

Dinamics of Colloquial Language – English Discourse Markers Online

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Colloquial language is very permissive when it comes to not following a specific set of rules. This fact represents the result of colloquial language mainly having an oral character. Thus, even borrowing and using foreign words in different contexts become more frequent. In most cases, speakers use borrowed phrases, expressions and even discourse markers from English in order to save time and to diminish the effort during the speech act. Some of the borrowings reveal themselves as being easier to use or being more on point than the correspondents in Romanian. Besides that, the Internet has had a great influence on Romanian colloquial language these past years, offering the speakers an easier access to content in English, which helps them acquire new skills. Social media also helps people to connect, to find shared values and beliefs and to freely express themselves. Due to social media promoting an informal environment for communication, discourse markers also occur, especially during videos, for example, on TikTok. Discourse markers encapsulate both a pragmatic and a sociolinguistic role, helping the speaker not only to revise his/her discourse, but also to connect to the listener through a shared linguistic behavior. Through this study, I intend to provide an analysis of English discourse markers on TikTok, emphasizing their role in the discourse.

Colloquial language; English influence; discourse markers; online discourse.

Colloquial language represents a collective functional style which mainly focuses on the affective dimension of the discourse. Dumitru Irimia states that functional styles are built on the message-concept relation. (Irimia, 1986, p.102) Thus, we can affirm that the entire communicative process should be held depending on the context. The speaker should take into consideration the linguistic and socio-cultural environment and the knowledge of the listener. The way speakers communicate is very important, since they have to choose the very words from the lexical sphere that is common to both participants at the speech act.

In regards of following spelling norms, colloquial language is flexible. The interlocutors are not constraint to use only literary language or to use only words from a specific area. This type of language is permissive, thus offering speakers the option to directly express their emotions, to simplify the communicative process through abbreviations or omitting words and to even use borrowings from different languages, such as English.

The influence of English is very prominent nowadays, because of the development of technology. Thus, we can easily observe that an impressive number of borrowed words

and expressions are frequently used in the colloquial language. English has gained a global status, as David Crystal states, through the fact that its role is worldwide recognized. (Crystal, 2003, p.3) This phenomenon is visible in Romanian as well, through the usage of English words, expressions and discourse markers in Romanian discourses, due to the fact that they might help the speakers to better express themselves or an emotion and to diminish time and effort.

When using colloquial language, speakers resort to suprasegmental elements, such as tone, gestures, mimicry, accent, regional/archaic/neological terms, slang and jargon. This phenomenon is frequently encountered and possible because there is a certain relationship between the interlocutors that allows them to build an informal dialogue. Besides using suprasegmental elements and words from different lexical spheres, speakers can resort to using independent linguistic units, specifically discourse markers. They do not possess any syntactic role, but they are important from a semantic and pragmatic point of view. Moreover, discourse markers can be borrowed from English, as we have already mentioned before, situation that consists in language development.

Discourse markers represent a category of pragmatic markers which, as Fraser states, indicate the relation between the message and the discourse. They do not contribute to the sentence's message itself, but they help the listener to properly receive the message, through signaling different contextual factors. (Fraser, 1996, p.339) For example, discourse markers can be used to indicate the changing of an idea, to mark a pause or a conclusion in the speech act etc. Fraser classifies the discourse markers according to these traits. The author states that there are markers intended for changing the subject of discussion. They imply that the speaker wants to move from an idea to another, which is not connected to the initial one. For this purpose, we can use discourse markers such as *by the way* or *speaking of*. There are also contrastive discourse markers that emphasize the contrast between an initial sentence and the new one, such as *anyway*, *however*. Elaborative discourse markers signal the speaker's intention to provide additional information or explanation in order to help the listener to better understand the message, such as *besides*, *like*. The last type of discourse markers that Fraser identifies is the inferential one. This one helps to highlight the presence of a conclusion. Inferential markers can be *so*, *then*, *thus* etc. (Fraser, 1996, pp.339-341)

Discourse markers establish connections between sentences and facilitate the understanding of the message. Thus, creating a connection between the colloquial language, the influence of English and discourse markers, we can conclude that they are interconnected and create a closed circuit. Colloquial language facilitates the integration of borrowed words, and this phenomenon occurs because English influences Romanian through technology and not only. Discourse markers can be easily used in their English version, be that in an online or offline discourse.

Next, we aim to analyze an example of informal online discourse in which we noticed the presence of English discourse markers. From a methodological point of view,

we would like to mention that the discourse is in Romanian and can be found on TikTok, on a public account that belongs to a female Romanian content creator (*influencer*). We will analyze the discourse markers from a semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic point of view in order to determine the purpose behind their usage. The transcription will not contain the suprasegmental elements, since they do not bring any relevance to the present study. We focus on the words in *italics* which highlight the English discourse markers in the discourse.

“Dau note unghiilor mele vechi PART 1”

Source: TikTok (@mara__stanciu)

[...] *Ok*. A fost prima dată când mi-am făcut gen ombré de ăsta la unghii și sincer mi-a plăcut foarte mult. Nu sunt chiar primele unghii astea pe care le-am avut [...] *not bad*, nu arată rău, dar n-aș mai fi ales culoarea asta, [...] *anyway*. Doamne, la unghiile astea cât de multă lume mi-a zis că I’m trying to copy Kylie Jenner. [...] Astea au fost printre preferatele mele [...] și mi-au plăcut foarte mult *for some reason*, nu știu [...].

In this excerpt, we observe the occurrence of English discourse markers. Firstly, the most genuine marker is *anyway*, which is a contrastive one. We can easily spot the contrast between two ideas/two elements that compose the discourse. *Anyway* facilitates the process through which the speaker makes the transition from a point to another and offers him/her additional time to build the following sentence. Secondly, there is *OK*. This word loses its basic meaning and becomes a discourse marker which has the role of introducing a sentence that contains additional information or explanation. Thus, it becomes an elaborative discourse marker. We are able to affirm that, after the occurrence of *OK*, the speaker brings into attention an idea that supports an initial sentence.

Moving forward, we can spot some English expressions/phrases as well, such as *not bad* and *for some reason*. Normally, they keep their basic meaning in the discourse, but their role is solely to help the interlocutor to correctly understand the global message, that can be distinct from the shallow subject. We aim to bring into the attention that the speaker consciously uses words and phrases from English together with other discourse markers, in order to maintain their cultural relevance. Specifically, they try to validate their membership to a greater community which extends over the territory of our country. Thus, we need to analyze the phenomenon from a pragmatic and sociolinguistic point of

view. We believe that social platforms created new ways of communication and interconnection, consequently content creators have numerous chances to build enlarged and varied communities, resorting even to the linguistic factor, through using English words that belong to different trends started in U.S.A, for example. Both can be transformed into elaborative discourse markers, since the speaker has the intention to explain an idea after each of the two phrases.

In conclusion, we can state that English influenced colloquial Romanian during the past years, especially through Internet, which became an important means of communication and human interaction. Moreover, the English discourse markers are not only used to facilitate the discourse, but they are also used to arouse reactions online, to align to specific trends and to signal the membership to a worldwide English-speaking community. As we noticed from the example, the content creators are usually aware of the impact that English borrowings have on listeners/followers in online communication and they take advantage of them in order to gain access to even more followers.

References

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