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# Investigating Pragmatic Markers in English and Arabic Blogs- A Contrastive Study

A Thesis

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## *Abstract*

The majorities of linguistic studies observe that there is a grammatical and pragmatic phenomenon for a class of heterogeneous linguistic items. Those linguistic items' meaning encodes often an interpretation that seems to depend on context rather than their syntactic behaviour in the language. Modern linguistic researches provide many labels for those items. As far as this study is concerned, they are called pragmatic markers. Allegedly, they exhibit extrasentential features such as reflexivity which makes a particular text more coherent. Also, they seem to have no precise definition or one dominant feature. However, modern available studies expanded to detect features of what can be recognized as PMs. Notably, they are not part of the propositional content of particular messages; however, they are part of the discourse. Therefore, PMs may play role in the process of conceptual change because they may reflect not only procedural knowledge, but also they reflect often conceptual representation. Ultimately, they are subject to how they are realized and interpreted by the interlocutors in a particular focal event and particular time. So PMs are contextualized pragmatic and cognitive tools which operate on cognitive implicated level due to their intersubjective socio-cognitive reciprocal connection of pragmatic implicated meanings. Basically, the present study is a contrastive pragma-discoursal analysis of PMs with an emphasis on them from a cognitive sociolinguistic perspective.

In order to verify those linguistic items' classification, an eclectic model is adopted which includes Fraser model (1999) for the purpose of detecting PMs types' classification, Boyd (2014) concept of context collapse and then recognize those PMs' relevance and their role in the conceptual change process using cognitive sociolinguistic approach as represented by Blakemore (1987, 1992) and Chi (1992) and Vosniadou & Brewer (1987). Fraser (cited in Fischer, 2006:189)

observes that PMs as class of lexical expressions used to perform different communicative functions in any language. This thesis attempts to scholarly discern the issues of PMs from different theoretical views in English and Arabic. It also hypothesizes that online discourse is a fertile ground to detect the similarities and differences between the adopted PMs in Arabic and English blogs.

This study statistical analysis shows that there are differences and similarities between Arabic and English online discourse. In a cognitive environment of an online discourse, PMs are significant tools within interactive online framework. So PMs are pragmatic and cognitive tools adopted by English and Arabic tweeters almost relatively similar to face-to-face-conversations. Arab tweeters rely more on PMs than English ones to deliver their communicative meanings. However, Arabs, as bloggers, are less committed to the content of their communicative messages than English ones i.e. they are committed to reality using CMs more than Arabic tweeters.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

Pragmatic markers are a set of single or multi-word expressions which occur often in a discourse. Their semantic content is almost empty in that they contribute little to the propositional content of the message of an utterance. As a phenomenon in language, pragmatic markers, henceforth PMs, are a loosely attached group of expressions since they are difficult to delimit. According to Fraser (1999), these expressions can be found in every language (cited in Fischer, 2006:202). Thus, the study draws upon Fraser's statement that English as well as Arabic exhibit these tools to a high extent of frequency.

The term pragmatic markers is one among many terms that refer to the same phenomenon like: discourse connectives (Blakemore, 1987, 1992), discourse particles (Schorup, 1985), pragmatic formatives (Fraser, 1987), pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1988, 1990; Schiffrin, 1987), pragmatic operators (Ariel, 1994) and many others.

### 1.1 The Problem

In an internet discourse, PMs are a controversial issue in every language; they vary in their linguistic features. As a matter of fact, linguistic units and how they are inter-related within a linguistic system differ from language to another. The number and functions of these expressions are very difficult to sort out since they behave differently in different languages. As a group of expressions, PMs are means to an end. To put it in another way, they require a process of contextualization to signal the speaker's communicative intent whether on textual or interpersonal level; so their more relevant pragmatic interpretation requires

pragmatic enrichment. Accordingly, the multi-functionality of PMs gives them undue prominence as tools for successful communication.

Just like other types of texts, English and Arabic blogs encompass to a high degree of pragmatic markers which are difficult to sort out its meanings and types. The study is set to establish within how PMs pragma-discoursal and cognitive-sociolinguistic frameworks, in English and Arabic, exist as group and how they contribute to English and Arabic blogs while discovering any gap possible by applying contrastive method supported by quali-quantitative analysis. Any similar or different feature among the two groups will be sorted out. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, such type of internet discourse for blogs, with respect to PMs, has not been visited contrastively.

## **1.2 The Aims**

- 1- Conducting a quali-quantitative analysis, of English and Arabic PMs, to study their pragmatic type and their cognitive sociolinguistic behaviour.
- 2- Shedding light on the range of the adopted PMs in Arabic and English twitter's blogs on the basis of their types.
- 3- Identifying the classification of Arabic and English groups of PMs with respect to the language involved by following Fraser model (1999).
- 4- Finding out similarities and differences whenever possible using quali-quantitative analysis.

## **1.3 The Hypotheses**

It is hypothesized:

- 1- PMs are pragmatic phenomenon that operates on cognitive implicated level since they establish a socio-cognitive reciprocal relationship which it is intersubjectivity.

2- PMs can be intuitively detected by depending on the linguistic and social context of collapse.

3- The linguistic behavior of PMs reflects different categories and socio-cognitive features in every language.

4-Arabic and English PMs exhibit various similarities and differences but not in a similar way, rather the type of the discourse will specify those differences and similarities.

## **1.4 Procedures of the Study**

1- Presenting a theoretical framework.

2- Taking twitter's blogs as data analysis for English and Arabic.

3- Analyzing extracts from both languages' (blog) following the eclectic model of pragma-discoursal and cognitive-sociolinguistic analysis.

4- The quali-quantitative analysis will lead to conclusions, suggestions and recommendations.

## **1.5 Limits of the Study**

The study is limited to Arabic and English PMs in online selected blogs' discourse of various BBC socio-political news blog and personal blogs for activists, philanthropists and TV fandoms. The present study analyzes 6 extracts with their 30 comment for each language; those electronic blogs are selectively chosen for the analysis.

## **1.6 Value of the Study**

The value of the current study is that it compares similarities and differences between Arabic and English PMs groups using quali-quantitative analysis and accurate

statistics. It also reflects how these modern types of online discourse operate by the aid of these significant pragmatic tools within the interactive environment of social media as a medium which is neither like traditional writing nor speaking but selectively and adaptively exhibit features of both.