Unravelling the Functions of Discourse Markers in BPO Communication: A Pragmatic Analysis

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Abstract

In the realm of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), the strategic utilization of discourse markers (DMs) holds immense significance for facilitating clear communication across various stakeholders, including clients and colleagues. This research primarily aimed to uncover the functions played by DMs in BPO communication, while also exploring the perspectives of BPO employees regarding their usage. By employing AntConc as a tool to analyze concordance and frequency, the study identified 22 frequently used discourse markers. Additionally, it found that these markers served distinct pragmatic functions, categorized into interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive based on a multi-categorical framework for discourse markers. Furthermore, the research utilized both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions involving 10 participants each. The findings revealed four essential themes pertaining to the utilization of DMs by BPO employees: clarity and understanding, seamless transitions, coherence, speech organization and management, and conversation flow and control. This study holds particular significance due to the scarcity of similar research in the Philippine context and contributes valuable insights to the existing body of related research.

Keywords: applied linguistics; discourse markers; pragmatic analysis; BPO communication; Philippines

1. Introduction

Communicating effectively in English provides career opportunities since it has become the language for most people in various fields. Over time, learning a second language plays a critical role in producing good communication. However, despite the increasing demand for speaking English, there is still inadequacy in spoken discourse. Bartolo (2019) asserted that even though Filipinos are acknowledged for their skill in English, there's a noticeable trend of many students facing challenges in expressing themselves in the language.

In Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), employees are expected to utilize discourse markers (DMs) strategically to facilitate practical and clear communication, which is crucial in their roles when dealing with clients, colleagues, and diverse business contexts. Yet, there are instances where employees either need to learn to use DMs or employ them, disrupting the coherence and comprehensibility of the conversation.

Consequently, gap fillers, such as "um" or "uh," might become prevalent substitutes for DMs in conveying the message. Arya (2020) suggests that English speakers' restricted use of discourse markers impeded communication effectiveness.

Discourse markers are fundamental in human communication, with listeners often regarding the speaker's choice of these markers as a primary means to ensure a conversation's smooth flow and coherence (Sari, 2023). They serve as crucial tools for structuring and organizing communication across various levels of interaction (Kizil, 2021). Through these DMs, speakers can expound themselves clearly and make the conversation glide smoothly and engage without distorting its underlying meaning. Thus, it remains a significant concern when speakers intend to use DMs without understanding their fundamental functions in spoken discourse.

Discourse markers (DMs) serve diverse purposes and engage the discourse-pragmatic abilities of speakers. In this context, the conduct of this study is deemed necessary as it seeks to investigate communication in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry to uncover the various functions of discourse markers. This research is crucial in enhancing awareness among language users who may need more understanding of how DMs function. Furthermore, staying informed about the correct utilization of DMs in speech and conversations contributes to improved communicative and pragmatic competence.

Different scholars have widely explored the study of discourse markers in written and spoken discourse. Research into spoken English discourse in real-life scenarios has experienced rapid growth (Alami, 2016; Bartolo, 2019). Consequently, certain linguistic features have gained recognition as crucial elements in communication between speakers and listeners. Specific speech tools help ESL learners convey coherent and cohesive discourse (Bartolo, 2019). Speakers utilize linguistic devices like *you know, well, now, so, I mean, of course, however,* and others as discourse markers, signaling how upcoming part of speech or text relates to the ongoing discourse context (Bartolo, 2019; Schiffrin, 1987).

Discourse markers are studied under many labels like discourse markers, discourse connectives, discourse operators, pragmatic connectives, sentence connectives, and cue phrases (Basol & Kartal, 2019; Fraser, 1999). Thus, these different terminologies only suggest that several researchers embark on their research on this group of words from different perspectives and that DMs carry various discourse definitions. For instance, Khameneh and Faruji (2020) assert that discourse markers are words and phrases used in speaking and writing to signpost discourse. Discourse markers do this by showing turns, joining ideas together, showing attitude, and controlling communication. Similarly, Huneety et al. (2023) suggested that these markers constitute a functional category that typically does not change the core content of a statement but significantly contributes to the arrangement and structure of discourse. This function involves establishing an interpretive connection between the segment where they are used and the preceding statement. This connection can be expressed through methods such as providing additional details or commentary on the previous discourse, signaling a contrast between what was said before and what is coming next, drawing attention to forthcoming information, restating an idea, or emphasizing a proposition (Heine et al. 2021).

Moreover, discourse markers possess unique attributes that distinguish them from other linguistic elements (Farahani & Ghane, 2022). For instance, in the context of meta-discourse markers, as described by Hyland (2022), three distinctive roles are attributed to them: firstly, these characteristics must be separated from the core propositional aspects of meaning since they inherently lack propositional content; secondly, they encompass those elements within discourse that serve to establish interaction between the writer and

reader or the speaker and audience; and finally, they can serve diverse functions in varying contextual situations.

Conversely, DMs perform interpersonal and textual roles. The textual roles include introducing a new turn, marking transitions (topic shifting), initiating or terminating a digression, presenting a reason or explanation, introducing self-correcting, direct speech, floor holding, and fillers. The interpersonal roles are composed of conveying an attitude or reaction, showing the speaker's reluctance, and achieving sharing and cooperation between the speaker and the listener: saving face, expressing and checking comprehension, and verification (Liu, 2017; Truong, 2022).

Furthermore, a more current definition of DMs are linguistic expressions such as particles, words, or phrases that signal speaker attitudes, indicate how hearers might "take" an utterance, and contribute to the coherence/flow of the discourse (Arya, 2020; Culpeper et al. 2018).

The philosophical paradigm of the study is anchored on *Fung and Carter's (2007) Discourse Marker Multi-categorical framework*, composed of structural, referential, cognitive, and interpersonal as a point of departure in the analysis of DMs found in transcripts from the actual pre-employment interviews in selected three BPO companies.

The present study may be a replication of the previous studies that have been explored; however, the scant studies of DMs in Davao City prompted the researcher to embark on a similar field, specifically in BPO communication, in advancing more studies in Philippine context focusing on discourse markers. Specifically, by employing Fung and Carter's (2007) Discourse Marker Multi-categorical framework, the researcher had a structured guide for analyzing DMs based on their categories and functions within the discourse.

1.1 Research Question

The present study examines discourse markers' functions in BPO communication. Specifically, it seeks answers to the following questions:
1. What are the discourse markers commonly used in BPO communication?
2. What are the functions of these discourse markers?
3. What are the BPO employees' insights on the use of discourse markers?

This research on the functions of discourse markers in BPO communication will add to the current pool of knowledge in linguistics and pragmatics. The methodology of this research can serve as a foundational basis for other researchers who wish to embark on a similar study. Furthermore, the study's results will also add to the existing knowledge in literature related to discourse markers published in reputable journals. Foremost, having scant studies of this kind of research in the Philippines, particularly in Davao City, the present study will supplement the body of related research. In addition to the myriad advantages of this study, it also significantly impacts the community. First, this brings awareness to society, particularly English language users, regarding the importance of understanding the functions of discourse markers in both written and spoken discourse. Second, this gives BPO employees, in particular, the opportunity to improve clarity and coherence in conversation.

Lastly, this research is an immense help to the BPO industry to consider upskilling and training enhancement communication programs, helping their employees express themselves more effectively and using discourse markers appropriately, which can contribute to professional success by facilitating clear and

efficient communication when dealing with clients and vendors. On top of that, this research endeavor will significantly help future researchers who aim to explore similar studies. This study's methods and detailed discussions may offer foundational support for future research endeavors. The proponent of this study hopes to contribute to the pool of literature so that future researchers will no longer have difficulty finding related studies in the locality.

The proponent of this study focuses only on identifying the commonly used discourse markers in BPO communication and determining the function of these DMs. In the analysis, only 50 audio-recorded pre-employment interviews are compiled. The analysis will not include the interviewer's responses; hence, only the applicants' responses will be considered. Besides, only the audio-recorded interviews from 2022 to 2023 are used for the analysis. By doing so, the researcher of this study assures an in-depth analysis of all discourse markers found in the transcripts.

On top of that, the researcher delves into understanding the insights of BPO employees in their use of discourse markers by conducting in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). In conducting these interviews, the researcher randomly selected 10 participants. The researcher employs AntConc 3.5.9, a no-cost web-based tool for corpus analysis, to uncover concordance and analyze text. This initial scan will focus on identifying discourse markers (DMs) that serve structural, interpersonal, referential, and cognitive functions by Fung and Carter's Discourse Marker Multi-categorical framework (2007).

2. Method

This section provides an overview of the research methods employed in the study. It elaborates on critical aspects, including the study's participants, materials, instruments, research design, and procedure.

2.1. Study Participants

Following a comprehensive analysis of the discourse markers identified in the transcriptions, the researcher aimed to understand employees' insights regarding language usage. Due to this, an in-depth interview (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD) were conducted. The interviews were composed of 10 randomly selected participants in three BPO companies. In conducting focus groups, the number of participants may differ. Commonly, focus group members consist of 10-12 people (Baumgartner et al 1994), between six to ten (Powell & Single, 1996), and between six to eight (Krueger, 2014), together in a discussion in which a moderator will guide them. It was also suggested by (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Giorgi, 2009) that in qualitative research, to attain representativeness and generalizability with a limited number of research participants, it is advisable for researchers conducting in-depth interviews to engage with a range of five to 25 participants who have encountered the same phenomenon.

When selecting participants, specific criteria were taken into account. Inclusion criteria involved individuals who successfully passed the pre-employment interviews conducted by the recruitment team, individuals who remained employed within the company throughout the study, and individuals who expressed their willingness to participate in interviews with the approval of their respective team leaders or managers. Conversely, exclusion criteria pertained to applicants who did not pass the interviews and those who passed but needed endorsement from their team leaders or managers. Withdrawal criteria were applied to the following individuals: those who hesitated during the interviews and requested to discontinue and those who expressed their desire to withdraw before the interview began.

The choice of the study locale was due to the convenience and accessibility of the researcher of this study. Furthermore, the researcher previously held a call center agent position in two distinct BPO firms and accrued two years of expertise in this industry.

To guarantee that all participants willingly chose to participate in the study, a briefing session was organized to provide them with information about the research's aims and the objectives of the interviews.

2.2. Materials and Instrument

The study utilized a dataset comprising 50 audio recordings from three different BPO companies. The selection of these 50 audio recordings for analysis adhered to the following inclusion criteria: each recording must span at least five minutes, have been conducted over the phone, and have taken place between 2022 and 2023. Conversely, two exclusion criteria applied to the following: audio recordings lasting less than five minutes and interviews conducted in person were excluded from consideration.

Because interviews were employed in the study, it is crucial to have validated interview guide questions. The proponent of this study created an interview guide instrument that includes the main, identifying, and probing questions. These questions centered explicitly on gathering responses regarding the participants' insights on using discourse markers.

2.3. Design and Procedures

The proponent of the study employed a qualitative approach that focused on analyzing the subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images rather than numbers and statistics (Adamu et al. 2018; Inansugan et al 2021).

This method is frequently applied in the social sciences to explore non-numeric data to elucidate the importance of these findings, aiding researchers in the analysis of social phenomena within specific populations or regions (Akyildiz & Ahmed 2021; Mohajan 2018). In addition, this study utilized pragmatic analysis through the lens of Fung and Carter's (2007) Discourse Marker Multi-categorical framework.

Using the provided framework, the research classified the discourse markers (DMs) identified in the transcripts under four main functional categories: interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive. The combination of qualitative and pragmatic analysis facilitated a thorough exploration of the study's results. Additionally, employing this framework enabled the researcher to conduct a detailed examination of the pragmatic roles of discourse markers within BPO communication, further confirming the suitability of the research design.

3. Results and Discussion

This section unfolds the commonly used discourse markers in BPO communication. This section also unravels the functions of these DMs and discusses the insights of the BPO employees on the use of discourse markers.

3.1. Commonly Used DMs in BPO Communication

Presented in Table 1 are the commonly used discourse markers in BPO communication. Through

AntConc, the researcher utilized the search tool to create lists of occurrences of lexical terms and expressions found in the corpora. These lists underwent manual inspection based on predefined criteria to identify items categorized as discourse markers. Furthermore, a secondary manual analysis was conducted to observe the potential functions of each DM. This process identified specific tasks that each DM could fulfil. Leveraging these functions, categorized into the four mentioned categories, as a framework for analysis, the researcher systematically used the mentioned tool to identify instances functioning as DMs.

The analysis found that the compilation of fifty transcripts contained a sum of 29,758-word tokens or the total number of words used. Among these, there were 2,491 unique word types.

Table 1. *Commonly used Discourse Markers in BPO Communication*

Rank	Discourse Markers	Frequency
1	and	814
2	so	441
3	because	219
4	like	213
5	yes	203
6	yeah	176
7	actually	170
8	okay	166
9	but	141
10	really	132
11	then	125
12	you know	101
13	well	85
14	alright	39
15	I mean	37
16	I think	32
17	yet	20
18	basically	11
19	however	5
20	absolutely	3
21	exactly	2
22	anyway	1

As the preceding shows, the most frequently used discourse marker is "and," appearing 814 times. Additionally, the DM "so" secured the second position on the list, utilized 441 times during the pre-employment interviews. Following closely, the DM "because" ranked third with 219 instances. Subsequently, "like" was employed 213 times; "yes" with 203 hits; "yeah" with 176 hits; and "actually" with 170 hits.

The DM "okay" secured the 8th position with 166 instances, followed by "but" with 141 occurrences, "really" with 132, "then" with 125, and "you know" with 101 occurrences. Conversely, the discourse marker "well" followed closely with 85 hits. Subsequently, "alright" and "I mean" were observed with 39 and 37 occurrences, respectively. "I think" occurred 32 times, while "yet" appeared 20 times. Other discourse markers identified from the text analysis included "basically" with 11 hits; "however" with 5 hits; "absolutely" with 3 hits; "exactly" with 2 hits; and "anyway" with 1 hit.

3.2. Functions of Discourse Markers in BPO Communication

As depicted in Table 2 below, the functions of discourse markers in BPO communication are presented as utilized by the applicants.

Table 2. *Functions of Discourse Markers in BPO Communication*

Category	Function	Discourse Markers
Interpersonal	Marking shared knowledge:	*you know*
	Indicating attitudes:	*really, absolutely, basically, actually, exactly*
	Showing responses:	*okay, yeah, yes, alright*
Referential	Marking cause:	*because*
	Marking contrast:	*but, yet, however*
	Marking coordination:	*and*
	Marking consequence:	*so*
	Marking digression:	*anyway*
Structural	Opening and closing of topics	*so, well*
	Sequence:	*then*
	Marking topic shifts:	*so*
	Marking conclusion:	*so*

	Continuation of the current topic:	*yeah, so, because*
Cognitive	Denoting thinking process:	*well, I think*
	Reformulation:	*I mean*
	Elaboration:	*like, I mean*
	Hesitation:	*well*

The analysis is based on Fung and Carter's (2007) discourse marker multi-categorical framework comprising interpersonal, referential, structural, and cognitive categories. Each category within this framework encompasses multiple functions as a starting point for examining commonly used discourse markers. Through meticulous categorization of discourse markers based on these dimensions, the researcher guarantees a thorough grasp of the communicative functions present in the discourse. This method underscores the researcher's dedication to adhering to Fung and Carter's theoretical framework, ultimately enabling a detailed and nuanced examination of the data.

3.2.1. Interpersonal Functions of DMs

The DMs classified in the interpersonal category were used by the applicants when responding to the pre-employment interviews. These DMs that fall under this category are devices that let them mark shared knowledge, indicate attitude, and show responses. The applicants use the DM "you know" with 101 occurrences to mark shared knowledge in the conversations. A discourse marker indicating shared knowledge signals to listeners or readers that both parties already understand or assume the information being communicated.

For instance, in transcript 15, the applicant used the DM "you know" 5 times when asked about career shift:

> *Interviewer: Okay, so why choose to have this career shift and apply for a BPO company?*
>
> *Applicant: Okay, if you're not asking, by the way, yes, I am a teacher. I am a language professional teacher. So, I believe that working in a BPO or a BPO company, I believe that the work actually would really help me in terms of,* ***you know,*** *aside from the career. It also helps me, but by means of, this would help me to improve my communication skills. And at the same time, it would help me,* ***you know****, for professional growth,* ***you know****, aside from,* ***you know****, working in a school. I would also,* ***you know****, also part of the scope of my interest is working in the BPO industry. So, as I mentioned, it would really help me to improve my communication skills. And I know BPO, in the work of BPO, it is a diversified environment, actually. So, I would try to do that.*
> *(Transcript 15)*

Bartolo (2019) examined commonly used discourse markers, exploring their pragmatic functions and syntactic placements in spoken discourse. The discourse marker "you know," predominantly occurring in the

middle position, serves an interpersonal function, indicating shared understanding and cooperation among speakers.

On the other hand, in the same category, the DMs "really," "absolutely," "basically," "actually," and "exactly" were utilized by the applicants to indicate attitude. A discourse marker indicating attitude conveys the speaker's subjective stance, opinion, or emotional state toward the content being discussed. For instance, in transcript 45, the DM "really" emphasized the speaker's sincerity or earnestness in expressing his feelings. It highlights the genuine privilege and happiness felt by the speaker about being in the final interview:

> *Interviewer: Okay. So you mentioned earlier that you want to be part of the training team. That's what you said. Now, what will you do both personally and professionally to achieve this personal growth or professional growth here in ____?*
>
> *Applicant: First, you have to indulge yourself to the experiences. That's why I am **really** privileged to be and I am actually happy to have this final interview because I had passed the assessments and the initial interview and it's quite hard, but I got nervous but I **really** do expect to be in this position as well. To have initial, there's a ladder for me to be. And that position, I just had that I'm not saying that I want to be that in that position because it entails a lot of effort, a lot of if you have to prove yourself, prove in a way that you follow so that you can have the experiences and knowledge to share also. And your attitude to be in that position too.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Transcript 45)*</div>

The DM "absolutely" also carries the same function: to indicate the speaker's attitude. Transcript 44, for instance, shows the speaker's attitude about using the discourse marker "absolutely" as a strong affirmation and enthusiasm. Using "absolutely," the speaker expresses wholehearted agreement and eagerness to seize the opportunity presented:

> *Interviewer: So because actually we do have this program here at ___ that we help our working students. We call that the SHIFT-EXEMPT program. So if ever you are going to be hired, actually at SHIFT-EXEMPT program works, we are getting the class schedules of our working students and then as soon as we have those schedules, we are going to tailor fit their work schedule to their class schedule so that it will not interfere to each other. So if ever that we're going to hire you, are you willing to grab that opportunity?*
>
> *Applicant: Yes, **absolutely** and that would be a great opportunity to hire.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Transcript 44)*</div>

Moreover, the DM "basically" also has the same function to indicate the speaker's attitude, as shown in transcript 21. The applicant employed the DM "basically" to simplify and summarize her experience:

> *Interviewer: So can you please tell me more about that? Can you please tell me your tenuity and at the same time those accounts that you were in and your role on those specific accounts?*

Applicant: Okay. So, uhm T-Mobile was an international account. It was ***basically*** *an assistance of a customer in terms of their payment, most especially the payment, payment arrangement for essentially their payment and also for the sales. And like promotion, they were asking for what is the deal where they could get when they go into purchase of this specific device. And they also have this something like in common with the customer that they always ask for like advice, what would they do about the phone that they have because they do not really know what the phones are getting, especially with all the old customers that I have with before.*

<div align="right">

(Transcript 21)
</div>

Conversely, the DM "actually" also carries the same function: showing the speaker's attitude. In transcript 11, it can be shown that the applicant repeatedly used the DM "actually" in her response. The repeated use of "actually" underscores the speaker's desire to convey the information as factual and accurate:

Interviewer: Can you please tell me something about that movie, _____?

Applicant: Yeah. So that specific movie is ***actually*** *a series. It has a part 1, part 2, and part 3. That is* ***actually*** *a bit interesting because aside of the cast, it's* ***actually*** *good looking and it is* ***actually*** *a tension hooker from movies from India. It is* ***actually*** *traditional the way they dance, the way they sing. It is* ***actually*** *good and great. And for the summary of the movie, it is* ***actually*** *somehow like a love life. It's all about a love life wherein the boy met a girl. However, they got separated because of the greedy father. So the boy has no option but to take her daughter, Mary, to a wealthy man because of the debt of the father. But because of the love of the actor, the actor man fights everything for the love in an action way.*

<div align="right">

(Transcript 11)
</div>

Finally, the DM "exactly" with 2 hits also carries the same function. The applicants' use of "exactly" indicates their attitude to ensure that their message is understood precisely as intended. It also suggests their commitment to clarity and effectiveness in their communication, as shown in transcripts 22:

Interviewer: Okay. So, you mentioned that you love watching documentaries in YouTube. Can you please tell me the most recent documentary that you've watched and what is the most striking detail on that specific documentary video?

Applicant: Okay. So, I forgot the title, but it's about, like, it's about the story, you know, it's about news. ***Exactly****, news. It somehow, like, you know, it really, the striking part of it is, like, you really have, the striking part of it is, like, some people are because the documentary is all about, like, destruction or damages caused by certain or specific calamity. So, the striking part of it is, like, when you watch, when I watch that certain documentary, I really have that sense of, you know, sympathy to people in there because, you know, the destruction is really, like, caused them so much. There are so, so, a lot of damages.*

<div align="right">

(Transcript 22)
</div>

Ismail (2021) strongly argued that the discourse markers mentioned above streamline the process of conveying information and represent the speaker's attitudes toward the information being conveyed. Similarly, Fei and ZOU (2023) regarded these markers as attitude indicators since they reflect the speaker's disposition. In the sampled text, these DMs indicate a sense of precision or certainty.

At the same time, discourse markers within the interpersonal category serve not only to denote shared knowledge and convey attitudes but also to demonstrate responses. A discourse marker showing responses indicates the speaker's reaction or response to the preceding information or statement. Discourse markers such as "okay*," "yeah," "yes,"* and "alright" fulfil this role. In transcript 8, using the discourse marker "okay" in this context implies a sense of confirmation or agreement. It suggests that the applicant acknowledges their first and last name request and is ready to provide the information. It helps to establish a cooperative and polite tone in the conversation:

> *Interviewer: I'm currently looking for a mobile phone.*
>
> *Applicant:* **Okay,** *for me to assist you, may I know your first and last name please?*
>
> > *(Transcript 8)*

In transcript 11, the applicant's use of "yeah" serves as a conversational filler or affirmation, indicating agreement or understanding with the points being made. It suggests that the applicant is actively listening and engaging in the discussion about the importance of integrity and passion within the company:

> *Interviewer: Okay. I see. So I do have one and final question for you. I know that you used to work here in _____. And can you please tell me how would you define the phrase passion for people?*
>
> *Applicant:* **Yeah,** *for me since it's been really quite a while, but I can understand that. really have really implies more about integrity in your company. And if you think that passion would really give growth to your employees, then I can see that, I mean, with your company, uhm, with your company, people would really have passion. And would really like grow more and hone more skills, more skills. And yeah, I think that is really what I understand with passion, with that.*
>
> > *(Transcript 11)*

In transcript 6, the use of DM "yes" suggests that the applicant is responsive and cooperative, demonstrating a willingness to accommodate the interviewer's schedule or needs:

> *Interviewer: Hey, good morning once again. So, I will be the one who will be doing your final interview. Are you currently available today?*
>
> *Applicant:* **Yes**. *I am very available today.*
>
> > *(Transcript 6)*

In addition, in transcript 9, the applicant's use of "alright" signals his acknowledgment of the interviewer's statement and readiness to assist. The DM "alright" serves as a responsive marker, indicating the

applicant's willingness to engage and offer help in finding a new phone:

> *Interviewer: I'm currently looking for a brand new phone.*
>
> *Applicant: **Alright**, yeah, don't worry sir. I can definitely assist you and look for a great deal or great phone where you can save a lot. So, may I ask what's you first and last name...I'm sorry.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Transcript 9)*</div>

The result of the analysis aligns with Bartolo's (2019) claim that discourse markers in the interpersonal category serve not only as markers of agreement but also as indicators of response or reaction. In particular, DM "yes" can fulfill various functions, including serving as a back-channel signal, agreement marker, response or reaction marker, and confirmation-seeker or face-saver.

3.2.2. Referential Functions of DMs

The discourse markers within this classification function as causal markers, contrast markers, coordination markers, consequence markers, and digression markers. The applicants commonly used these DMs on numerous occasions. A discourse marker showing cause indicates the reason or cause behind a particular event, action, or statement. The DM "because" as a causal marker was used by the applicants 219 times. This is evident in transcript 30, wherein the use of "because" clarifies the causal relationship between the applicant's desire for a career change and her motivation for seeking a new experience outside of teaching:

> *Interviewer: Perfect. So let's start off with, can you please tell me something about yourself, ___?*
>
> *Applicant: Um, I'm ___ and I've been a teacher for seven years in a private school here in Polomoloc and I wanted to be a call center agent there in ___ **because** I wanted to go out from my comfort zone and experience away from teaching and I'm very excited if given a chance to be a part of your team.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Transcript 30)*</div>

The findings indicating how the discourse marker "because" operates as a casual align with Lin's (2023) assertion that causal markers, including "because," serve various functions: indicating causal relationships, demonstrating consequences or effects, linking two clauses, and providing the rationale or cause for an argument.

On the flip side, DMs "but," "yet," and "however" also fall under the referential category that serves as contrast markers. The discourse marker "but" in transcript 21 highlights the difference between the applicant's present and future residences, indicating a shift or contrast:

> *Interviewer: Okay, well that's good. Actually that's the best way on how you can handle that specific call. So I would just like to know, where are you currently residing ___?*
>
> *Applicant: I'm here at Cagayan de Oro **but** I will go back to Davao next week. Maybe that would be Sunday.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Transcript 21)*</div>

Another discourse marker that functions as a contrast marker is "yet." With 20 hits, the applicants use " yet " to convey their responses. In transcript 24 below also shows the function of "yet" as a contrast marker. The use of "yet" introduces a contrast between the applicant's acknowledgment that she may not be able to graduate or study immediately and her goal to achieve stability in terms of finances within the next 12 months:

> *Interviewer: What are your priorities for the next 12 months?*
>
> *Applicant: So my priorities for the next 12 months is stability. Maybe I will not be able to graduate **yet** or study right now, but I have the goal to stabilize myself in terms of financial. I think we all really think about it. So that's for me. My goal for the next 12 months, we're trying to say 12 months, right?*
>
> *(Transcript 24)*

Finally, another discourse marker that falls under a referential category that functions as a contrast marker is "however." For instance, in transcript 23, the DM "however" highlights the shift or contrast between the two locations, indicating a difference or discrepancy between them:

> *Interviewer: Okay. Well, that's great. So, where are you currently residing, ____?*
>
> *Applicant: Currently in Cagayan De Oro. **However**, I have someone who I know in Davao and I can communicate with him.*
>
> *(Transcript 23)*

The result of the analysis corroborates the notion of Lin (2023) that these markers are utilized to contrast between two clauses or segments of discourse, showcasing differences between an anticipated and actual response or statement.

On the contrary, another DM that falls under the referential category is "and," which functions as a coordination marker. A discourse marker showing coordination links related or equal elements within a discourse, indicating a connection or relationship between them. For example, in transcript 15, the discourse marker "and" functions as a connector, linking the applicant's statements about taking an exam, passing it, and cohesively mentioning her priorities. The use of "and" helps to provide coherence in the applicant's narrative by highlighting the relationship between her achievements and her current focus:

> *Interviewer: Yes, yes. Okay. So, did you already take your licensure examination?*
>
> *Applicant: Okay. Yes, last March of this year, I actually took the exam **and** yes, luckily, I passed. That is the first take. But, you know, I have to mention it on my previous interview, I think that's yesterday, I have mentioned that for now, my priority is to find work and I have to set aside to apply for a BS Ed course. I have to set aside from that **and** a job or, you know, I really need, you know, for work.*
>
> *(Transcript 15)*

Another DM that falls under the referential category is "so," which serves as a consequence marker. A discourse marker showing consequence indicates the result or outcome of a preceding action, event, or situation. In transcript 44, the DM "so" indicates that the applicant's interest in working at the company results from his colleague's positive experiences and feedback:

> *Interviewer: So are you willing to be relocated here in Davao if ever that we're going to hire you?*
>
> *Applicant: Yes. Actually sir, my colleague now works there and he said a lot of things about the company **so** that is the reason why I am interested to work there.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Transcript 44)*</div>

Novita Wijayanti (2019) stated that the discourse marker "so" is employed to signify a connection between a premise (cause) and a conclusion (result), where premise refers to cause and conclusion denotes result. Furthermore, it fundamentally conveys the idea of a result.

Lastly, another discourse marker under the referential category is "anyway." The DM "anyway" is the least used discourse marker in BPO communication, which only has 1 hit upon the analysis. For example, transcript 32 shows that "anyway" is a digression marker. Using "anyway" indicates a shift from discussing his educational background to explaining his decision to relocate and apply for a job in a different city:

> *Interviewer: Perfect. So let's start off with, can you please tell me something about yourself?*
>
> *Applicant: Well, my name is _____. Currently I'm from Cagayan de Oro City. I'm 29 years old and I studied at Xavier University for two years, two to four years when I was on and off college because of my sister and right now I decided to apply in Davao because I was planning to relocate **anyway**. So yeah, here I am and I applied at ___.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Transcript 32)*</div>

Bartolo (2019) suggested that the discourse marker "anyway" delineates discourse boundaries, indicating a shift or partial shift in topic. Similarly, Lin (2023) contends that markers for topic shift or digression indicate transitions between discourse topics, signaling deviations from one topic to another or returning to a previous topic.

3.2.3. Structural Functions of DMs

The discourse markers in this category serve various functions, such as opening and closing topics, sequencing markers, marking shift topics, concluding markers, and continuing the current topic. In transcript 22, the DM "so" functions more as an opening of the topic rather than its closing. It is used to transition into providing more detailed information about the speaker, marking the beginning of a new aspect of the conversation:

> *Interviewer: Perfect. So, let's start off with, can you please tell me something about yourself?*

*Applicant: Okay. **So**, well, I am _____. I am 22 years of age and I am currently residing here in the biggest city, Davao del Sur. And I am a college undergraduate and unfortunately, I am unable to pursue my college degree. And also, I am passionate about communicating to people, serving them what they need. And also, assessing them in their, like, what they are going to do or what they should do or what they must do in their, you know, about their own concerns in life.*

(Transcript 22)

As stated, the discourse marker "so" functions not only as an opening but also as a closing of the topic. For example, in transcript 46, the discourse marker "so" functions as a transitional element that concludes the explanation provided by the applicant:

Interviewer: Is that Ramadan?

Applicant: Yes, Ramadan.

Interviewer: Okay.

*Applicant: And we call the last of Ramadan our Eid. **So** I guess that was the time I will be absent because that was very important to us.*

(Transcript 46)

Another DM that functions as an opening of topics is "well." The applicants have utilized the DM "well" 85 times in their conversation. In transcript 4, the DM "well" serves as an opening discourse marker, signaling the beginning of the applicant's response to the interviewer's question:

Interviewer: okay. Well, thank you so much. So, my last question for you then is out of all other candidates, why should we hire you as one of our agents?

*Applicant: **Well,** for me sir. I'm not really good in that but I know that I have the ability to learn something, and I am willing to learn new something, and I am teachable. And, if there is something that they want uhm that can highlight me or something that can uhm which is the leadership because I know that leadership is one of the important thing in our self because leadership start from our self. And I know and I believe that I have that ability which is leadership and discipline. And I believe that I have discipline, respect, and leadership.*

(Transcript 4)

Another discourse marker categorized structurally as a sequence marker is "then." The discourse marker "then," which appeared 125 times, was utilized by the applicants in numerous instances. To ascertain transcripts 31, as shown below, the discourse marker "then" functions as a sequence marker to indicate the chronological order of steps or actions that need to be taken to reach a destination:

Interviewer: No. From your house going to SM Ecoland.

Applicant: Okay. So since I live here in Matina Pangi, specifically Block 10

*Lot 15 Samantha Holmes, from our house, you need to get to cross two streets first from our street. You turn left and **then** go up to another street, which is the main Wilson Street. And **then** after that, you go left again so that you can get out of the subdivision and ride a tricycle. And from there, there's a motorcycle that travels 10 minutes from the center point in a crossing, which you will be going to ride a jeepney for going to SM Ecoland. And for that one, it's like a 5 to 10 minutes travel as well.*

(Transcript 31)

The result can be attributed to the proposition of NovitaWijayanti (2019) that the discourse marker "then" is utilized to signify a transition between preceding and subsequent shifts in conversation—a progression from one topic to another.

In addition, the discourse marker "so" falls into a structural category that indicates topic shifts. Transcript 37 proves that the discourse marker "so" indicates a topic shift. The DM "so" marks a transition to a new topic. Here, "so" signifies a change from the applicant's personal background information (being a solo parent and previous employment) to her current employment status and plans:

Interviewer: Perfect. So, let's start off with, can you please tell me something about yourself?

*Applicant: Yes, sure, sir. So, well, I'm a solo parent. I have three sons. And with my previous job, I work with Nadella International Sibling Solutions here in Tagum City for three years. **So**, I currently resigned now in the company and I'm looking forward for another job. And I choose ____ for it.*

(Transcript 37)

Arya's study (2020), which investigates the distribution and contextual function of discourse markers, found that the discourse marker "so" is commonly utilized. The absence of the "so" marker would result in a less seamless transition between shifts in discourse.

In addition to marking topic shifts, the discourse marker "so" is also used in conversations as a summary or concluding marker. This demonstrates that a single discourse marker can fulfill multiple functions within discourse, in the case of transcript 34, wherein the DM "so" functions more as a concluding marker than a summary marker:

Interviewer: Okay, so why you choose to apply here in ____?

*Applicant: So for that, I have been referred by a colleague. So I was also shocked that I was referred to your business. So I just tried a while ago because you just sent me via phone. **So** yeah, that's what I did.*

(Transcript 34)

Lin (2023) pointed out that discourse markers also serve as markers to summarize or conclude, signaling or introducing outcomes, summaries, or conclusions.

Meanwhile, the last function of discourse markers that still fall under the structural category is a continuation of the current topic. Based on the analysis, these DMs are "yeah," "so," and "because." To

support this, the use of "yeah" in transcript 9 signals the applicant's intention to continue the conversation after acknowledging the interviewer's statement about the familiarity of his last name:

> *Interviewer: Okay. Well, your last name is quite familiar to me. How are you related with, you know, if you know this name, ___? Who's an associate...*
>
> *Applicant: I'm not really sure, but **yeah**, there are a lot of people asking me how I related to him. I think he's a valuable player, right?*
>
> *(Transcript 9)*

Meanwhile, the DM "so" also functions as a continuation marker for the applicants' use. In transcript 28, "so" signifies the continuation of the applicant's explanation by introducing a method or strategy they employ to handle pressure or challenging environments:

> *Interviewer: So what I want to know is that how do you usually handle those kinds of customers?*
>
> *Applicant: For me, first is to keep calm and think. I work better under pressure or challenging environments as it keeps me motivated. **So** I found a way such as dividing and creating a schedule for my task little by little. So everything will be taken care of and get done on time with sacrificing the quality because at the end of the day, it's our job to feel contented. I feel contentment for the customer. And afterwards, I reward myself because I deserve it and this one helps me handle the stress and it's very fulfilling.*
>
> *(Transcript 28)*

Subsequently, the DM "because" also functions as a continuation marker as thoroughly analyzed. For example, in transcript 35, using DM "because" introduces additional information or explanation that elaborates on the applicant's previous statement:

> *Interviewer: Okay, so besides working in abroad, you also have a lot of opportunities to work for an airline company. So why apply here besides enhancing your communication skills?*
>
> *Applicant: Actually, sir, for this question, sir, I just want for more because in travel and airline industry, it's also for your communication skills with the customer service. But this is different, sir, **because** this one is interacting with people using by phone calls. This also a big opportunity for me to enhance my communication skills, sir.*
>
> *(Transcript 35)*

Therefore, the findings of the analysis support Lin's (2023) assertion that continuation markers are employed to signify the ongoing discourse on a particular topic and to provide supplementary details to aid in complete understanding.

3.2.4. Cognitive Functions of DMs

Within the cognitive category, discourse markers serve several purposes, including indicating the thinking process, offering reformulation, providing elaboration, and expressing hesitation. To begin with, within the cognitive category, discourse markers like "well" and "I think" effectively indicate the thinking process.

For example, it can be observed in transcript 3 that the DM "well" serves more as a marker of the thinking process. It indicates a brief pause as the applicant considers how to articulate his response about his leisure activities:

> *Interviewer: well, I'm quite curious. What are these activities uhm that you do in your leisure time?*
>
> *Applicant: uhm, for example sir like uhm **well**, I love to go out sir. So, things like, uhm it's not rare but I go out sometimes without really bringing my phone.*
>
> <div align="right">(Transcript 3)</div>

Another DM marker of the thinking process is "I think." The applicants utilized the DM "I think" with 32 hits when responding to questions. For example, in transcript 1, the DM "I think" indicates a thinking process. It suggests that the applicant actively considers or evaluates her feelings and beliefs regarding her passion and career interests:

> *Interviewer: okay. Do you have any plans though?*
>
> *Applicant: uhm. For now, sir, no.*
>
> *Interviewer: why?*
>
> *Applicant: uhm. I just… **I think** it is not my real passion because I feel deep inside me, I am into sales or into marketing. So, I 'm planning to work and after I am being employed, I will…maybe I could start, or I could enroll myself in a sales class or business course.*
>
> <div align="right">(Transcript 1)</div>

Palacio and Gustilo (2016) asserted that the cognitive category encompasses the thinking process of the interlocutors. Discourse markers like "I mean," "I think," and "hmm" are instances of these markers that demonstrate the speaker's clarification and adjustment of ideas presented in their speech.

Another DM that falls under the cognitive category, which functions as reformulation this time, is the DM "I mean." This DM occurred 37 times and was evidently used by the applicants. For example, in transcript 4, the DM "I mean" functions as a reformulation marker. The applicant uses it to refine his previous friendship and mutual support statement:

> *Applicant: okay. So, not a movie sir but an anime.*
>
> *Interviewer: okay, go ahead*
>
> *Applicant: uhm one piece. Uhm I learned that one piece is uhm they taught on how to be a good when in comes to friendship no matter what their flaws and*

*I learned that when you have a friendship, you don't need to uhm **I mean**, you need to help one another, and teach them and learn from them. And also, uhm pray that you can learn from them. By that, you will accomplish the specific uhm mission or something that you want to achieve.*

(Transcript 4)

Palacio and Gustilo's argument (2016) corroborates the finding that using the discourse marker "I mean" indicates a speaker's effort to clarify and adjust ideas expressed in a statement. Similarly, Bartolo (2019) contends that "I mean" is employed to fix or adapt one's and others' discourse.

Another function of discourse markers within the cognitive category is to serve as markers for elaboration. Examples of these markers include "like" and "I mean." The applicants used the marker " like " 213 times to expand on their thoughts. It can be observed in transcript 2 that DM is used multiple times to draw comparisons or provide examples, which suggests that it is being used as an elaboration marker:

Interviewer: okay. Well, that being said, what are some of the expectations that you have uhm if we talk about a BPO or call center industry?

*Applicant: uhm my expectation about uhm I do have a little knowledge about BPO since I do have lots of friends working there, **like** talking to different people from other countries, **like** uhm doing uhm making calls, answering queries uhm answering problems by the other people from different countries. Also, my expectation in BPO is that uhm having a good environment to work with people like you can uhm rely on them, uhm when it comes to help about something that you don't know, that people are willing to train, and willing to correct you when you are wrong. That's it.*

(Transcript 2)

Lorenz (2022) asserted that functioning as a discourse marker, "like" conveys textual connections by linking the present statement to the preceding discourse. Additionally, it indicates exemplification, illustration, elaboration, or clarification.

Later, the discourse marker "I mean" also serves as an elaboration marker. This demonstrates that a specific discourse marker can serve multiple purposes depending on the context in which it is used. For instance, transcript 5 shows the DM "I mean" as an elaboration marker that helps the speaker clarify or elaborate on his previous statement:

Interviewer: so, basically, pretty much, you're an agent with a good attendance performance, at the same time, KPI passer. Right? So, what made you decide to leave your current company and work here in ____.

*Applicant: uhm I actually, the only reason why worked with ___ before, was actually I was young that time and I'm not really matured you know to handle things especially work. Because that's the first job that I had before. And the reason why I left ___ because of the environment. And yeah, I'm not really that you know good at you know handling other agents or **I mean**, you know I'm not really good at socializing and that's the reason why I left because you know because not healthy then, yeah. And for me, the reason why I apply here*

in _____ because you know in this time of pandemic, it's really hard to find a job. And as a member of you know, as a transgender, it's really hard for us to find a job because our opportunity when it comes to job is not really that wide. And ____ actually provides wide range opportunity for us, so that's the reason why I apply here in ____.

<div align="right">

(Transcript 5)
</div>

Novita Wijayanti (2019) highlights the prevalence of this type of discourse marker in everyday conversations, where it frequently serves to clarify preceding statements. In contrast, Troung (2022) suggests that the discourse marker "I mean" signals an impending explanation, effectively capturing and maintaining the listener's attention.

At the same time, another role of the discourse marker within the same category is as a marker of hesitation. Based on the researcher's analysis, only the discourse marker "well" fulfills this function. For instance, it is evident in transcript 36 that the DM "well" does function as a hesitation marker:

Interviewer: Okay, I see. So, ____, I would just like to know, what are your priorities for the next 12 months?

*Applicant: My priorities, to be exact, is to earn in this industry and regarding my...Like everybody says, do I have the plan to pursue the board licensure examination? **Well**, I don't have the interest. And yeah, just like I said, I am going to prioritize my career first in discovering new skills here in the BPO industry.*

<div align="right">

(Transcript 36)
</div>

Arya (2020) identifies "well" as a versatile word that can mark the beginning of a speech event, express reactions or contradictions, or indicate a speaker's moment of thought. In contrast, Tonio (2021) delves into the pragmatic function of "well" as a delaying marker, suggesting scenarios where speakers might not be immediately ready to respond, hesitate to disclose the truth, or need extra time to organize their thoughts.

3.3. BPO Employees' Insights on the Use of DMs

The insights of the BPO employees on the use of the discourse markers were unveiled based on both In-depth interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted by the researcher. In the interviews with ten BPO employees, four themes emerged in the insights on using discourse markers. These themes include tools for clarity and understanding, devices for seamless transitions, instruments for coherence, speech organization and management, and aid for conversation flow and control.

3.3.1. Tools for Clarity and Understanding

This theme emerged as one of the insights of the BPO employees as they recognize the importance of using discourse markers to provide clarity and coherence to their communication. They also understand that these markers serve as linguistic tools, guiding both themselves and the listener through the conversation. Interviewee 1 shared that he used discourse markers to clarify what he had previously mentioned. He specifically said this,

There are several possible reasons why I use these markers. However,

> *primarily, I use them when I am attempting to clarify something I mentioned earlier or when I forget or need to reconsider the correct tenses or sentence construction.* (RQ3 PQ1 I1 IDI)

The response of interviewee 1 was a clear indication that DMs are utilized to provide clarity and understanding. Similarly, interviewee 3 shared the sentiment that he employed DM to emphasize and clarify the person he communicates with. He stated,

> *I also use markers to give myself more time to think of the terms and answers I need to provide to the person I am talking to. Additionally, I utilize markers to emphasize the points I want to clarify to the person I am speaking with.* (RQ3 PQ1 I3 IDI)

Based on the above transcripts, the participants used discourse markers for clarity and understanding, mainly when conversing with their customers. This viewpoint can be linked to Arya's (2020) concept that in the absence of discourse markers to signify or clarify the speaker's communicative intent, there is an increased likelihood of communication breakdown when the listener interprets the statement solely based on context and intonation.

3.3.2. Devices of Seamless Transitions

The emergence of discourse markers as devices of seamless transitions flourished as a second theme. BPO professionals acknowledge that discourse markers are vital in seamlessly transitioning between different topics to maintain phone engagement with clients or guests. They realize that smooth transitions help keep the conversation dynamic and prevent it from becoming monotonous or disjointed. For example, interviewee 7 recalled when she used discourse markers when transitioning to a different topic. She explained,

> *Mostly, when I am still pondering what I am going to say to someone, especially during transitions to different topics.* (RQ1 PQ1 I7 IDI)

The response of interviewee 7 is also supported by participant 5 in focus group discussion when she mentioned that using DMs can convey smooth conversation toward her clients or customers. She clearly stated,

> *I use these discourse markers because they help me smoothly guide conversations with my clients or guests over the phone. They enable me to clearly express my thoughts, ensuring that they understand what I am trying to convey.* (RQ1 PQ1 P5 FGD)

The above remarks from the participants proved that DMs can serve multiple functions, including devices for seamless transitions. Gregori-Signes (2016) claimed that discourse markers signal transitions in the ongoing flow of conversation, indicating the connection of an utterance to what was previously said and demonstrating an interactive bond between speaker, listener, and message. Additionally, discourse markers are employed to switch topics, conclude a specific subject, end the entire conversation, or potentially return to a previous topic.

3.3.3. Instrument for Coherence, Speech Organization, and Management

Based on the narratives provided by the participants in the study, another prominent theme emerged concerning their perspectives on the utilization of discourse markers as instruments for coherence, speech organization, and management. BPO professionals recognize the role of discourse markers in organizing and managing their speech. They understand that these markers serve as linguistic tools for structuring their thoughts and guiding the progression of their verbal communication. For example, interviewee 1 recalled that DMs helped organize one's speech. He cited,

> *Discourse markers, in general, help organize one's speech. Furthermore, they contribute to clarity by reinforcing or clarifying what was previously said.* (RQ3 PQ2 I1 IDI)

In a separate session, participant 4 mentioned that discourse markers may influence one's speech as they are used to organize and manage what to say. She expressed,

> *Discourse markers significantly influence my speech because they are employed to organize and manage our communication. Through the use of words and phrases, they facilitate the connection of ideas and enable us to express our sentiments regarding the subject matter being discussed.* (RQ3 PQ2 P4 FGD)

Noticeably, the narratives from the participants suggested that discourse markers aided a speaker in organizing and managing thoughts in a conversation. This viewpoint intensified the claim of Khameneh and Faruji (2020) that different kinds of discourse markers act as subconscious tools that create pauses within sentences as the speaker gathers his/her thoughts while aiming to retain the listener's attention.

3.3.4. Aid for Conversation Flow and Control

In the BPO setting, discourse markers are invaluable tools for maintaining control over conversations while enhancing clarity and coherence. By strategically deploying discourse markers, BPO professionals can guide the conversation in a structured manner, ensuring that points are effectively communicated and understood while maintaining a natural and engaging flow of interaction. Participant 7, in a group discussion, shared his sentiments that DMs aid him in effectively maintaining control over the conversation. He specifically said this,

> *Call center representatives typically maintain a friendly and approachable tone when interacting with customers. In my case, adopting this tone assists me in effectively managing and steering the conversation in the direction I desire.* (RQ3 IQ2 P7 FGD)

Hence, participant 7's response only showed that DMs can effectively aid someone in a conversation. Also, interviewee 2 mentioned that DMs aided her in the elaboration of the information. She expressed,

> *This approach enables me to elaborate on the information I wish to convey while also providing the opportunity to consider and add additional statements as needed.* (RQ3 IQ2 I2 IDI)

Thus, it can be gleaned from the narratives that DMs aid in the smooth elaboration and explanation of information and facilitate the seamless expansion of ideas without the need for awkward transitions. DMs facilitate smooth and engaging conversation, enhancing clarity, politeness, and interest without altering its meaning. Therefore, DMs are vital linguistic tools that act as bridges, leading to precise and meaningful discourse interpretations (Palacio & Gustilo, 2016).

Concluding Remark

The exploration of pragmatic analysis centered on discourse markers' roles in BPO communication has revealed the multifaceted functions of these linguistic devices. This analysis has underscored the crucial significance of discourse markers within conversational contexts. Additionally, delving deeper into insights from BPO employees regarding using discourse markers has illuminated the diverse purposes behind their use. It has become evident that discourse markers serve various functions, including enhancing clarity and understanding, facilitating smooth transitions, organizing speech, managing conversation flow, and ensuring coherence in communication. This realization highlights discourse markers' nuanced and essential role in effective communication within BPO settings.

While analyzing the collected corpora, listening to the audio recordings of job applications led me to recognize the varied approaches BPO companies employ in interviewing applicants. This observation underscored the importance of discourse markers, mainly since interview processes frequently involve situational questions and mock call simulations. Therefore, incorporating discourse markers in speech can help avoid periods of silence, enabling applicants to maintain coherence and clarity while conversing with job recruiters.

I also recognize the challenge posed by AntConc, a tool for identifying frequently used discourse markers. While it does offer precise data regarding concordance and frequency, it is essential to conduct a manual analysis of the identified discourse markers to ensure their pragmatic functions. This analysis typically involves categorizing them into four distinct categories.

Indeed, the study of discourse markers in BPO communication offers invaluable insights into the intricate dynamics of language use in professional settings. Researchers develop comprehension of workplace communication by investigating the utilization of discourse markers in the realm of business process outsourcing. This investigation illuminates the pragmatic functions of discourse markers, highlighting their fundamental role in shaping interactions among BPO employees, clients, and peers. The findings from this study have implications not only for language teaching and communication training programs within the BPO sector but also for broader fields of research, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics.

Learning how discourse markers are used to achieve different communication goals in BPO settings helps us understand how people talk professionally, communicate across cultures, and use language in other workplaces. Furthermore, insights derived from this research can have practical implications for improving communication effectiveness, enhancing customer service experiences, and optimizing operational efficiency within BPO organizations.

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