Review[1]

Péter B. Furkó: *Discourse Markers and Beyond: Descriptive and Critical Perspectives on Discourse-Pragmatic Devices across Genres and Languages* (2020, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. xviii + 285).

1. General overview and scientific merit

Discourse markers, while abundant in interactive talk, constitute nevertheless a notorious bunch of lexical items, for a number of reasons: a) terminology: there is no consensus on what they should be called – i.e., there are a number of competing labels in the linguistic literature (following Bálint Péter Furkó, I will use the term *discourse marker* [DM] in the present assessment); b) categorization: the boundaries of the category are rather fuzzy and overlap with the boundaries of other, similar categories, such as pragmatic markers, connectives, etc.; and c) criteria for category inclusion: there is also a lack of consensus concerning the criteria for category inclusion, which can range across a number of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects. While these three issues are more theoretical in nature, there is a fundamental methodological problem as well: there are also a number of alternative approaches to identifying DMs, depending on the adopted theoretical framework (e.g., Interactional Sociolinguistics or Relevance Theory) and/or the study method (quantitative or qualitative).

Bálint Péter Furkó's monograph is concerned primarily with the methodological challenge – how a combined, i.e., quantitative and qualitative method can be effectively applied to the analysis of DMs, especially with respect to a number of problem areas, such as multifunctionality, stigmatization and translation. Following a brief introduction to the main theoretical and methodological challenges to DMs, Chapter 1 explores the possibility of how an automated tagging software (specifically the UCREL Semantic Analysis System) is able to identify oral DMs, which sets the scene for the empirical approach that is applied to the identification and analysis of DMs in a range of genres and languages – as laid out in the ensuing chapters (case studies), which form the backbone of the book (Chapters 2 to 9).

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 constitute the first part of the volume, focusing mostly (though not exclusively – see SD and NC subcorpora in Chapter 2) on political discourse, in the form of confrontational interviews and parliamentary speeches, with the main objective to investigate DMs across genres (as the title of the first part of the volume indicates: "Discourse Markers Across Genres"). The bulkier second part of the volume, encompassing Chapters 5 to 9, foregrounds DMs across languages (as indicated by the title of the second part of the volume: "Discourse Markers Across Languages"), and scrutinizes cross-linguistic and applied linguistic aspects, such as the sources of difficulties in acquiring DMs in a second language (Chapter 5), translating DMs (Chapter 6), representing DMs in scripted dialogues (Chapter 7), DMs as authentication strategies in *The Hobbit* (Chapter 8), and the function of DMs in Bible translations (Chapter 9). The case studies are followed by a short Concluding Remarks (approx. 2.5 pages in length).

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[1] Since the monograph under assessment is in English, for reasons of consistency the present review is also written in English.

Most of the research presented in the volume has already appeared in *some* form as separate publications by the Author (this is acknowledged by Bálint Péter Furkó himself on p. 28: "In the individual chapters, I use my previous research as a starting point"). However, the present volume not only brings together these originally separate investigations, but complements them with new datasets and takes a fresh look on the ensuing results. The main results of this undertaking are spelled out on p. 247: "automatized annotation methods can open new vistas of research into the study of discourse markers"; "only a mixed methodology that involves automation as well as careful qualitative analysis of individual examples needs to be undertaken when analysing genres/sub-genres … or when reflecting critically on discourse"; and "with a view to increasing the plausibility of the findings, discourse markers should not be studied in isolation but with reference to other discourse-pragmatic devices".

Bálint Péter Furkó manages to accomplish – and with elegant ease for that matter – a much-needed combined approach of quantitative and qualitative research methods in the identification and analysis of a notorious set of linguistic items, i.e., DMs, across a wide range of case studies encompassing multiple languages, varieties and genres. Thanks to the straightforward argumentation of the chapters, the focused research questions, the meticulousness of the individual case studies and the impeccable English throughout, the book can by all means serve as an invaluable resource guide for conducting similar studies for researchers working in pragmatics and its related fields, such as variational pragmatics or second language pragmatics – no wonder that the book has been published in the *Postdisciplinary Studies in Discourse* book series by Palgrave Macmillan. **These features make the book a veritable scientific contribution to the field of DM research, and I recommend it for public defence.**

2. Results

Bálint Péter Furkó lists three main theses as novel scientific results (Tézisgyűjtemény, p. 8), which can be summed up as follows:

i. Automatized annotation methods open up new vistas in DM research ("Az automatizált annotációs módszerek új távlatokat nyitnak meg a diskurzusjelölők kutatásában…");

ii. Verifiable results can only be attained via a mixed methodology, through the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, involving both automated annotation and the human element ("Validálható és reprodukálható eredményeket kizárólag komplex módszertan alkalmazása révén lehetséges bemutatni, a vizsgált jelenségekre […] szabott, alacsony granuláltságú annotációs séma használatával, a kvantitatív és kvalitatív módszertan, valamint a humán ás automatizált annotáció ötvözésével"); and

iii. DMs should not be studied in isolation, but with reference to other discourse-pragmatic devices ("A diskurzusjelölőket nem célszerű elszigetelt nyelvi jelenségként kezelni, hanem egyéb diskurzuspragmatikai elemekkel […], (manipulatív) társas gyakorlatokkal és azok diszkurzív stratégiákban való megvalósulásaival szükséges kapcsolatba hozni").

While all three theses are formulated on a quite general level, they follow from the scientific achievements of the volume, and for this reason I accept all of them. However, formulation of the novel scientific findings on a more specific level – pertaining to each of the findings of the chapters themselves (which would also have entailed a larger number of theses) – would have given a more accurate account of the novel scientific accomplishments of Bálint Péter Furkó's research, because there is plenty, even if not spelled out in individual statements.

Therefore, I do have some remarks about the formulation of Thesis #2 and Thesis #3, with the disclaimer that these remarks do not cancel their acceptability as novel scientific achievements (see above). Thesis #2 places heavy emphasis on the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in the study of DMs. The problem here is that there has been an ongoing discussion about the necessity of quantitative methods to the study of DMs for a number of years – it was already considered "unthinkable" (Foolen, 2011, p. 221) in the 2010s to analyse DMs based on intuition alone. As Foolen elaborates: "The minimal methodological requirement in present-day research is that an analysis of a PM [pragmatic marker] in a specific language is based on a substantial set of 'real' uses of the marker […] Better still is the exhaustive analysis of a corpus, in which all occurrences of a PM are accounted for. Modern corpora make possible a further step, as they are constructed on the basis of sociolinguistic and stylistic variables. Such corpora invite PM studies from a variational and quantitative perspective." In light of these expectations, and not surprisingly, there are a number of studies on DMs that adopt a mixed methodology approach, such as Kern (2014), Martín-Laguna and Alcón-Soler (2018), Mihaljević Djigunović and Vickov (2010), Regan (2016) or Yang (2014) – just to cite a few.

If the novelty is specifically the utilisation of an automated annotation method combined with a qualitative analysis, then I can fully accept the novelty of the thesis, though with the disclaimer that the book did not offer a comparison of the effectiveness of this particular approach to other possible alternative methods (i.e., we do not have ample information to accept the full validity of this claim). Note that there is a plethora of approaches – both quantitative and qualitative – to the study of DMs, as exemplified in the special issue of the journal *World Englishes* on "Discourse Markers and World Englishes" (2021, vol. 40[4]), and the mixed methodology applied by the Author in the present volume is but one possibility out of a number of others.

Thesis #3 – the idea that DMs should not be studied in isolation – is justified by the data, but cannot be considered a novel scientific achievement, if stated in this current format. To cite Foolen (2011, p. 221) yet again, "The minimal methodological requirement in present-day research is that an analysis of a PM [pragmatic marker] in a specific language is based on a substantial set of 'real' uses of the marker, *whereby not only isolated utterances but also their context is taken into consideration*" (emphasis added, RB). Thus, a more nuanced formulation of the thesis – with specific reference to *why* (as based on the empirical evidence provided in the volume) is it necessary to study DMs in reference to other discourse-pragmatic markers, etc. – would have better captured the original, scientific merit of the volume.

3. Limitations

The volume is based upon two larger sections: one looking at DMs across genres, and one analyzing DMs across languages. Needless to say, the separation is not clear-cut: there are non-English data in the "genre" section (specifically Hungarian), and there is an abundance of different genres in the "languages" section (literary work, textbook, scripted discourse, Bible translations), ensuring a very rich and diverse collection of data for the Author to build on. The Concluding Remarks, however, does not offer much with respect to how the adopted methodology can add to DM research "across genres" and "across languages", apart from very general observations that can be applied for the whole book (see the main theses in section 2 above). What is missing overall is the take-home message / conclusions / limitations, etc. for DM research a) "across genres"; and b) "across languages". Without giving an account of these conclusions, the separation of the volume into the above two sections seems unnecessary and to some degree even ad hoc.

4. Questions

Bálint Péter Furkó introduces the volume by giving an account of the theoretical and methodological challenges of DM research. One such challenge is the fuzziness of the category itself, which the Author also alludes to explicitly in a number of places (e.g., p. 13: "fuzziness of the category of discourse markers"), which do suggest a prototype-based account (see also Aijmer, 2015). Given that "any categorical definition is only useful insofar as it is endorsed by an empirical model of identification and annotation" (Crible, 2017, p. 99; cited by the Author on p. 15), how do the present empirical investigations add to the definition and/or categorization of DMs? Based on the empirical results, which criteria are more central and which are more peripheral for category inclusion?

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