

## THE MANAGEMENT OF FLOW AND STRUCTURE IN DISCOURSE

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Discourse analysis is the analysis of the language in use. It views language in a social context and studies the use of it above the sentence level. Discourse marker is a feature of discourse analysis, which adds coherence to the text. The most significant quality of discourse markers is that they do not always perform a single function. A writer may use a marker by placing it in a different context to serve other functions. They enhance the coherence in the written or spoken form. They help in removing the ambiguities of discourse thus making the interaction clearer. The selection of the appropriate discourse marker is a matter of great significance for the production of a discourse. The present study attempts an analysis of the discourse marker 'well' in the dialogic exchanges of Mahesh Dattani's play bravely Fought the Queen. The play has many instances of discourse markers. The present analysis is restricted to the use of 'well' by different characters in some instances in Act-1 of the play.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Discourse Analysis: Discourse Markers: Coherence: Function*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is generally understood to be the analysis of the language in use. It has been derived from a Latin term 'discursus' meaning 'running to and fro'. In linguistics, 'discourse' implies a type of language used in a specific context or subject or a unit or stretch of language, and particularly spoken language, which is longer than a clause or a sentence. Stubbs (1983:1) observes that discourse analysis consists of "attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language in use in social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers".

Discourse analysis is a vast area. The vastness and ambiguity of discourse analysis is also suggested by text books on different approaches to languages, such as pragmatics, which defines this field as the study of the general condition of the communicative use of language.

#### **There are Following Assumptions of Discourse Analysis-**

Language always occurs in context

Language is context sensitive

Language is always communicative

Language is designed for communication.

(Schiffrin, 1987)

### **Discourse Coherence and Cohesion**

Coherence in discourse is developed in many ways. If we use our knowledge of scripts, speech events and maintain the topic, the result is usually a coherent text- text that-"sticks together" as a unit. However, sometimes the connections we want to draw between various parts of the discourse are not very apparent. Cohesive ties and discourse markers help to make relation among sentences or clauses of the discourse more explicit.

Coherence is achieved in a text or conversation as a result of interaction between the receiver and the text. Cohesive devices are neither regarded necessary nor sufficient to regard a text as coherent. Coherent texts have cohesive devices but it does not imply that coherence is achieved only with the help of cohesive devices. A text is regarded coherent if the reader is able to comprehend the meaning of the utterances with the help of context.

Cohesion on the other hand as defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976) is a textual property that binds a text together. Apart from being present in monologue, it can also be seen in dialogue. To locate conversational cohesion is to examine dialogue pairs whose propositional completion depends on contributions from both speaker and hearer. For example in questions/answers pairs, in asking a question, a speaker presents a proposition which is incomplete either as to polarity (a yes-no question) or as to 'who' 'what', 'where', 'why', 'when' or 'how' (or 'wh' question). Completion of the proposition is up to the recipient of the question who either fixes the polarity or fills in the 'wh' information.

Some studies of cohesion indicate that the meaning conveyed by a text is meaning which is interpreted by speakers and a hearer based on their inferences about the propositional connection underlying what is said.

### **Discourse Markers**

Some important discourse markers are 'oh', 'well', 'and', 'but', 'or', 'so', 'because', 'how', 'then', 'you know', and 'mean'. They mainly enhance the coherence in the written or spoken form. They help in removing the ambiguities of discourse thus making the interaction clearer. They at times are multifunctional, performing different functions in different contexts.

Holker (1991, cited in Jucker and Ziv 1996) gives four basic features that characterize discourse markers.

- They do not affect the truth conditions of an utterance.
- They do not add anything to the propositional context of an utterance.
- They are related to the speech situation and not to the situation talked about.
- They have an emotive, expressive function rather than a referential, denotative or cognitive function.

Brinton (1996, cited in Jucker and ziv 1996) has also talked about the features of discourse markers. Discourse markers are sort and phonologically reduced and form a separate tone group. They occur outside the syntactic structure or they are only loosely attached to it.

The present study attempts an analysis of the discourse marker 'well' in the dialogic exchanges of Mahesh

Dattani's play *Bravely Fought the Queen*. The play has many instances of discourse markers. The present analysis is restricted to the use of 'well' by different characters in Act-1 of the play. The play identifies various functions it in different contexts and highlights their role in the overall interpretations of the dramatic image of the play. There are three dramatic characters present- Dolly, Alka and Lalitha.

#### Exchange-1

**Lalitha**-(Sits down). Well, I'm glad you're at home, considering...

**Dolly**-(Turns off the stereo). Well, I'm not going to be home very long.

**Lalitha**-I was told you would be here – of course, you're here but

#### Description

Lalitha comes to meet Dolly, who is getting ready to go somewhere and is therefore puzzled to see her.

#### Specific Contextual Function

'Well' is used to start a new conversation.

'Well' is used to show disagreement.

(Act - 1 P -4)

#### Exchange-2

**Lalitha**-Did Mr. Trivedi at least tell you why we were meeting?

**Dolly**-Engaged. (Dials again) Hmm? To be frank with you, I had even forgotten all about it.

**Lalitha**-We are supposed to discuss the masked ball.

**Dolly**-Engaged. (Hangs up) Oh, well your husband will find out.

#### Descriptions

Lalitha tells Dolly about the masked ball, the purpose of her visit. Dolly does not seem to understand what she says. She then decides to call her husband and sort out the confusion.

#### Specific Contextual Function

'Well' helps in conveying a kind of solution to the problem.

(Act -1 P-6)

#### Exchange-3

**Lalitha**-Oh, sorry Here's the list of invitees. Mr. Trivedi said you know most of the tabler's wives. (Hands over the list to Dolly) You are supposed to suggest costumes for all of them.

**Dolly**-Why me?

**Lalitha**–Well, he did say you had some experience in tailoring. (Pause) I guess it’s nice to know a bit of this and that.

**Dolly**–(Gives Lalitha the list quietly). Take this. I am not in a mood to discuss this.

#### **Description**

Lalitha explains Dolly what the Revatee project is all about and tells her the whole concept of the masked ball and how she intends to go about doing it. She asks Dolly to finalize the costumes for the invitees.

#### **Specific Contextual Function**

‘Well’ helps in explaining something that has been said earlier.

(Act - 1 P -8)

#### **Exchange-4**

**Lalitha**–I’m sorry. I – I didn’t mean to startle you!

**Alka**–Oh no, no. It’s okay!

**Lalitha**–I didn’t know you were...

**Alka**–(Speaking over Lalitha) It’s okay! I guess I was slightly... Well, I usually like to open our back door and take in some cool air... It’s just that I was dreaming a bit when you came and Well... I admit you startle me! (Laughs in an embarrassed manner)

**Lalitha**–I thought you were your sister. I mean I came looking for your sister, but it was –you! (Also laughed in an embarrassed manner)

#### **Description**

Lalitha comes out of Baa’s room and moves slightly towards the kitchen. She exits to the kitchen. After a while Alka enters, looking flustered, followed by a bewildered Lalitha muttering an apology.

#### **Specific Contextual Function**

‘Well’ helps to explain something that has been said earlier.

(Act -1 P-13)

#### **Exchange-5**

**Alka**–Where’s Dolly?

**Lalitha**–She’s probably still getting dressed.

**Alka**–Dressed?

**Lalitha**–To go out, I think.

**Alka**–What do you mean?

**Lalitha**–Well, she thinks she is going out with you all, I think. But my husband... Oh, it's all a big muddle!

**Description**

Lalitha was still puzzled as to why Dolly was getting dressed for the party for she had been told by her husband to discuss the masked ball with her. In the meantime Alka comes and the two start talking.

**Specific Contextual Function**

'Well' helps in showing disappointment.

(Act - 1 P- 14)

**Exchange-6**

**Dolly**–(To Lalitha) Is your husband coming to pick you up?

**Lalitha**–Well yes.

**Dolly**–Good. Did he say anything else? Whether they are coming?

Lalitha looks uncomfortably at Alka. Alka shakes her head.

(Turns around) Did he?

**Lalitha**–Well, no.

**Description**

Dolly joins Alka and Lalitha in the conversation. She still expects to go out with her husband. She is dressed up, realizing little that the plan for the evening has been cancelled. Alka tells Lalitha not to reveal this to Dolly.

**Specific Contextual Function**

'Well' is used here to show a partial agreement with the views of Dolly.

(Act - 1 P -19)

**Exchange-7**

**Dolly**–(On the phone) Hello Sridhar? (Looks at Lalitha) Yes, she is right here... No, we haven't finished with the ball. We haven't started, in fact. Could I speak to my husband? He's what...? Well, wake him up! (To Lalitha) He's sleeping. May be he isn't feeling well.

**Lalitha**–Oh, dear.

**Description**

Dolly now comes to realize that she isn't going anywhere in the evening. She is very sad to know this. She then calls up her husband to confirm it.

**Specific Contextual Function**

'Well' helps in showing disappointment.

(Act - 1 P-23)

**Exchange-8**

**Lalitha**—Oh, dear.

**Dolly**— (On the phone) Hahn Jiten? Why aren't we going? No, I swear you didn't tell me! Well, I might have been around when you spoke to them on the phone... okay, I was around. But I didn't gather they were calling it off... sorry, right – you were calling it off... No, I don't recall. (Sighs) What difference does it makes whether I do it or not? The fact is you didn't tell me directly... Look never mind the Kapoors. Let us go out somewhere to that new restaurant. We could all go. We will invite Lalitha and Sridhar as well. (To Lalitha) Wouldn't you like to go?

**Description**

Dolly calls up her husband to know why they were not going out in the evening. She tries to convince Jiten to take her out in the evening.

**Specific Contextual Function**

'Well' has been used here to show partial agreement with the views of Jiten.

(Act -1 P-23)

**Exchange-9**

**Dolly**—Oh, you were drinking rum?

**Lalitha**—I have an occasional one. It sort of loosens my tongue.

**Dolly** – (Taking the empty glasses to the bar) It seems to have worked, I notice. Do you want another one?

**Lalitha**—I hadn't asked for a drink. She sort of...(Makes the motion of glasses being exchanged) Well, never mind. Let's get on with the ball.

**Description**

Lalitha while discussing the ball goes on to talk about her bonsai plants. She is then reminded by Dolly that they were supposed to discuss the ball and not bonsai.

**Specific Contextual Function:**

'Well' helps in ending the current topic of conversation and resuming the earlier one.

(Act – 1 P- 26)

**Exchange-10**

**Dolly**—(quietly). He did that for your own good. You would never have been... accepted ...anywhere else. You should appreciate that. (Pause) For three months I was in agony after your husband threw you out. Praful came twice

begging and pleading with Nitin to take you back. And I had to beg and plead with Jiten to ask his brother to do so. Poor Praful. I know you must have felt humiliated as well, but I can't help feeling that you... Well...

**Alka**—Deserved it.

#### **Description**

Dolly and Alka get engaged in an argument. Their brother Praful was in town but did not come to visit them. Then there are some instances of the past which are brought forth in their dialogues.

#### **Specific Contextual Function**

'Well' helps in prevention of saying something which is bitter to hear. It functions as a blank which neither closes the topic entirely nor states anything clearly.

(Act -1 P- 31)

#### **Exchange-11**

**Alka**—All right. We can talk about Daksha.

**Lalitha**—(Obviously interested). Daksha?

**Alka**—Her daughter. Didn't you know?

**Lalitha**—Well, she had mentioned her.

#### **Description**

Dolly and Lalitha are engaged in a conversation when Alka enters. Alka is surprised to know that they were discussing about Kanhaiya, she then enquires if Dolly had told her (Lalitha) anything about Daksha.

#### **Specific Contextual Function**

'Well' is used to recapitulate information which had been stated earlier.

(Act - 1 P- 34)

#### **The Analysis of 'Well' in Dramatic Exchanges Reveals that it Performs Multiple Functions such as:**

- To start a new conversation.
- To show disagreement.
- As a conclusion.
- As a marker used to reintroduce something.
- To explain something.
- To show disappointment.
- To resume an earlier conversation.

- To show partial agreement with the views of the hearer.
- In ending a current topic of discussion and resuming the earlier one.
- As a blank, not stating things clearly.
- To recapitulate information stated earlier.

To conclude, we can say that discourse markers besides enhancing the coherence of a text, can assume different functions in different contexts. They at times have a multiple role to play in a text. Its correct use helps in removing the ambiguities of discourse thus making the interaction in the play easy and clear. They can take up different meanings and can contribute towards the overall meaning of the text. The correct selection of the appropriate discourse marker can have a great significance in the production of discourse.

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