

Discourse Markers in Uzbek

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Abstract

This study explores the use of the Uzbek discourse markers *haligi* ‘like,’ *nima* ‘you know’, *shu* ‘well’ and their role in Uzbek discourse. To examine these discourse markers, conversations with individuals from Andijan, a region in southeast Uzbekistan, were recorded and transcribed. A total of eight individuals, four men and four women, participated in this study. The conversations were about food, school, video games, everyday life, and other interesting stories from the lives of participants. The goal of the study was to examine the function of discourse markers among the speakers of the region. The results showed that these discourse markers served many functions, such as marking the new information and placing focus on it, hedging, clarifying the upcoming topic in the discourse, and referring to the topic that was mentioned earlier in the discourse.

Introduction

In this study I would like to explore some of the discourse markers used in Uzbek. Discourse markers, as Muller (2005) points out, “contribute to the pragmatic meaning of utterance and play important role in the pragmatic competence of the speaker” (p. 1). Discourse markers have been studied and labeled in different ways in research. As Fraser (1999) states, they were labeled as discourse markers, operators, discourse connectives, pragmatic connectives, sentence connectives, and cue phrases. In addition to these expressions, they were also named as conversation fillers, “verbal garbage,” Schourup (1985: 94) mentioned in Jean, Tree & Schrock (2002) and labeled as “slova-paraziti” (words-parasite) (Natalievich, 2010) in Russian that does not have any meaning in the sentence and distracts the listener.

Even though there are some articles about these discourse markers in Uzbek or Russian, there is little research published in English about Uzbek discourse markers. Therefore, the primary goal of this study is to analyze some of the most frequently used discourse markers in Uzbek and see if they function in the same way as in other languages. To study these discourse markers, I decided to limit my data sample to focus only on conversations from speakers of certain region, Andijan, because the same regional differences in the use and function of discourse markers.

Discourse Markers

Fraser (1999) defines discourse markers as “a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs and prepositional phrases” (p. 231). He states that they signal a relationship between the two segments where one segment introduces the second one (p.231). The definition of discourse markers depends on many factors, such as whether their grammatical function or pragmatic function is being analyzed in the discourse. As mentioned above, discourse markers are considered to be markers, connectors, particles, and others. Schiffrin (2001) states that expressions such as *like well*, *but*, *oh*, and *y’know* can be observed functioning in many domains such as cognitive, expressive, social, and textual domains. (p.54). Therefore, some studies consider them to be unnecessary elements in the discourse. But by exploring the discourse

markers *like* in English, Underhill (1988) states, “nonstandard *like* is neither random nor mindless.” (p.234) It functions as a marker of new information and focus, where he gives the thorough explanation of the functions of the *like*. There were many similar studies of discourse markers in various languages; however, this was not the case with Uzbek as there was a lack of studies examining of discourse markers in the speech of Uzbek speakers. This study will shed some light on discourse markers in Uzbek.

Uzbek

The Uzbek language, currently the official language of Uzbekistan, belongs to the Qarluq branch of the family of Turkic languages. It has been influenced by Persian, Arabic and Russian. Uzbek is also spoken in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, and Russia. The speech patterns of each region’s speakers differ from each other at some degree phonetically, lexically and syntactically. According to information from the Center for Turkic and Iranian Lexicography and Dialectology (2014, August 2) at Indiana University, Bloomington, Reshetov (1959) places the speakers of Andijan region into the Karluk-Chigil-Uyghur dialect Group retrieved from (<http://www.indiana.edu/~ctild/Uzbek/DialectClassification>), specifically in the Ferghana group.

Participants

In the analyses of the discourse markers in Andijan dialect of Uzbek, eight volunteers, four men and four women have participated. The participants are between 20-40 years old, mainly from the Andijan region, including the city of Andijan and surrounding districts. All of the participants’ first languages are Uzbek spoken in Andijan. Their second language is Russian and the third language is English. All of the participants are educated professionals: three have high school diplomas, two have bachelor’s degrees, and two have and Master’s degrees.

Methodology and Data Analyses

To collect the data, an announcement was sent through Facebook to approximately 100 people. People who showed an interest to participate in the project were selected to have a conversation with each other or with the researcher over the phone or Skype. The conversations were recorded on Soundcloud.com and transcribed. The conversation themes consisted of the topics such as attending an American universities, food, teaching, giving birth, learning, banking, and video games. The purpose of having different topics was to see the frequency of usage of discourse markers in the speech of these participants. The results suggest demonstrate that the frequency of the discourse markers used is related to the topic. The most frequently used discourse marker was *shu*, ‘well’ then *haligi*, ‘you know’ and the last one is *nima* ‘you know.’ However, there might be other factors that contribute to the usage of these discourse markers.

The usage of haligi ‘that’ or ‘like’ in the discourse

The original function of the *haligi* ‘that’ ‘that one’ is to point out something in the sentence. For example, *Haligi odam bizinikiga keldi*, ‘*That person came to our house.*’ But in the discourse of the participant’s speech it functioned differently, as “a marker of new information and focus” as stated by Underhill, (1988) and functioned similar to English ‘*like*.’ (p.238) There are some examples of marking new information with the discourse marker *haligi*. English translations of these conversations might be interpreted slightly differently without the full context. Uzbek texts in these analyses represent only the spoken version of it. Below are three examples of haligi being used to introduce new information in the discourse.

(1)
Mengabo'gan, shunaqa ediki, **haligi** berda Kolumbiyada, har bitta **aligi** Ivy League degan **haligi** sakkizta ta universitet bor. O'shalardi har bittasini spetsializatsiyasi bor. Biznes sohasi bo'yicha, misoli uchun, Wharton Business School ham judayam kuchli. Penselvaniyada... U moliya sohasida judayam kuchli. Harvard management bo'yicha kuchli.

*To me ... happened, it was like that, here **like** in Columbia, each **like** Ivy League schools, there are **like** eight universities exist. Each of them has their own specializations. For example, in business, the Wharton Business School is very strong. It Pennsylvania... It is very strong in the field of finance. Harvard is strong in the filed of management.*

(2)
Yani, Derivatives degani, aaa o'zini anaqasini, qimmatini, **haligi**, it derives its value from something else.
*In other words, derivatives means aaa its that one, value, **like**, it derives its value from something else.*

(3)
U erdan ip chiqqandan keyin, uni **aligi**, material to'qiydigan tsexta junatdim.

*After the yarn was produced, that one, **like**, I sent to the department that weaves a fabric.*

So, in (1) it is used to introduce *Columbia, Ivy League* and *eight universities*, the information that was not previously mentioned in the conversation. The same function can be seen in (2) where the new information, 'the process,' is introduced with **haligi** by telling the listener about the process of derivation. In (3) the speaker is introducing the new topic of the department 'that weaves the fabric.'

In addition to introducing the new information, these discourse markers function as the markers of focused information. Below are two examples where **haligi** marks the focused information.

(4)
A: Uuuuuu zurakanu! Man bopakanda u!
B: Aaaa kein divanlari bor. **Aliyi**, nima alohida xonachalari bor. Aaa yaxshi tomoni aliyi study roomga o'xshagan. O'zizga kirvolib, hech kim xalaqit bermaydi.

*A: Ohhh cool! That's exactly what I like!
B: Aaa then there are couches. It is that **like**, there are separate rooms. Aaa good side is that there are rooms similar to like study rooms. You can enter and nobody bothers you.*

(5)
Misol uchun Agrobank bu faqat paxta, bug'doy bilan ishlaydi. Keyin **aliy**, aaa paxtani puli Agro bankka tushadi. Agro bankda aylanadi.

*For example, Agro bank works only with cotton and wheat. Then **like**, aaa the money paid for cotton goes to Agro bank. It evolves in the Agro bank.*

In example (4) the discourse marker is marking the focused information 'room' in two languages: Uzbek and English: **xona**-Uzbek and study room-English. In example (5) the focus is on *cotton*. The '**paxta**' *cotton* is mentioned in the previous sentence and focused again in the next sentence. So we can see that in above-mentioned examples, speakers either mark the new information or focuses on previously mentioned information by using the discourse marker **haligi**.

The usage of discourse marker nima 'you know,' nima edi (deydi)? What was that?

Hedging

Another discourse marker **nima** 'you know' is frequently used in hedging. Originally, **nima** 'what?' is used in forming a question. For example, *Bu nima (dir)?* 'What is it?' *Nima qilasan?* 'What will you do?' But in discourse they have different functionality roles, such as hedging or softening the information. Often times,

when the person is too shy to say some information directly, they use *nima* a lot in the discourse. It is worth noting that hedging with *nima* occurred more among women speakers, but more data analyses are needed to prove any difference in frequency between male and female speakers. That said, most of the examples provided here come from women's speech.

(6)

Woman teacher is explaining about her participation in the contest.

A: A...

B: Shu 5, 6 IELTSs ga to'g'ri kelar ekan. Shu bo'yicha imtihon qildi. Biz topshirib, xudo hohlasi muvaffaqiyatli o'tiv oldik shundan. Hali aaa... *nima* sertifikatlar berilgan yuq. Shu kamchilik boptiy-u, lekin shularni ichida bormiz xudoga shukur.

A: Hm....

B: *It is 5, 6 according to IELTS's score. They examined us on it. We have taken it and thanks to God we successfully passed it. Still hmm... you know, the certificates haven't been given yet to us. It was the shortcoming, but thanks to God we are among the participants.*

(7)

A: Aha. Aha

B: Uydagilaram qullab-quvvatlab ancha tajribamizni oshirishga harakat qildik. Bilmadik, baribir, *nima* endi kamchiliklar bo'gan bo'sa kerak shu bumadi endi. Yana bitta programmalar borakan Harbert Humferi deb yaqinda keldi. Shuni DDDon o'zi tavsiya qip qoldi.

A: Aaa. Aha

B: *We tried to gain an experience and our family members supported us. We didn't know, anyway, you knooooow there must have been some shortcomings, it didn't work out. There was another program named Hubert Humphery, which we heard. D has recommended it for us himself.*

(8)

A: Ey qomayapsizmi, yana uch oyga?

B: Yooo oshani, *nimaga*, cholimga aytsam, endi ashu etmay turuvdi dedi.

A: *Are you going to stay for three more months?*

B: *Noooo, I told that to you know, my husband. But he refused saying that's not what he was expecting.*

(9)

A: Nega?

B: Endi... esayiz dedim, haliyi. Ichim quruq ketayotganimda. Aligi, qornimdaginiyam *nima* qildim. Bo'shanib ketdiim. Egim kemadi, chunki endi andaqada... Ichiz toza bo'sa yaxshi-da. Kuchanasiz.

A: Why?

B: *Well..., if eat I thought, like. My stomach was empty when I was leaving. Like, the one that was in my stomach, you know, I did that. Emptied it. (She went to the restroom). I didn't want to eat because... well, it is like that... If your stomach is clean it is good. You need to push.*

(10)

Keyin aytdi, *nima* qilamiz... Brinchi dediiiiiii. Hhhhhhhh anaqani matkani ochadigan ukol qilamiz dedi.

Then she said we would you know do... First they said. Hmmm like that... we will give a shot to open up the womb, they said.

These examples demonstrate how *nima* is used for hedging, similar to the discourse marker 'you know' in English. Women feel uncomfortable discussing or saying certain words or information directly in the discourse; therefore, to soften the conversation they use this discourse marker. In examples (6) and (7) the participant is hesitating to criticize that she still didn't get a certificate and the shortcomings that she encountered. In example (8) the woman is shy to say 'my husband', so instead she is using the hedging marker '*nima*' first and then explains what she means. In examples (9) and (10) the woman is kind of embarrassed to talk about her conditions before birth, therefore she is using *nima qildim* 'you know I did that' which means that she went to the bathroom to clean her stomach, but culturally Uzbek women do not talk about this topic explicitly. She is also not saying directly that her womb will be opened, but using the discourse marker *nima qilamiz* 'you know, we

would do that' and pauses slightly in the discourse or hesitates about the formulation of the upcoming information in the speech. So, *nima* 'you know' is used a lot in hedging, and based on the data collected here, is used more frequently by women.

Clarification

In addition to hedging, the question form *nima* 'what' also functions as a clarifying question in the conversation or as an engagement question in the discourse. Speakers are using the question *nima edi (deydi)?* 'What was it?' or 'what is said?' to clarify the topic or to engage the interlocutor for the conversation.

(11)

B: U endi prosesni tushintirib beradigan bo'sam, ko'proq aql bilan ish ko'rilishk kerak. Aligi, bu ko'proq aligi *nima desa bo'ladi?* Aa iqtisodchilarga rosa qo'l keladi bu.

B: Well, if I explained the process, one needs to work wisely. Like, this one like, what was it? (What can I say?) Hmm it is really good for economists.

(12)

A: Ohhh zurku!

B: Mana aligi, *nima deydi?* Sizga xalaqit bermoqchi bo'gan narsayam pul bo'p qola-dida sizga.

A: Ohhh this is great!

B: Here, like, what do we say? The thing that can be an obstacle on your way becomes a profit for you.

(13)

A: Hhhhh, pupovinasini. Kindigini.

B: Hhhhhaaa kesishdi hohlaysami duvdi? Qanday kesaman deudi, kes, kes, davay deb, andaqa, *nima deydi?* Kuchli, bud silnee, deydi-yu.

A: Aha

B: Ina. Qo'rqma, qo'rqma deb, keshdirishdi keyin o'ziga.

A: Hmm, belly button. Belly button.

B: Yeeees they asked if he wanted to cut it. And he asked how he would cut it, they kept telling 'cut, cut...'. Well, what do they say? They say strong, be strong

A: Aha

B: Then, they made him to cut by telling him to be strong.

These examples show that speakers want to clarify the information or the topic or they want to engage their interlocutors. While in many cases *nima* may function as a placeholder when the speaker has difficulties in finding the right word, it also play the role of clarification and engagement of the interlocutor. In all three examples above the speaker is asking herself, trying to clarify the information to make sure that the interlocutor has understood the conversation and engaging the other speaker in the conversation.

The usage of shu 'well' in the discourse

In general *shu* 'this' is a pronoun that points at something or someone. For example, *shu bola meni urdi* is translated as 'This child hit me.' In spoken discourse it plays other roles, such as sharing information, introducing, explaining, or clarifying. It is translated into English as 'well.' The examples below demonstrate their role in shared information.

(14)

B: Voy kim bilsin, zo'r bolardi. Biz bilmapmizda bunaqa... Bugun Dbek aytib qoldi-da, *shu* Sharifa opamiz bilan gaplashinglar opa deb, shunaqa devdi. Voy jon deymiz, qaniydi ertaroq anayqa qimagan ekan bilmapmiz bizam.

Oh, who knew, it would have been great. We didn't know... Today Dbek told us that, well, you needed to talk to Sharifa sister. Oh, we would be happy to talk her, but we didn't know about it.

(15)

A bo'sh vaqtim hozir... a **shu**, D aka bilan o'qiymiz. Keyin boshqa vaqtlarda debat kurslari bor... Debat kurslariga borardim oldin.

Hm my free time now... well, we study with brother D. Then in other times, there are debate courses... I used to go to debate courses.

In (14) and (15) **shu** is taking the same function as English well in the discourse. Fraser (1999) referring to Labov and Fanshel (1977:156) points out that “well” refers to some topic that was shared among the participants of the speech. In all these examples the ‘well’ refers to a topic that is shared among the participants. For instance, in (14) *Bugun Dbek aytib qoldi-da, shu Sharifa opamiz bilan gaplashinglar opa deb, shunaqa devdi.* ‘Today Dbek told us that, well, you needed to talk to Sharifa sister discourse marker **well** is referring to the person that is familiar to both speakers that is *Sharifa sister*.

Discussion

Discourse markers at the functional level can work on numerous linguistic levels at the same time points out Jucker and Ziv, 1998, therefore, they can be counted in many other ways. Sometimes they can function in its original role and sometimes they can mark particular information in the discourse. The discourse markers **haligi** ‘like,’ **nima** ‘you know’, **shu** ‘well’ may operate in different ways. In analyzing the discourse markers the focus of the study is important. How these discourse markers are being analyzed and what is being paid attention to. In these analyzes, I tried to briefly look at their functions in the discourse, but they all need more deeper analyses of its own. These analyses were made on the bases of only one regional speaker’s utterances. The overall educational level of the speakers, their language contact with Russian, English and with other dialects may have had an influence in their speech in Uzbek. Therefore, other factors should be examined too.

Conclusion

This study briefly examined the discourse markers in the speech of individuals from the southeastern part of Uzbekistan. In addition to their direct functions, these pronouns functioned in different ways in the discourse. Discourse marker **haligi** ‘like,’ operated as a marker of new information and focus. The discourse marker **nima** ‘you know’, functioned as hedging and clarification. And the most used discourse marker, **shu** ‘well’ functioned as a marker of the information that was already mentioned in the discourse. These discourse markers may be used in other roles, but more data needs to be analyzed in the future.

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