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The Metalinguistic Awareness of Kurdish EFL Undergraduates on Pragmatic Markers

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatics markers are linguistic units of multiple functions as they are used to meet different needs in both writing and speaking. Thus, this linguistic set is an inevitable part of learning for foreign language learners. Thus, from a metalinguistic perspective, they are supposed to be aware of identifying and using such markers relying on the knowledge they already provided in the class. Identifying this assumption, this paper investigates the metalinguistic awareness of Kurdish EFL students in manipulating the pragmatic markers in the English language. Recognizing the gaps related to this lexical area can guide EFL instructors to train their students to be better communicators in the English language. To meet these aims, a test has been designed in which the students were required to identify the appropriate pragmatic marker to use in a suitable context. The results indicate that EFL learners require more focused exposure to pragmatic markers to enhance their proficiency in both academic and everyday English communication. To achieve this, teachers need to highlight the materials with pragmatic content in the modules they teach to enable learners to consciously internalize them. To a reasonable extent, the EFL undergraduates could identify the pragmatic markers for being not part of the sentence structure, but their functions were not equally accessible to them.

Keywords: Metalinguistic, Pragmatics, Markers, Discourse, Communication, Knowledge.

1. DEFINITION & TERMINOLOGY

This study can be theoretically located in the frame of metalinguistic knowledge that encompasses the pragmatic subdomain of discourse structure. The metalinguistic awareness of EFL learners involves the learner's knowledge of the underlying system of the foreign language s/he learns. This awareness enables them to communicate in that language properly; an ability that requires reflection on the explicit and implicit knowledge of the language. This matter can be inferred from Malakoff (1999 as cited in Kola, 2018) defines *metalinguistic awareness* as "the awareness of the features of the language that gives the speakers of the language ability of not only comprehending or producing utterances but also checking the linguistic form and the

structure underlying the meaning of the utterances”. Thus, this awareness mainly involves two basic types of activities: analysis of the linguistic strategies and adjustments of these strategies according to physical and linguistic contexts that one encounters in daily life. The latter type often encompasses the cognitive processes of monitoring and controlling which occur in the language learner’s mind.

Pragmatic markers are, to a great extent, defined similarly by the linguists and those who investigated them. Keller (1979, p.220), for instance, defines them as “a set of signals in the conversationalist’s speech, used to introduce level shifts within the conversation, or to prepare listeners for the next turn in the logical argument”. Almost similarly, pragmatic markers are perceived by Blakemore (1987, p.125) as a group of “expressions used to indicate how the relevance of one discourse segment is dependent on another” and that “they signal semantic relationship between utterances” (Blackmore, p.2002). Not very differently but more swiftly, Schiffrin (1987, p. 31) defines such markers as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk”. Though (Livenson 1983, cited in Fraser,1988, p.19) is credited to be the pioneering work that called for studying *discourse markers*, the first deep exploration of them is attributed to Schiffrin (1987), according to Fraser (1999, p.933). Fraser (ibid) comments on Schiffrin’s perception of discourse markers stating that she finds them to serve as “discourse glue”, which suggests that the major function of discourse makers is making the discourse parts coherent. Additionally, she asserts that some of these markers, without identifying them fully, are pragmatically used. Schiffrin (2015, p.192) clearly postulates their use is “multifunctional”.

Taking the previous definitions into account, Heine *et al* (2021, p.7) coined a definition that sounded quite comprehensive involving all the characteristics of the pragmatic markers found in those definitions as stated below:

Discourse markers are (a) invariable expressions that are (b) semantically and syntactically independent from their environment, (c) set off prosodically from the rest of the utterance in some way, and (d) their function is metatextual, being anchored in the situation of discourse and serving the organization of texts, the attitudes of the speaker, and/or speaker–hearer interaction.

In light of the presented definitions, the procedural definition for pragmatic markers that this study adopts can be worded in this fashion: *pragmatic markers are words or phrases that are not essential syntactic elements in the structure of the discourse they appear in. They are used by the addressers to enable the addressees to smoothly navigate through the interaction and get the intended message accurately as they can guide the addressees to identify how the parts of the discourse are related and how the argument is directed.*

Technically, pragmatic markers are also known as *fillers*, *pragmatic operators/particles*, *discourse markers*, *discourse operators*, *discourse connectives*, *discourse signaling devices*, *discourse particles*, *phatic connectives*, *hedges*, *conversational greasers* (Fraser 1990 and 1999) and (Beeching 2016). Syntactically, according to Fraser (ibid, p.940), a pragmatic marker is “a subordinate conjunction” as it “cannot introduce a sentence which stands alone but requires that the previous independent clause be present”. To Fraser (1996, p.322-323), the term *pragmatic marker* is used to refer to the nonpropositional meaning of the sentence, i.e. the potential message the interlocutor intends to convey. These markers signal the intended message and reveal the force of the utterance. Consider these examples:

a. Luckily, Jack arrived on time and gave me a hand.

b. In fact, I won't be able to join you.

In (a), in addition to the truth value that the propositional content of the utterance, an expressive function is indicated by “luckily”, which reveals the speaker's pleasure for what Jack did. And, in (b), what the speaker adds to the propositional charge of the utterance is a representative force as s/he implicitly apologizes for not joining the addressee in a future activity. In both of the utterances, the pragmatic function is obviously expressed.

The diversity of perspectives from which pragmatic markers are addressed is apparently attributed to the different disciplines that are concerned with them. Pragmatic markers do interest syntax (Fraser, 1999 and Diewald 2006), semantics (Hansen, 2006) pragmatics (Fraser 1996), discourse markers (Schiffrin, 2001) as well as sociolinguistics (Muller, 2005 and Heine *et al*, 2021); each discipline approaches them according to the nature of its domain. The multicolored-views-based studies clearly signal the important role of pragmatic markers in both spoken and written communication. This vital role can be detected in Heine *et al*'s (ibid, p.2) postulation that pragmatic markers “tend to be transferred easily from one language to another – more than most other kinds of linguistic expressions”. This statement does stimulate translation theorists to research pragmatic markers from their domain's perspective. It also suggests the universality of pragmatic markers.

It is worthy to mention that some scholars, like Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg (2006), identify pragmatic markers to be different from discourse markers arguing that the former type indicates the speaker's attitude about what s/he utters whereas the latter type is simply used to indicate coherence. In disagreement with this distinction, some other researchers, like Fraser (1996), generalize using the term of pragmatic markers arguing that discourse markers are a subclass of pragmatic markers. A third different view represented by some researchers, like Brinton (1996), prefer the term pragmatic marker without identifying the term of discourse

markers. In her review of Schiffrin's seminal book (1987), Traugott (1995, p.5) identifies the markers as "items which are all pragmatic" for they do "meta-textual work" which is realized in indexing the attitude of the use of such markers. This judgment sounds quite decisive and straightforward as if its target is the propositional content and the truth value of the utterance, they can be produced and accessed without including the markers. Thus, the pragmatic markers add to the utterance extra meaning, which is mostly non-propositional meaning. This view is confirmed by Biber et al. (2007, p.140) who believe that such markers "do not affect the propositional meaning of the clause, instead of having a purely pragmatic function".

Stemming from Hymes' (1971) emphasis on the role of what he called *communicative competence* to be equal in its importance to Chomsky's (linguistic) *competence*, this study attempts to shed light on the Kurdish EFL learners' knowledge of using discourse markers. In the current study, the term of pragmatic markers is preferred due to the fact that such linguistic devices do not only signal the concept of connection and, but they also indicate a procedural concept in the course of the discourse; they are unquestionably used for pragmatic reasons. As for the linguistic expressions used for cohesive purposes, transitions—as Meyer (2000, p.88) calls—can be an appropriate label for such a set whose sole function is achieving coherence throughout a text.

2. TYPES AND FUNCTIONS

In a brief, though there is no comprehensive taxonomy of discourse markers yet, Brinton (1996) highlights two main functions of pragmatic markers in terms of their textual uses:

(a) to mark various kinds of boundaries (to initiate or end a discourse or to affect a shift in topic), and

(b) to assist in turn-taking in oral discourse or "chunking" (marking of episode or paragraph) in written discourse.

and in terms of their interpersonal uses as:

(a) subjectively, to express speaker attitude, and

(b) interactively, to achieve intimacy between speaker and addressee (for example, by appealing to the addressee or expressing shared common knowledge).

(p.6)

The first type of function covers the written formal and academic uses of pragmatic purposes and the second involves the spoken uses as the examples to follow display. Fraser (2009, p.295-297) indicates a more detailed taxonomy of four main types with multiple subsections as shown in Table 1.

It is worth mentioning that pragmatic markers are similar in their functions in the discourse to signposts on the road. In other words, they indicate the speaker/writer's intended meaning rather than being part of the core of his/her message. Schifffrin (1987, p.55) approves this feature of pragmatic markers clearly saying that "the structure and meaning of arguments can be preserved even without markers"; simply because the markers are out of the scope of the core proposition capsulated in the linguistic units. Importantly, Schifffrin (2006, p.318) makes a simple yet valuable point about the functions of markers stating that they are "similar to their pragmatic meanings".

Urgelles-Coll (2010, p.28) highlights the role of pragmatic markers in stringing the linguistic units in a text and make them coherent stating that "discourse markers are a cohesion device in a text that would be a simple group of sentences without them" and that "speakers use markers to integrate forms, meanings, and actions to make sense of what is being said."

As for the frequent positions of pragmatics makers, Beeching (2016) identifies two normal positions stating that such markers "occur at the junction between speakers in turn-taking, frequently in utterance-initial or utterance-final positions. Fraser (1999) is more detailed in this point as he identifies four different fashions of behavior that mark the different sets of the English discourse markers- as he prefers to label them. He recognizes these issues related to the position of the markers in daily utterances:

1. A discourse marker may occur at the beginning of the second sentence.
 - He woke up so early. However, he missed his bus to school.
2. In addition to beginning the sentence, a discourse marker may end it or occur within sentences.
 - Jack is a distinctive businessman. He is, in spite of this, often sad.
 - We knew it was too dangerous. We gave a try, nevertheless.
3. It needs to consider these cases:
 - a. A discourse marker relates two independent sentences as seen in 1 above.
 - b. A discourse marker joins two independent clauses.
 - Tom is an engineer whereas his wife is a professional pianist.
 - c. A particular set of discourse markers can introduce the dependent clause that it joins with the independent one. This set can also initiate the second related sentence.
 - Because of her hard work, Janet was rewarded by the manager.
 - Janet was rewarded by the manager because of her hard work.

- Janet worked hard. Because of that, she was rewarded by the manager.
 - d. This class of discourse markers can only initiate the dependent clause.
 - I won't do it unless you explain it.
 - Unless you explain it, I won't do it.
4. The discourse marker to be used should indicate the semantic relationship/s between the related utterances so as to keep them coherent in their sequence.

Importantly, pragmatic markers indicate their users' interpretation of what they would utter next to the marker. This point has been stressed on by Fraser (1999, p.891) saying that the discourse markers "signal a relationship between the interpretation of the segment they introduce" as Table-1 displays.

Table-1: Types & functions of pragmatic markers

| Type | Function | Example in utterance |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Basic Pragmatic Markers | To explicitly indicate the illocutionary force | - <i>Please</i> , sit down! |
| 2. Commentary Pragmatic Markers: It has 5 subtypes: | To signal a comment on the basic message | |
| a. Assessment Markers | | -I was late for the exam. <i>Luckily</i> , it was postponed for the following week. |
| b. Manner-of-Speaking Markers | | - <i>Frankly speaking</i> , I can't help you, Jack. |
| c. Evidential Markers | | - A: Will he go? B: <i>Certainly</i> , he will go. |
| d. Hearsay Markers | | A: Is the game still on? B: Reportedly, the game was postponed because of rain. |
| e. (Non)Deference Markers | | -Sir, you must listen to me. - You jerk, where do you think you're going? |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>DISCOURSE MARKERS.</p> <p>There are 3 classes:</p> | | |
| a. Contrastive Discourse Markers | <p>To signal a relation between the discourse segment which hosts them and the discourse segment, perhaps produced by another speaker.</p> | -Mark, a good guy. <i>On the contrary</i> , he's a jerk |
| b. Elaborative Discourse Markers | | -I don't think it will fly. <i>Anyway</i> , let's give it a chance. |
| c. Inferential Discourse Markers | | - Sue isn't here. <i>As a result</i> , we won't be able to see the video |
| 4. Discourse Structure Markers. There are three subclasses: | | |
| a. Discourse Management Markers | <p>Signal an aspect of the organization of the ongoing discourse</p> | - <i>In summary</i> , the economy has not flourished under the Bush administration. |
| b. Topic Orientation Markers | | -That's all there is to say on this for now. <i>Returning to my previous topic</i> , I would like to point out that... |
| c. Attention Markers | | -We must leave right away. <i>Look</i> , can't you pay attention to what I'm saying |

See (Fraser 2009, p.295-297)

3. METHODOLOGY

To collect data to diagnose the student's awareness of English pragmatic markers in terms of their uses and functions, two tests have been used. The markers used in the test have been selected according to the participants' academic level and their expected frequent exposure to such markers. To assess the learners' recognition awareness, a discrete-point test has been utilized, which is a multiple-choice question of 15 items with three options to select the answer

Another, to probe the learners' awareness of the pragmatic function of the markers, the test has been made up of another question that included ten pragmatic markers in sentences. The test-takers task was to identify each marker and indicate its pragmatic function. For the validity of the test's ability to meet the aims of the study, a jury of three experts has been consulted to review the content of the test. Later, the test was piloted with a group of ten senior undergraduates to assess its reliability. Some slight adjustments were made and the last version of the test was then approved by the jury.

The test was taken by 30 seniors at English Department, Charmo University. The participants were all regular morning female and male students in the academic year 2022-2023. They took the test in person on campus in a lecturing hall at the Department of English Language. Thus, due to the fact of being of the same grade, age, and academic institution, the participants were selected according to convenience sampling. Additionally, all the participants' first language was Kurdish—living in the governorate of Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan-Iraq.

4. Data analysis and discussion of the results

The results have shown that the performance of the participants was almost good in general as the average of the correct answers to all the items of the multiple-choice question was about 65.84%, whereas 34.16 failed to identify the majority of the appropriate choice. This indicates a promising index about the students' awareness of meanings and functions of pragmatic markers, which implies that the test-takers have acquired considerable knowledge in their classes about such markers. In light of the researcher's knowledge of the curriculum of the department where the students study, the acquisition of this knowledge has occurred unconsciously via the students' exposure to different linguistic and literary texts at their different academic levels at the department.

Before exploring the details related to the test-taker participants, it could be appropriate to demonstrate the model answer in the table below:

Table.2 Question's items and their correct answers

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Answer | A | C | A | C | B | C | A | A | C | B | A | C | B | A | C |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

As for the details of participants' replies to the questions in figures, they are briefed in Table.2.

Table.3 Test-takers' performance in Test-1

| Question | Choice A | Choice B | Choice C |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. | 95% | 0.0 % | 5.0% |
| 2. | 20% | 17.5 % | 62.5% |
| 3. | 82.5% | 0.0% | 17.5% |
| 4. | 15% | 7.5% | 77.5% |
| 5. | 20% | 42.5% | 37.5% |
| 6. | 2.5% | 12.5% | 85% |
| 7. | 40% | 57.5% | 2.5% |
| 8. | 92.5% | 2.5% | 5.0% |
| 9. | 5.0% | 15% | 80% |
| 10. | 72.5% | 20% | 7.5% |
| 11. | 25% | 17.5% | 57.5% |
| 12. | 15% | 12.5% | 72.5% |
| 13. | 7.5% | 77.5% | 15% |
| 14. | 35% | 50% | 15% |
| 15. | 17.5% | 32.5% | 40% |

Presenting how the test-takers have replied to questions' items individually may provide a better insight into their awareness of the use of English pragmatic markers. Relatedly, the first item in the question was answered correctly by almost all the students as 95% of them selected the right option. The question stated as follows:

- **I get up late at weekends, _____ during cold weather.**
 - a. including b. particularly c. similarly**

Probably, the familiarity of the content of the item to the students had its positive role in this success as most of the students wake up late on weekends and holidays.

The performance of the test-takers declined in the second item, which was correctly answered, choosing option C, by 62.5% of the subjects. The item had been realized by the following incomplete sentence:

She rarely drinks, _____, not during the week.

- a. particularly b. in other words c. or at any rate**

The wrong answers were almost equally divided between the other two options—A and B. Lack of exposure to the correct choice, compared to the other two, could be the reason for the incorrect choices made by about 38% of the participants.

The third item in the question has been correctly answered by the majority of the test-takers. The context could have been quite helpful to identify the appropriate marker to complete the sentence as the two cities' names could have drawn their attention to the marker, *namely*.

- The study also mentions two other cities, _____ Singapore and Shanghai.

- a. namely b. in other words c. to be accurate**

Good performance has also colored the fourth by being answered properly by 77.5% of the test-takers. Surprisingly, though the test-takers were not as exposed to this marker, *not to say*, as to the other two alternatives. It could be justified that their awareness of the inappropriateness of the two markers has provided a clue to identify the correct option to fill in the sentence gap. Thus, the test-takers seem to be conscious of the context here, which is a positive indicator of their performance.

- Her manner was rather offhand, _____ rude.

- a. at least b. particularly c. not to say**

The test-takers were not satisfied in their answers to the fifth item as only 42.5% of them selected the right option. Being enclosed by two commas because of its position, the correct choice, *strictly speaking*, could not be identified by the test-takers depending on their vocabulary knowledge or on the general linguistic context of the missing marker. This may be understood better when knowing that Kurdish EFL learners' knowledge of using English punctuation is not good enough and this issue is one of the challenges that they face in their writings as evident in several studies like Aljaf, Ahmed & Salim (2021), Omar & Barzani (2022) and Taqwfeeq (2019).

- The tomato is not, _____, a vegetable even though it is commonly thought of as one.

- a. by contrast b. strictly speaking c. likewise**

Apparently, the sixth item has not been challenging for 85% of the test-takers who successfully responded to it. The reason is not difficult to identify as this pragmatic marker, *for example*, is one of most frequent markers EFL learners come across in the texts they may read.

- Many cities, Hong Kong _____, have extensive mass transit systems.

- a. say b. including c. for example

Only 40% of the test-takers made the right choice and 57.5% selected B option. Thinking the adjectival phrase next to the pragmatic marker paraphrases the adjective *outrageous*, the participants must have thought the option of *in other words* would fit best.

- Prices at the mall were outrageous, _____, considerably higher than at other shopping centers.

- a. or at least b. in other words c. not to say

The fluctuation of the participants' performance is crystal clear when it comes to item-8 as 92.5% of them have responded correctly. Making a connection between the names *USA and UK* and the pragmatic marker *namely* must have triggered their appropriate choice. This proves the students' use of the linguistic context to get what a pragmatic may mean or function in a sentence or an utterance.

- A number of countries, _____ the USA and the UK, have banned smoking in restaurants.

- a. including b. namely c. viz.

The ninth item was responded appropriately by 80% of the test-takers, which is a very good indicator. Some of the participants, 15% of them, chose the B-option, which is wrong, probably thinking that the marker *so* would collocate with *many*, which is following the space.

- Everyone knows that cigarettes cause disease. Why, _____, do many people continue to smoke?

- a. for example b. so c. then

What is interesting to notice is that the sentence is simple lexically and syntactically, yet it was not easy for 20% of the test-takers to identify the correct pragmatic maker. This suggests that the EFL learners need to be cautiously exposed to the sets of pragmatic markers so that they can use them properly and control them metacognitively.

Another time, the curve of the participants declines when describing their responses to item-10 as only 20% of the answers were correct. 72% of the test-takers thought that option-A fit best.

- He needs to go on a diet, _____, cut down on sweets.

- a. that is to say b. or at any rate c. likewise

Similarly, the participants' performance was poor at answering the eleventh item of the question; 25% of them could identify the right pragmatic marker, 57.5% chose the second option and 17.5 selected the third.

- **Her report highlighted what we all know, _____ that there have been problems with distribution.**

- a. viz b. for example c. in particular**

Lack of knowledge can be the most probable reason for the student's failure to answer the two items, 10 and 11 knowing that the pragmatic markers *at any rate* and *viz* are the least common markers to the participants compared to the other ones. Being unaware of these makers' meaning and function has made the test-takers evade them.

The curve of the participants' performance rises considerably in their answer to item 12 which depicts the following context:

- **English is often said to be the most commonly spoken language although _____, this is not true as Chinese and Spanish have more native speakers.**

- a. at least b. in other words c. strictly speaking**

72% of the participant have identified the most appropriate choice, which suggests a positive indication that the students were able to access the content of the pragmatic marker they opted and it how it would properly bridge the gap between the two clauses in the sentence. The rest of the participants have almost equally been divided in selecting the wrong options realized by the alternatives of **a** and **b**.

A similar positive case is seen in item -13. The participants' performance keeps climbing up the scale higher as the positive ascending curve hits 77.5 % by selecting the marker of **b**, whereas 7.5% chose **a** and 15% chose **c**. The item stated the following:

- **I'd like to thank our local office staff, _____ David Evans, Jackie Robbins and Mike Smith.**

- a. that is to say b. namely c. for instance**

Negative performance is seen with the participants in doing item-14 and item-15 as only 50% have successfully selected the best choice in the former and 40% could do item-15.

Item-14 sketched out the following context:

- **This chapter focuses on three elements that are essential for a successful product, _____ good design, quality materials and effective marketing.**

- a. namely b. for example c. in addition**

Being in a list-fashion, the terms mentioned after the space have made the participants think that they are examples for the three elements not their names. Thus, 50% of the students believed that *for example* was the best choice and only 35% of them made the correct selection. The selection of the remaining 15% seemed to be based on poor reasoning and weak comprehension. On the other hand, apparently, the participants could not identify the relationship between the two sentences, probably due to lack of knowledge that *Cantonese* is a language and that they could identify the comparison involved between the two languages. This clearly indicates that language proficiency is a fundamental factor in using or identifying pragmatic markers in a language. Item-15 has involved the following context:

- The Thai language has five tones. Cantonese, _____ , uses tone to convey meaning.

- a. by contrast b. for example c. similarly

40% of the participants filled in the gap correctly. However, 35% of the participants thought that Cantonese is an example of Thai language.

To sum up, to make their choices, the participants have been attracted to the pragmatic markers that seemed to be more frequently used in their academic environment. Moreover, the participants' linguistic proficiency, especially the lexical aspect, could enable them to certain extent to identify the pragmatic markers in the sentences and to access the function of many of them.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the results this study has arrived at, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. It could be generally judged that the students' awareness of the usage of pragmatic markers is fairly acceptable, especially if we statistically learn that the correct answers of the test was 65.84% in gross. However, the Kurdish EFL undergraduate face difficulty in identifying the functions of such markers, especially the ones that they are less exposed to. This deficiency may negatively affect their ability to use or comprehend such markers.
2. Lack of exposure to pragmatic markers can have a considerable negative impact on the EFL learners' ability to accurately access the using and identify the concept/s of the marker.

3. Cognitively speaking, a lack of knowledge about the English-speaking world and how life there is experienced may influence the performance of the EFL learners' use of English language, especially the culture-flavored parts.
4. Pragmatic markers are inseparable sets from the language, which makes an extra challenge for EFL learners to speak fluently and write appropriately. This point requires the EFL teacher to address such sets in their instruction and highlight the importance of their inclusion in whatever they assign the students more to establish these markers in their use of English.
5. The EFL learners need to understand that using pragmatic markers is crucial to sound authentic and clear in their use of English; pragmatic markers are not simply used to decorate what is written or uttered.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

To enhance the awareness of the EFL Kurdish undergraduates of English pragmatic markers, teachers are required to highlight such markers whenever used in the class whether in spoken or written discourses. Not only the semantic aspects of the marker should be focused on but also their pragmatic functions in the contexts they appear in. This requirement can be authentically activated in the classes of conversation and academic writing. Additionally, in classes that involve literary modules, especially novels and short stories, the teachers can draw the learners' attention to the use of the pragmatic markers throughout the narrative texts they teach. The learners' frequent authentic exposure to the various sets of such linguistic signposts throughout their academic journey will undoubtedly internalize their semantic and pragmatic characteristics and use them precisely.

Further research can be conducted on pragmatic markers in terms of their occurrence in the series of English textbooks used in the English classes at primary and high schools in Kurdistan region and how the teachers address them.

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