ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Discourse Markers in Oral Personal Narratives of the Jizani Dialect of Arabic

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PAGES: 98

By investigating discourse markers within the narrative genre of personal experience, research shows that these lexical items are not arbitrarily used; rather, they are employed to achieve context-specific and genre-specific functions related particularly to oral narratives. Moreover, these functions are sometimes different from those of the discourse markers employed and attested in other discourse contexts. Interestingly, some discourse markers are seen to have a considerable frequency of occurrence and variation in oral narratives that is lacking in other discourse settings; additionally, their semantic and pragmatic functions and their frequency of occurrence are varied across the elements of narrative structure proposed by Labov and Waltzky (1967; 1997) and Labov (1972).

Using data collected from four natural audio recorded narratives and utilizing both approaches of quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the present study investigates the linguistic behavior of two Arabic discourse markers employed in narratives of personal experience in the Jizani dialect of Arabic. This study specifically investigates the discourse markers fa ‘so’ and yani ‘it means’. The study takes the discourse coherence framework as a point of departure for its analysis. The analysis was based on two components of discourse coherence relations: local coherence relations and global coherence relations. It appears that
these two discourse markers can strengthen coherence relations contributing to the local and
global coherence relations in oral narratives of personal experience. These linguistic devices are
seen to play various semantic and pragmatic functions at different levels of a narrative structure.
The study is also designed to investigate the frequency of occurrence of these two discourse
markers with respect to the structural elements of narratives of personal experience: abstract,
orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. It also examines the semantic/
pragmatic functions of the discourse markers fa ‘so’ and yani ‘it means’ with respect to the
structural elements of narratives of personal experience. In addition, the study takes one more
step by detecting the syntactic positions of fa ‘so’ and yani ‘it means’ and report any interesting
behavior with respect to their functions.

This study ultimately aims at contributing new views to the literature of discourse
markers, in general; moreover, findings of the current study add substantial knowledge to the
existing literature of Arabic discourse markers, particularly in the narrative genre of personal
experience. The study also elaborates on a narrative genre that is generally overlooked by Arabic
scholars interested in oral arts, narratives of personal experience.