

Forms And Functions Relationships: Use Of Discourse Markers In Kabras Conversations

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Abstract

Spontaneously spoken natural Kabras discourse contains many instances of redundant interjections and backchannel utterances. These expressions otherwise referred to as discourse markers (henceforth DMs) have not received much attention and few systematic analyses have been made.

Items typically featured in this study include for English conversational particles such as *well* and *oh*, parenthetical lexicalised clauses such as *you know* and *i mean* and a variety of connective elements in speech and writing including *so*, *after all* and *moreover*. These expressions thought not to affect the propositional content of the utterances in which they occur.

On the basis of the analysis of spoken Kabras discourse, it's noted that utterances such as **sasa** (*now*), **yaani** (*i mean*), **nee koo** (*and*) and **lolakho** (*see*) display characteristics of DMs. The corpus of this data consists of conversations conducted in Kabras a dialect of luhya, a language spoken on the western shores of Lake Victoria in Kenya. The corpus further shows that the expressions play a role in showing topic markers in conversations, being building blocks in utterance relations and also as polite markers.

It is widely seen that DMs are spurious expressions and so taken as manifestation of the irregularity and non systematic nature of spoken language, this study however demonstrates the importance of DMs in conversations. The principal issues in this paper are the forms and functions of DMs in conversations in Kabras with reference to frameworks in which DMs and other closely related items have been studied.

Key words: *discourse markers, form function relations, kabras dialect, conversations*

Introduction

This is a pragmatic and linguistic research dealing with a functionally related group of expressions often referred to as DMs but also known by a variety of other names such as discourse particles and discourse operators. Since the 1970s, interest in DMs has increased commensurately with growing interest in the production and comprehension of extended discourse and more generally in pragmatic and contextual aspects of utterance interpretation. This broadening of interest has drawn increased attention to those elements of linguistic structure that appear to be most directly involved in the relation of separate utterances.

Within this new perspective many elements sidelined in sentence based linguistic research have been brought to limelight including expressions such as *well* and *you know* in English which had previously been regarded as items unworthy of close attention. The research on DMs and similar phenomena has continually expanded throughout the 1980s.

Surprisingly for an area in which interest has so widely grown there is no agreement regarding definition and classification. The disagreements have quickened in the recent past as DMs have increasingly come to be seen not only as underexplored facet of language behaviour but as a testing ground for hypotheses concerning the boundary between pragmatics and semantics and those theories of discourse structure and utterance interpretation.

Background

Defining discourse markers

Numerous studies have attempted to specify the meaning or function of DMs in various languages (Goldberg, 1980: Carlson, 1984: Schoroup, 1996) and several other attempts have been made to characterise DMs in a more general way (Schiffrin, 1987: Fraser, 1990) Despite the quantity of research in this area, however, no consensus has emerged regarding fundamental issues of terminology.

No precise definitions of DMs are present, however it is generally acceptable that their role is to signal how one proposition should be interpreted given the other in the discourse (Millis et al, 1995) Most researchers in this field also agree that the relation between these propositions may exist regardless of whether a DM is present or not. (Scott and Desouza, 1990: Knott, 1995) A DM therefore is simply an explicit signal of a specific relation between two or more propositions.

Since terminology presents a difficulty, it is possible to identify a small set of characteristics on which all items described as DMs can draw selectively and with limited variations.

Characteristics of discourse markers

a) Connectivity

According to Fraser (1996) a DM is “an expression which signals the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse”. Hansen (1997) defines DMs as “linguistic items of variable scope, and whose primary function is connective” and Schiffrin (1987) operationally defines DMs as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk”.

From the above definitions, one characteristic prominently featuring is that DMs are used to relate utterances or other discourse units. Schiffrin and Fraser’s definition specify that DMs relate two textual units, thus contributing to inter utterance coherence or connectivity.

b) Optionality

DMs are regarded as syntactically optional in the sense that the removal of a DM does not alter the grammaticality of its host sentence (Fraser, 1988). DMs are also widely claimed to be optional in the further sense that they do not enlarge the possibilities for semantic relationship between the elements they associate. If a DM is omitted, the relationship it signals is still available to the hearer, though no longer explicitly cued.

The following examples can be understood in the same way:

The others are going to Stoke. However, I am going to Paris.

The others are going to Stoke. I am going to Paris.

(Quirk et al., 1985:76)

Brinton (1996) notes that omitting the DMs does not render the text ungrammatical or unintelligible. Despite such observations, it is never claimed that the optionality of DMs renders them useless or redundant, they are used to guide the hearer toward a particular interpretation and simultaneously ruling out unintended interpretations (Brown and Yule, 1983)

c) Non – truth- conditionality

DMs contribute nothing to the truth – conditions of the proposition expressed by an utterance (Blakemore, 1988; Hansen, 1997). This is to mean that DMs do not affect the truth – conditions of utterances (Fraser, 1996). The non – truth – conditionality of DMs distinguishes them from ‘content’ words, including manner adverbial uses of words like *sadly*, and from disjunctive forms which do affect truth – conditions, such as evidential and sentence adverbials. As noted by Quirk et al (1985) a non conjunctive adverbial and a DM can give rise to similar overall interpretations, as seen in the following examples

Owens is a respected drama critic. *I tell you* in addition that she has written.

Owens is a respected drama critic. In addition, she has written.

(Quirk et al., 1985)

The absence or presence of the DM *I tell you* in the second sentence does not contribute to the truth condition of the utterance.

d) Orality

Most forms claimed to be DMs occur primarily in speech for example *by the way*, *well* and *after all* (Brinton, 1996). However, no principled grounds exist on which to deny DM status to similar items that are largely found in written discourse such as *moreover*, *consequently* and *contrary*. Association of a particular DM with the written or spoken channel is not strict and is often tied only to the relative formality/ informality of the DM.

The meaning of a marker may also ally it to one channel or the other (Schoroup, 1985). For example, some putative DMs such as *conversely* and *in contrast* encode a high degree of utterance planning. Impromptu speech – linked DMs such as *before I forget* and *by the way* may also be associated with speech, because their meaning presupposes a familiarity with the addressee not typical of impersonally addressed writing. *After all*, for example, encodes that the speaker has grounds for believing that the premise introduced by *after all* is already accessible to the hearer (Blakemore, 1987).

e) Multi- categoriality

DMs are most often said to constitute a functional category that is heterogeneous with respect to syntactic class (Schoroup, 1985). On this view DM status is independent of syntactic categorization. An item retains its non – DM syntactic categorization but does ‘extra duty’ as a non –truth- conditional connective loosely associated with clause structure.

Forms of Kabras discourse markers

Schiffirin (Schiffirin, 1987) gives the operational definition of DMs as ‘sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk’ units that include entities such as sentences, propositions, speech acts and tone units the exact nature which she deliberately leaves vague. Hirschberg and Litman (1987) note that DMs may instead of making a semantic contribution to an utterance (i.e.

affecting its truth conditions) be used to convey explicit information about the structure of the discourse. Other words used to designate DMs are 'cue phrases' or 'clue words' examples of English DMs are *but, now, by the way*

Unlike their English counterparts many Kabras DMs are not generally regarded as comprising a well-defined category. For example in English words such as *well* and *now* only function as DMs but also have their inherent senses like 'in a good manner' and 'the present time'. Their status as words therefore is questionable. Their Kabras counterparts **koo** (well) and **sasa** (now) have no functions other than as DMs. They have no meaning by themselves and are not used in written language. This explains why little consensus exists among researchers as to which words constitute DMs and why some utterances are treated as interjections, backchannel utterances or fillers.

Although there is no received categorisation, Kabras DMs can be divided into three main groups: word, phrase and non-phrasal markers. Words and phrasal markers are routinely used for conveying information about the structure of the discourse. They include lexical phrases such as **alafu khandi** (*and then again*) and words like **kho** (*so*), which are directly related to the discourse. Non phrasal markers include fillers like **nee** (*then*), responsiveness **aha** (*huh*), final sentence particles **ta** (*no*) and conjunctives such as **khandi**. (*also*)

Functions of Kabras discourse markers

According to Georgeakopoulos and Goutusos, (1997) the functions of Discourse Markers are essentially traceable to Halliday's (1994) tripartite division of language functions into ideational, textual and interpersonal. The textual function covers the stringing together and segmenting of units for example, the signalling of topic shifts and continuities, the return to topics after digressions the interpersonal function covers the relation between addressor and addressee and the expression of the subjective elements of linguistic communication e.g. feelings and attitudes. It is on this basis that the functions of discourse markers were categorized. Excerpts from the corpus on which this study is based, show the functions of Discourse Markers in conversations in Kabras.

1. Starting a new turn/conversation/topic

In the data analyzed below there are cases where the DMs **Aya** (*ok*) and **khuisie** (*To me*) were used to start a new turn/ conversation. The DMs were produced at the beginning of the utterances. Consider the example below; the DM **aya** (*ok*) is used at the beginning of the turn to start a new topic in the conversation. The marker is produced by speaker A in his turn to change the topic from talking about how the society is biased towards girls as compared to boys to a new topic about the widening gap between the poor and the rich.

Example 1 (Situation: The interviewer changes his topic from the biasness of the society to the gap between the poor and the rich)

Speaker A: Ata avandu vakhasi vene vaaminanga vari avasiani nivo avana kho avandu vakhasi ninywe shida.

[Even women also believe that girls are not children so you women are the problem]

Speaker B: Kenako na matukhu ka khale saa hii amakhuva ka chenja

[That is what used to happen long time ago nowadays things have changed]

Speaker A: **Aya** elirebo lindi livere ombu avandu avainda nende avamaskini yaani avatajiri
vaenedeleanga okhuva nende efindu ne avamaskini navo vaenedeleanga
okhutakhana
[Ok the next question is about the rich and the poor how come the rich continue
being rich and the poor continue to be poor]

Example 2 (Situation: The speakers are talking about why girls say no when they sometimes
mean yes)

Speaker A: Ass nee mwana mukhana navola ari yee avetsanga wiyamile no tawe?
[And if a girl says yes does she mean it]

Speaker B: **Khuisie** ndalolanga endi nivavola vari tawe vavetsanga veyamile sichila
vekanangakhane veyamile
[**To me** I think that when they say no they mean yes because sometimes they say
no when they have accepted]

Example 2 above shows the initial DM **khuisie** (*to me*) produced by speaker A being used to start a new turn in the conversation through which the speaker takes the opportunity to offer her contribution regarding the debate about what a girl means by saying no or yes.

2. Interrupting politely

Politeness seems to be an important value that occurs in all societies, even though the social norms relating to what is and what is not considered polite behaviour may vary across cultures (Brown and Levinson, 1978). It is a form of emotional control serving as a means of preserving face. Politeness or tact as it is sometimes called, is a “strategic conflict avoidance” (Leech, 1973) or a device used “in order to reduce friction in personal interaction” (Lakoff, 1977). The corpus on which this study is based reveals that in verbal interaction politeness manifests itself through the use of certain DMs.

Excerpts from our data show the DMs that were used by speakers in conversations to interrupt other speakers politely. The speakers used the DMs to interrupt the other speakers but effectively avoided making the interrupted speaker feel interrupted rudely. From the corpus the DMs that were found to perform this function are **shichila lenjela** (*because see*) and **nee koo** (*and politely*). The markers were produced with a falling intonation. Consider the following extract.

Example 3 (Situation: The interviewer is talking to young female respondents about
how unfair people can be to girls compared to boys)

Speaker C: Khuisie ndalolanga endi shichila avakhana avanyinji vaumianga shichila itukjha
avundu Kenya omwana omukhana ateshe sasa Kenya vekhale ngumu lakini
omwansa omusiani vaparanga vari kho alakhavanga omukhana omulai
[To me I think that they think that boys are looking for the best girls but for the girl
you have to be married and there are so many problems.....]

Speaker B: **Shichila lenjela** kava vari Peter anyala wetisa ingo saa inne tsia mushiro nawe
witse saa mbili paka ovole wolarulanga novulai kweli?

[**Because see** if peter comes home at ten in the night and you come home at eight
do you know that you must explain, is that fair]

Speaker C: Tawe

[No]

The above extract shows the speaker C beginning her turn while the first respondent is still talking about how unfair the society is to girls as compared to boys. She begins her turn with the DM **shichila lenjela** (*because see*) and goes ahead to make her contribution on the topic by adding that if Peter who is a brother to the speaker C respondent comes home late he is not reprimanded but if the speaker C does the same she could even be beaten. This happens to be a specific example of how the society is unfair to girls and the previous speaker does not feel offended by being interrupted because the second respondent begins her turn with the DM **Shichila lenjela** (*because see*). The DM softens the utterance so that the speaker does not sound rude. Example 4 below further illustrates how another DM **Nee koo** (*and*) is used by speaker A to interrupt speaker B politely.

Example 4 (Situation: The interviewer is asking respondent if they wear trousers)

Speaker A: Mufualanga etsiloti?

[Do you wear trousers?]

Speaker B: Khufualanga lakini omanyavevuli shivenyanga tashichila.....

[We wear but you know parents do not wantbecause.....]

Speaker A: **Koo** shina eshivi nende okhufuala etsiloti?

[**And** what is wrong with wearing trousers]

Speaker C: Vaaminanga vari nofuala eloti olaviya

[They believe that by wearing trousers you will be spoilt]

Speaker A: Kho enywe mulalolanga muri etsishida tsino tsinyala okhuwa tsirie?

[So you think that how can these problems be solved]

Speaker C: Vaveli shivaelewanga tawe shichila.....

[Parents do not understand because.....]

Speaker A: **Nee koo**....nikhuvu nende etsifamili miting.

[**And**what if we have family meetings]

Speaker B: Omanyavevuli miting netsindayi lakini avevuli valala shivanyala valakha

olakaye tawe

[You know family meetings are nice but some parents can not allow you to talk]

This excerpt shows that the speaker A abruptly interrupts speaker C to ask a question regarding whether it is wrong for girls to wear trousers. It is noted that the speaker A produces the Discourse

Marker **koo** (*and politely*) before producing the question. The marker **koo** (*and politely*) produced with a falling intonation politely appeals to the listener. Therefore the marker produced before the question makes speaker A to sound polite and therefore the previous speaker does not feel offended by the interruption.

This scenario is repeated when speaker A also abruptly interrupts to pose a proposal that in order to solve problems in homes there should be family meetings. If the question and the proposal are posed without the DMs they would appear rude because they are interruptions. The DMs **Nee koo** (*and politely*), **shichila lenjela** (*because see*) and **koo** (*and politely*) help a speaker redress Brown and Levinson (1987) face threatening act through which a speaker interrupts a listeners freedom of action with orders, requests or suggestions.

3. Highlight of a proposition that immediately follows

From the data it was established that there were DMs that were used to give a hint to the listener on the upcoming utterance. The markers were used to refer to the utterance that follows immediately. From this point of view, these DMs were seen as cataphoric markers since it is the utterance that comes after these markers that was emphasized. In this way the speaker can draw the listener's participation in the conversation because it draws his attention to expect what follows.

The following examples illustrates this

Example 5 (Situation: the interviewer is asking the respondent about the medicine they used to use)

Speaker A: Valakhukhalaka awene wo lalulalanga

[Will they cut you where you are feeling the pain?]

Speaker C: Khushilifu valakhalaka ovupande vuo mukhono omukhasi

[On the chest will they cut on the left hand side?]

Speaker B: **Omanye** omundu nakhuuna omuvano yino olafwa lakini yino tawe

[**You know** if someone pierces you here you will die but not here](Showing the left hand side of the chest)

Speaker C: Ass valatsoma ano ass nivakhatsoma olekhala ne eshitonda shieneshi valavakhao amafura

[So they will pierce here and then on the wound they will appear cow oil]

In this extract speaker B uses the DM **omanye** (*you know*). The marker is said with a rising intonation followed by a short pause. Initially the speaker had been talking about making cuts on the chest if someone was unwell. The speaker then uses the marker **omanye** (*you know*) before introducing an utterance that talks about the exact place where the cuts can be made. The marker hints on what to expect in the utterance since the speaker had been talking about the areas to be cut.

In the following example speaker B while talking about girls, uses the marker **alafu otushe okumanya ori** (*again you come to know that*) before giving the utterance that a girl can like because she knows that you have money. The marker highlights a proposition about why a girl can like you and the proposition is that it could be because of money.

Example 6 (Situation: The interviewer is asking young male respondents if there are any good girls?)

Speaker A: Avakhana avalai vavereho vanyala okhuyanza omundu ata navula etsisendi?
[Are there good girls who can love someone even if he does not have money]

Speaker B: Vaho vanyala okhuyanza mani mumenye lakini nivatiti.
[They can love you but they are very few]

Speaker C: **Halafu otushe okhumanya ori** omukhana anyala wakhuyanza khane ulolile
eshindu shalenyanga...
[**Again you should come to know** that a girl can like because she knows there is something she has seen]

4. **Listener's attention**

Whenever two people are talking, there is need for a person to get the listener's attention in the conversation in order to be listened to. Excerpts from our data show that there were DMs that helped the speaker achieve this. The presence of these DMs helped to index the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors thereby increasing the interpersonal relationship between them. Look at the following example.

Example 7 (Situation: the interviewer is talking to young male respondents about gender equality)

Speaker C: Kho olavolanga ori omundu musatsa nie wa maana?
[So are you saying that a man is important?]

Speaker A: Olalolanga ata niitsa khu mikunda avandu vakhasi shivanyolanga tawe
[You are seeing even when it comes to land women do not inherit]

Speaker C: Mba likhuva lienelo liali mukatiba yene ya kwaa eyo Kava vari omundu
musatsa avere nende avakhana venyene shanyala okhuvakavira omukunda
ta?**Lenjela** omundu niyevule avakhana venyene olaulila ombu ata wane
avula avana
[Yes that issue was in the constitution, if a man has daughters only
why cant he give land to them when he dies? **Look** if someone has
daughters only you will hear people saying that he does not have
children]

Speaker A: Valolanga vari avasiani nivo avana avakhana tawe
[They say that boys are children but girls are not]

Example 7 shows speaker C using the DM **olalolanga** (*you are seeing*) before the main utterance. During the interview it was noted that when the respondent used the marker, which means are you seeing. The marker aligned the speaker and the listener face to face and therefore this captured

the listener's attention. Another DM, which performed the same function, is **Lenjela**, which means *see/look*. In the above extract, the marker is produced in the middle of the utterance before the speaker goes ahead to ask what is wrong with a man giving his daughters land after his death. The question seems to be serious and in order to capture the attention of the listener; the speaker uses the marker before posing the question.

Example 8 (Situation: the interviewer is talking to old female respondents about how a traditional wedding was done)

Speaker A: **Sholola** Shitukha wefu vatira tsa ngorwa omuimo kwali ena ?Omusiani sha okwiri yatsia tsa na mutira ne vatsia nnae. Ata Waronya yesi yavukulwa kwa lazima.

[Don't **you see** Shitukha was taken by force and married a strong boy like Okwiri would do it even Waronya was taken by force.]

Speaker B: Lakini awenao yali ambichiti

[But it was not far]

Speaker C: **Sholola** etofauti ivereho nende etsiharusi tsia vulano

[Don't **you see** there is a difference with these modern weddings]

In the above example both speaker A and C use the DM **sholola** (*don't you see?*) before their main utterances. For speaker A, the marker captures the listener's attention since it asks the listener if he is seeing or not, before the respondent goes ahead to list the girls who were customarily taken away by force to be married. In the second incident **sholola** (*don't you see*) comes immediately before the interviewer comments that traditional weddings were different from modern ones.

The marker makes the listener to take note about the differences between modern and traditional weddings. These markers when produced appeal to the listener to see and therefore his/her attention is captured before the speaker goes ahead to say what he intended to say.

5. Holding the floor and keeping ones turn

In a conversation when a speaker is making a contribution, the listeners are tempted to interrupt and therefore also try to make their contribution. Excerpts from our data show that one of the ways to keep ones turn or hold the floor, speakers used DMs in their utterances and therefore continued talking despite attempts by the listeners to interrupt. Let us examine the following examples.

Example 9 (Situation: the interviewer is talking to old female respondents about games that people used to play)

Speaker B: Ne emibayo nacho?

[What about games]

Speaker A: Avana avasiani na vakhana mulachesiana amani **sasa** mulachesiana musaa **vulano** muchesiane amani **vulano** avakhana na vasiani **vulano** mulachesiananga amani kho avasiani.....

[Boys and girls would go in an open place to wrestle]

Speaker B: Avakhana vanyala okhupa avasiani asi?

[Can boys wrestle girls down?]

In this extract speaker A is making her contribution regarding the games that people used to play. At the same time speaker B wants to make her contribution by asking a question. In order to keep her turn so that he can complete his current contribution, talking about the games, speaker B uses the DMs **sasa** (*now*) and **vulano** (*today*), to keep on postponing speaker A from making her contribution. In the meantime she continues making her contribution regarding how boys and girls would wrestle. However before she finishes speaker B grabs her turn to ask if girls could wrestle boys down.

Example 10 (Situation: the interviewer is asking the respondents about how a traditional wedding was done)

Speaker A: Awenao omukhana ashili okhwitsa

[By that time the girl has not come?]

Speaker B: **Ass** etsingombe nitsiakhetsa **lano** valalomba amalwa sasa omukhana alanje
aveshe ne atsie asinjile amudodo saasa valomba amachina kalashinjilakho **ass**
vamuvashe amafura ne lano avandu vasinjile eyo. **Ass** papa alasinjila amuvolele
ari yevule avana avanyinji.

[When cows have been brought, so they will prepare alcohol and the girl will invite
her friends then they will smear oil on her body this is done under the mudodo
tree then her father will tell her that she should have many children]

The above example shows speaker B using the following DMs to keep the floor: **ass** (*ok*), **lano** (*today*), and **sasa** (*now*). She uses the DMs when making her contribution regarding how a traditional wedding was done. The DMs make the listener not to interrupt because they show that the speaker is still talking and therefore this enables the speaker to hold the floor. In this regard the DM is used as speech filler.

6. To disagree politely

In a conversation there are times when speakers do disagree. It was observed that when a speaker disagrees with the listener, the usage of DM serves as a positive politeness strategy (Cook, 1983). The DM helps to mitigate the face threatening act of disagreeing with the listener and therefore to ensure cooperation in the conversation.

In example 11 below speaker A is asking speaker B what he would do if she had a young brother who was a drunkard and she is living with her. In her first turn the respondent uses a DM **sasa omany**e (*now you now*) before giving an utterance that disagrees with the suggestion that speaker A had given. When speaker A presses on, arguing that the brother could be a young one, speaker B accepts that she can persevere and to bring in an utterance that disagrees, she uses the DM **lakini omany**e (*but you know*), before giving a warning that if the brother persists then she would kick him out.

Example 12 (Situation: The interviewer is asking respondents about the causes of problems in the family)

Speaker A: Nee avana navo ?kama okhuva nende wandae uwo omumesi

[What about children? like having a drunken brother]

Speaker B: **sasa omany**e esie sienyala okhwikhala nende omundu sha omwenoyo ta.

[**Now you know** I can not live with someone like that]

Speaker A: Ata nali omwana wenyu omutiti.

[Even if he is your young brother]

Speaker B: Ta ndamenya nnae **lakini omany**e naendelea ndamukhuma

[Ok I will stay with him **but you know** if he continues I will chase him away]

In the above extract the DMs **sasa omany**e (*now you know*) and **lakini omany**e (*but you know*) occur before utterances that disagree with what the previous speaker had said. The occurrence of these markers before these utterances softens the utterances that disagree.

Example 13 (Situation: The interviewer is asking the respondents about the gender equality in homes)

Speaker A: Halafu ndatasakhoo endi omusatsa anyala wakhola eshindu shiosi shichila niye wayira omukhasi.

[And then I can add that a man can do anything because he is the one who married the wife]

Speaker B: Kho amakhuva ka ovusawa kavulao

[So the issue of equality is not there]

Speaker C: **Lenjela** amakhuva kovusawa niko kapomolanga etsinzu **yaani sasa** ewe olere omukhasi munzu nemulekhane?

[**Look** equality is what destroys homes, you bring a wife into your home and you become equals?]

Example 14 above reveals that speaker C when disagreeing with the interviewer about equality uses the Discourse Marker **lenjela** (*look*) before saying that equality is what destroys homes. The presence of the marker before the utterance softens it so that it does not appear to threaten the listener. Further on speaker C uses the DM **Yaani sasa** (*I mean now*) before pausing the question that how can you marry a wife and the two of you become equals. This is a question in disagreement and to sound polite in disagreement there is a DM that appears before the utterance.

Methodology

1) Participants

The objective of this study is to identify the variation of four DMs namely as **sasa** (*now*), **yaani** (*i mean*), **nee koo** (*and*) and **lolakho** (*see*) according to the age and sex of the speaker. Therefore the

participants in this study identified on the basis of their social networks are 18 males and 18 females, altogether the sample of this study is 36 respondents.

2) Procedures

Speeches were audio recorded from the respondents who are speakers of Kabras. The respondents were notified before the conversations that they were being recorded for a linguistic study. However, the researcher did not inform the respondents about the specific objectives of the study.

After the conversations had been recorded, they were transcribed. The number of markers in each speech was counted and documented. The mean for each of the markers predetermined by the study was then established. Averages for each marker were categorized into male and female and combined sexes for qualitative comparison.

3) Results

Table 1

Table 1 Discourse Markers and Gender.

Gender/DM	Sasa (<i>Now</i>)	Yaani (<i>You know</i>)	Neekoo(<i>and</i>)	Lolakho(<i>see</i>)
Men	73	65	52	53
Women	90	71	101	117

In the above table female speakers used **sasa** (*now*) 90 times, **yaani** (*you know*) 71 times, **Neekoo** (*and*) 101 times and **lolakho** (*see*) 117 times. While male speakers Used **sasa** (*now*) 73 times, **Yaani** (*you know*) 65 times, **neekoo** (*and*) 52 times and **lolakho** (*see*) 53 times. This therefore shows that women used more DMs in their speech as compared to men. While there is need for research to document why this is so, the researcher attributed this to be a cultural trait among the Kabras whereby women were observed to talk more than men. The women in Kabras utilize the relational function of language which accounts for them talking more than their men counterparts. Averages for each marker were then categorized into male, female and combined sexes for quantitative comparison purposes.

Table 2 The correlation between Discourse Markers and Gender

DM	Men			Women			Combined	
	Frequency	Mean	SD	Frequency	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sasa (<i>Now</i>)	73	1.75	6.21	90	1.66	7.15	1.70	6.68
Yaani (<i>You know</i>)	65	1.96	5.40	71	2.1	5.40	2.0	5.4
Neekoo (<i>and</i>)	52	2.46	3.80	101	1.4	8.12	1.98	5.96

Lolakho (see)	53	2.66	2.71	117	1.28	9.46	1.95	6.08
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4) Discussion of results

Table 2 above shows that out of the four markers designated for observation, two of the markers **sasa** (*now*) and **yaani** (*I mean*) were used equally by both genders, while the remaining two markers **nee koo** (*and*) and **lolakho** (*See*) were overwhelmingly used more often by women than men.

An analysis of the correlation from the above table reveals the following:

1. For **sasa** (*now*) the men have a mean of 1.75 while the mean for women is 1.66 Their SD is 6.21 for men and 7.15 for women.
2. For **Yaani** (*I mean*) the mean for men is 1.96 while for women it is 2.1. The SD is 5.40 for both men and women.
3. For **nee koo** (*and*) the mean for men is 2.46 while for women it is 1.28. The SD is 2.71 for men and 9.46 for women.
4. For **lolakho** (*see*) the mean for men is 2.66 while for women it is 1.28 and the SD is 2.71 for men while for women it is 9.46.

The following conclusions can therefore be drawn from the table:

1. That there is no significant difference between the usage of **sasa** (*now*) un men and women
2. There is also no significant difference between how men and women use **Yaani** (*I mean*)
3. There is significant difference between how men and women use **nee koo** (*and*) and **lolakho** (*see*) since women use **nee koo** (*and*) and **lolakho** (*see*) more than men.
4. Women used many DMs in their speeches as compared to men.
5. More polite forms of the DMs are used more by women than men.
6. In Kabras the politeness marker is marked by an affix **kho** (*so*) and **koo** (*and*)

Since the corpus on which this study is based reveals that women used more polite forms of the DMs as compared to men, the researcher felt that the reason could be that men in our society have traditionally been rated socially by their occupation, their earning power, and perhaps by their abilities - in other words, by what they do. On the other hand, women have to be rated instead, to a greater extent than men, on how they appear.

Another reason could be that, by using polite forms, a woman is trying to protect her *face* (a term often used in sociolinguistics to denote a person's needs and wants in relation to others see (Brown and Levinson, 1978). In other words, a woman tries to claim more status in society. Her greater use of polite forms may also imply that she does not attend solely to her own face needs but also to those of the people she is interacting with, thus avoiding disagreement and seeking agreement and rapport.

Since a speaker may use a DM in his or her speech to sound polite and appear social (Brown and Levinson, 1978), a speaker may also use a marker to attain conversational consistency (Bussman,

1984). Research done in English shows that DMs function as linguistic soothers or verbal adapters that allow speakers to fill gaps in their speeches (Croucher, 2004). The corpus on which this study is based reveals that the DMs present in the conversations had many functions.

Conclusion

In this paper we have demonstrated that Kabras DMs occur at word and phrase level. The DMs are distributed in the utterances of the speakers where they occur in initial and final positions of utterances as observed in other languages such as English

Despite there being no significant difference in the choice and use of DMs among the different ages of the respondents, it was evidently noted that the gender of the speaker does affect the choice and use of the DMs.

Finally this paper also establishes that DMs have functions that they serve in the conversations. The functions include making the conversations coherent, enhancing an interpersonal relationship among the speakers and allowing speakers to interrupt each other politely.

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