making connections with other people.
4. Men's way of using language is competitive while women's is cooperative.

While the advocates of the 'difference paradigm' argue that women as a sub-cultural group have different but preferred conversational strategies, the 'dominance theorists' point out that some groups are heavily disadvantaged by their conversational styles, i.e. the conversational styles of some groups have unfavourable material consequences for their members (see e.g., Fishman, 1980). Thus, speakers