



### **Editorial**

## **INTERACTIONAL MARKERS IN TURKISH: A CORPUS-BASED PERSPECTIVE**

### **Türkçede Etkileşim Belirleyicilerine Derlem Tabanlı Bir Bakış**

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Spoken discourse is characterized by a multitude of verbal and non-verbal elements that participants to an interaction employ in the co-construction of meaning/action and in indicating their uptake of utterances: turn-taking practices, backchannels, pragmatic markers, and gesture, to name a few (Caffi & Janney, 1994; Norrick, 2012a). Such elements function not only in conversational management per se but also in the management of social relations (see, e.g., Norrick, 2012b on backchannels). While the last two decades have witnessed an explosion of studies in pragmatics and conversation analysis especially on the function of pragmatic markers (e.g. Aijmer 2002) in international scholarship, studies on the pragmatics of spoken Turkish have yet to witness such a burgeoning of a research program with wide scope over these entities and phenomena. This is not to deny the significant contributions of a number of studies on particular

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pragmatic markers (e.g. Büyükkantarçioğlu, 2006; Çubukçu, 2005; Özbek, 2000; Yılmaz 2004).

As a first step toward enlarging the scope of such studies, a workshop on interactional markers (IM) in spoken Turkish discourse was held at the 16th International Turkish Linguistics Conference on September 19, 2012 at METU. The articles in this issue are extended versions of papers presented at the workshop.<sup>2</sup> As a joint venture, the collection casts a net over a number of high- and low-frequency IMs in the demo version (STC; Ruhi et al., 2010a) and a selection of the publishable version of the Spoken Turkish Corpus (STC; Ruhi et al., 2012), with the aim of bringing to light certain markers that have escaped scholarly scrutiny and certain markers that have frequently been the object of study in previous research. The collection intends to highlight the contribution of a corpus-based perspective to analyzing spoken Turkish and to explore the affective dimension of a number of markers especially in regard to relational management in the tradition of (im)politeness theories (see Brown & Levinson, 1987; Culpeper, 2011). By employing data from a general corpus, the articles explore the pragmatic functions of a number of IMs in a relatively wide range of domains and genres despite the arguably limited size of the corpus. In this respect, while the studies may lose with respect to the usual quantitative depth that characterizes traditional corpus linguistic research, they gain from breadth of discourse domains.

A few words on the use of the term ‘interactional marker’ are due here. An abundance of terms exists in pragmatics for those so-called ‘little words’ which move a conversation forward, which organize sequential contributions and function to achieve coherence and which display epistemic and affective stances (Fraser, 1996; Norrick, 2012a; Schiffrin, 1987). These linguistic entities have been variously referred to as ‘discourse markers’, ‘pragmatic markers’, ‘discourse particles’ or pragmatic particles. Amongst these ‘discourse markers/particles’ lean

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more toward their origin in text linguistic approaches, where the term indicates devices that have discourse organizational and coherence functions (see Schiffrin, 1987). Use of the terms ‘pragmatic markers/particles’ suggests a reliance on an understanding of pragmatics solely as the study of utterance interpretation (see Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2006). The four terms however have clear indexical functions in discourse –discourse, understood here as social action. The workshop title therefore picked up on the term ‘interactional markers’ used by Roulet, who emphasizes the “influence of social interaction on linguistic structures” and who argues that besides linguistics entities that indicate epistemic and evaluative stances, illocutionary force and suasive intentions, there are those that concern the maintenance of face and “attenuation” of imposition (1980: 224-226), that is, approval of self’s public image (positive face) and protection of hearer from imposition (negative face), respectively (Brown and Levinson, 1987).<sup>3</sup>

Roulet follows in Brown and Levinson’s footsteps in describing a variety of syntactic structures and lexical units as strategies to maintain face. His understanding of interactional markers thus includes both a larger and a more restricted variety of entities than envisaged by terms such as discourse or pragmatic markers. The class is larger because relatively formulaic entities and syntactic structures (e.g. please, I wonder if, etc.) are considered to fall under IMs, but it is smaller because acknowledgment tokens are not considered in the category even though recent research shows that they are significant markers that index relational management (Norrick, 2012b).

We therefore extend the notion of an interactional markers to encompass: (1) pragmatics markers, that is, “words or phrases [...] which signal the potential communicative force of an utterance” (Norrick, 2012a: 262); (2) (non-)lexical devices such laughter and

<sup>3</sup> In her study on *yani*, *şey*, *işte* and *ya*, Özbek (2000) uses the term ‘interactional markers’ in the title of the paper, but refers to the linguistic entities as ‘discourse markers’ in the analysis.

backchannels, which indicate affective and “cognitive states” (Norrick, 2012b: 243) and which may function as tokens of (non-) acknowledgment; and (3) gestures and other non-verbal conversational management strategies such as prosodic features which may index a variety of social meanings. In this extension we follow Schiffrin’s (1987) suggestion that paralinguistic features and gestures may also function as discourse markers, but to avoid confusion with the traditional usage of the term, we have opted to refer to these verbal and non-verbal entities as IMs. In the following the nature of the data used from STC in the articles are described and major findings are briefly presented.

The STC Demo version consists of 23 communications corresponding to 2,4 hrs. of interaction, and 18,357 tokens of 5601 word types. The STC publishable files data correspond to 10.1 hours of recordings and 71 transcriptions, with recording durations ranging from a few seconds to over an hour. In nearly all the recordings the consent of the speakers were obtained prior to recording, with a few solicited after the interaction. The publishable data comprise 73026 tokens of words and 15429 types. Like STC Demo, the publishable data also incorporate conversations in a variety of domains (e.g. family and friends), service encounter interactions, educational discourse, and radio programs. In addition, it includes conversations at the workplace, brief encounters between strangers, and televised broadcasts.

STC is a multi-modal general corpus, which employs EXMARaLDA software suite (Schmidt & Wörner, 2009) and a web-based, open source corpus management interface (STC-CMS) developed by M. G. C. Acar and K. Eryılmaz (see Acar & Eryılmaz, 2010). Transcriptions in STC are orthographic and based on an adaption of the HIAT (Rehbein et al., 2004) transcription conventions (see Ruhi et al., 2010b). Talk in STC is time-aligned with media files and represented in partitur format (see Fig. 1). In STC files each speaker is assigned a verbal (v) and an annotation (c) tier, the latter of which indicates stylistic (e.g. informal pronunciation of future tense markers) and



of smooth topic shift. The next two studies focus on IMs that have hitherto not been investigated in face-to-face interaction in Turkish. B. Bal Gezeğin's study on saying 'no' in Turkish, entitled "How Do We Say no in Turkish?: A Corpus-Based Analysis of *hayır* and *cık* in Turkish", carries out a qualitative, comparative investigation on *hayır* and *cık* with respect to communicative style. The author also observes that besides its function as a discourse connective, *hayır* also performs metalinguistic negation. In her study, "Laughter as an Interactional Phenomenon in Turkish: Evidence from STC", B. Başaran examines the contribution of laughter to the management of face, and describes its occurrence as a positive and a negative politeness device. Through these studies, we hope to show the advantages of studying interaction through audio-supported, annotated data and draw attention to the possibility of the existence of other interactional markers that have not been examined in Turkish discourse (see also Ruhi, 2011).

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