

'OH,' 'WELL,' AND HEDGES AS NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGY: THE DIFFERENT USE OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN FEMALE AND MALE STUDENTS' UTTERANCES

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Discourse markers
Gender difference
Mitigator
Imposition

Article History:

Received: 18/01/2021

Accepted: 09/05/2022

Available Online:
31/05/2022

ABSTRACT

Investigating gender differences in utterances by employing discourse markers is very interesting and challenging as the similarities and differences could be seen more distinctly than without them. This research aims to find out the similarities and the differences between them in students' interactions. The data were taken from female and male students' utterances. After being analyzed using the qualitative method, it concluded that there were some similarities and differences in applying them. For expressing hesitation, Female students use 'Hmm...', (20%), 'I think...', (17%), and 'Well...', (15%). Meanwhile, male students use 'Well...' (19%), 'I think...', (20%), and 'Hmm...', (10%). Female students use 'Well...' as a face threat mitigator and sometimes followed by 'sorry ...' (12%), whereas male students employ 'Well...' (7%). For expressing surprise, both use 'Oh' as a pure surprise (9%) and (6%). Female students prefer to use discourse markers 'Wow...', (7%) if they feel amazed, whereas male students apply 'Aah...', (6%). Both female and male students employ 'By the way...', to interrupt (8%). The research revealed that male students hide their doubts better than female students; female students are more polite. The research also finds discourse markers from students' local language that could be developed globally.

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A. Introduction

For years, empty space in utterances was filled in with 'Hmm...', 'Well...' 'Oh...' 'You know...', and those were considered only as fillers without any meaning. 'Markers have spread gradually in our communication, and for decades

they have been regarded as the redundancy for their contribute nothing to the truth condition of utterance.'¹ A lot of pivotal research does not only change

¹ Bruce Fraser, "What Are Discourse Markers?," *Journal of Pragmatics* 31, no. 7 (1999): 931–52, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(98\)00101-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5).

meaningless fillers into meaningful ones, but it also changes unworthy into worthy ones. For example, 'Well...' and 'Ooh...', which were only considered fillers, now have many functions after a series of indigenous studies were conducted. Discourse markers could be applied in a different plane of talks: exchange structure that we can find in turns, adjacency pairs, then, it could be found in action structure, and we can see it in speech acts. Another plane of talks is ideational structure, and it can be found in semantic units: propositions or ideas, and the last is participation framework, which can be employed in social relations involving the speaker and the hearer with their different relations.²

There are many definitions of discourse markers, and one of those states that Discourse Markers (DMs) refer to words or phrases that help readers and listeners comprehend a text of the speaker or writer. Hence, DMs serve as vehicles for establishing relationships between speaker and listener phatic purposes, as stated by Alami³ and Also Buyukkarci and Genc.⁴ The result of

discourse markers' use between males and females is considered different, but most of the research does not explain them succinctly.

Gender differences in the use of discourse markers are not only found in spoken but also in writing.⁵ Since discourse markers could be employed on different talks planes, some researchers tried to find the use of discourse markers in their research. Escalera claims an important relationship between gender and activity context and functions of discourse. Yet, there are no significant gender differences when discourse marker use is observed during a given activity context, yet role-play activity will show the exception.⁶ Furthermore, Nejadansari & Mohammadi give contribution on discourse markers by observing the frequency of occurrence, distribution, and the pragmatic function of DMs qualitatively and quantitatively. The research observed the frequency of distribution and occurrence of discourse markers quantitatively. Meanwhile, the qualitatively one found in DMs is based on Brinton's classification, and there is no significance in gender difference.⁷

² Eman Awni Ali, "The Use of Interpersonal Discourse Markers by Students of English at the University of Jordan," *SSRN Electronic Journal* 6, no. 3 (2016): 23–35, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2847459>.

³ Manizheh Alami, "Pragmatic Functions of Discourse Markers: A Review of Related Literature," *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)* 3, no. 3 (2015): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.3034.3121>.

⁴ Renalyn Banguis-Bantawig, "The Role of Discourse Markers in the Speeches of Selected Asian Presidents," *Heliyon* 5, no. 3 (2019): e01298, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e01298>.

⁵ Cristian Lopez Villegas, "Discourse Markers and Pragmatic Markers in Spoken and Written Everyday Life.," *Interdisciplinary Lens into Human Language, Identity, Conversation, Interaction, Discourse, Social Construction, Institutions, Society, Ontology*, 2019, 1–46, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.33992.57602>.

⁶ Elena Andrea Escalera, "Gender Differences in Children's Use of Discourse Markers: Separate Worlds or Different Contexts?," *Journal of Pragmatics* 41, no. 12 (2009): 2479–95, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.08.013>.

⁷ Dariush Nejadansari and Ali Mohamad Mohammadi, "The Frequencies and Functions of

Vanda and Peter show the use of 'You know' and 'I mean' as discourse markers. They discover that women apply discourse markers more frequently as well as the hypothesis that both men and women use discourse markers for interpersonal differences and discourse functions radically.⁸

Meanwhile, Lin compares discourse markers used by native speakers and learners of English students. She proves both groups employ the four central functions and, in particular, the Taiwanese group uses a significant use of interpersonal such as: 'oh, 'yeah' and structural DMs such as: 'so,' 'okay.' On the other hand, British group uses interpersonal significantly.⁹ Alami reveals that the most noticeable studies carried out on discourse markers and their functions in spoken discourse.¹⁰ It deals with the most prominent studies on DMs and their functions in spoken discourse.

There are many theories on discourse markers; however, there are three major theories to be employed in

this research. The first is Jucker's theory of 'well' as discourse markers. He has categorized 'well' into four with different functions, namely: 'well' as a frame marker, and it used to show a topic change or introduce direct speech.¹¹ Then the second category is 'well' as a face threat mitigator, and it is applied for mitigating the confrontational situation to reduce the imposition of utterances. The next category of 'well' is used as a qualifier. It is used when the hearer is not provided with sufficient responses, and the speaker leaves it up to the hearer to add some details.¹² The last category of 'well' is as a pause filler, and it functions to bridge interactional silence. Meanwhile, Svartvik has another term for it, and he calls it 'well' as a temporizing or delaying tactic.¹³

The second theory is 'oh' as discourse markers taken from Aijmer.¹⁴ Aijmer is a linguist and prolific researcher who developed the use of 'oh'. She states that 'It is difficult to fancy a conversation without a large number of 'ohs' and 'ahs.' Their frequency suggests that they can be

Discourse Markers in the Iranian University EFL Classroom Discourse," *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning* 4, no. 2 (2014): 3–20, <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrsl.2014.840>.

⁸ K. H. Vanda and F. B. Péter, "Gender Differences in the Use of the Discourse Markers You Know and I Mean," *Argumentum* 7 (2011): 1–18.

⁹ Yen-Liang Lin, "Discourse Marking in Spoken Intercultural Communication between British and Taiwanese Adolescent Learners," *Pragmatics. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPRA)* 26, no. 2 (2016): 221–45, <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.26.2.03lin>.

¹⁰ Alami, "Pragmatic Functions of Discourse Markers: A Review of Related Literature," *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)* 3, no. 3 (2015): 4, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.3034.3121>.

¹¹ Andreas H. Jucker, "The Discourse Marker Well: A Relevance-Theoretical Account," *Journal of Pragmatics* 19, no. 5 (1993): 435–52, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(93\)90004-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(93)90004-9).

¹² Ratna Padmi Trihartanti and Damayanti Diana, "The Use of 'Oh' and 'Well' as Discourse Markers in Conversation of Bandung State Polytechnic Students," *Language Education and Acquisition Research Network (LEARN) Journal* 7, no. 1 (2014): 22–44.

¹³ A. H. Jucker, "The Discourse Marker Well: A Relevance-Theoretical Account," *J. Pragmat* 19, no. 5 (1993): 92–96, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(93\)90004-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(93)90004-9).

¹⁴ Karin Aijmer, *English Discourse Particles: Evidence from a Corpus*, vol. 10 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2002): 119-130

inserted almost everywhere to pep up the conversation.¹⁵ Aijmer classifies 'oh' into three, and those are: 'oh' as a pure surprise, 'oh' as arriving at a realization, and 'oh' as in clarification sequences. The last major theory is from Brown & Levinson, who are famous for their politeness theory. They made significant development in the use of discourse markers as part of politeness. Brown & Levinson claim that hedges as part of a negative politeness strategy could function as discourse markers also,¹⁶ those are relevant and quality hedges.

Basically, relevance hedges are used to mitigate the imposition of utterance, for example, when a speaker wants to change the topic. Changing the topic is very sensitive and can impose a negative face on the hearers.¹⁷ Hedges showing the change and might be partially apologizing for it are: 'sorry,' 'oh,' 'by the way,' 'oh I know.' Another hedge used is quality. Brown & Levinson have categorized quality hedges 'I think...' into a discourse marker that indicates the speaker's hesitation, and it is supported by Salager-Meyer.¹⁸ Moreover, according

to Brown & Levinson Speaker's hesitation will increase if 'I think' is preceded by 'well' such as: 'Well...I think'.¹⁹ Another discourse marker is 'hmm.' Aijmer stated that 'hmm' has two functions. The first is to fill 'an empty space' in order not to create silence in utterance. The second is to express the 'hesitation' of the speaker because she/he hesitates to respond.

After reviewing the previous research, it is known that all of them focus on discourse markers; however, none of them discusses the difference use of discourse markers between male and female students' utterances in detail. From the previous research, we do not find out the different functions of 'well,' nor do they depict the different functions of 'oh.' Furthermore, the previous researchers do not portray relevance and quality hedges as discourse markers while both kinds of hedges are one of the negative politeness strategies. Those not discussed in the early research, are covered in the present research.

This research aims to identify discourse markers mostly used by students in their utterances and to analyze the different use of discourse markers in utterances between female and male students.

¹⁵ Jean E. Fox Tree and Josef C. Schrock, "Discourse Markers in Spontaneous Speech: Oh What a Difference an Oh Makes," *Journal of Memory and Language* 40, no. 2 (1999): 280–95, <https://doi.org/10.1006/jmla.1998.2613>.

¹⁶ Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 170-72.

¹⁷ Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 169-70.

¹⁸ Oise Salager-Meyer, "I Think That Perhaps You Should: A Study of Hedges in Written Scientific,"

Functional Approaches to Written Text: Classroom Applications, 1997, 105–18.

¹⁹ Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 166-67.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative method. Besides, the analysis results were students' utterances showing various social settings and the groups or individuals inhabiting these settings.²⁰ Semi-structured interviews were given to the new students of the English department of Bandung State Polytechnic who wanted to stay at a boarding school. There were two classes for the first semester students. The first class consisted of 10 male students and 16 female students. Meanwhile, 30 students belong to the second class consisting of 12 male and 18 female students, so the total participants were 56 students. As the first researcher was the academic adviser for both classes; therefore, new students were interviewed.

A semi-structured interview was given twice. The first was given initially, and the second was given three months later. Those students were evaluated to see the development of their academic skills and social lives. The new students were given a list of questions, and they were free to respond to these open-ended questions as they wished. Being their academic adviser, the researcher observed the students' responses, and those steps are in line with McIntosh & Morse.²¹

²⁰ Jixian Wang, "Qualitative Research in English Language Teaching and Learning," *Indonesian EFL Journal: Journal of ELT, Linguistics, and Literature* 4, no. 2 (2018): 116–32.

²¹ Michele J. McIntosh and Janice M. Morse, "Situating and Constructing Diversity in Semi-Structured Interviews," *Global Qualitative Nursing Research* 2 (2015): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674>.

Firstly, all students were asked to work in pairs to make utterances to get the data. Utterances were chosen because it is suitable communication for participants to express and share their ideas naturally. Since the number of male students was less than female students, some male students from both classes became volunteers to be the partners of their female friends who had no partners. Secondly, after finding their partners, the students were given 5 minutes to determine the topics. Before uttering in front of the class, the researcher prepared two cellular phones as instruments to record students' utterances, one for each category. Cellular phone was needed as it is a reliable and simple tool to record and save the data. While students were doing their utterances about 7-10 minutes for each pair, the researcher recorded theirs simultaneously. Having finished all their turns, all students had to listen to their utterances and type theirs. Typing their utterances was an important step to analyzing discourse markers easily without listening too often to the records; however, researchers could listen to them if they were confused about the certainty of discourse markers' functions.

The heads of the classes were responsible for collecting the data from their friends and submitting them to the researchers. The next step was to download and print the utterances out, and from the process, there were 28 students' utterances collected. The last steps were identifying and analyzing the data. All discourse markers were analyzed based on their functions and meanings.

C. Results

After identifying and analyzing the data, researchers found that the students used 160 discourse markers. Five discourse markers emerge mostly both in female and male students' utterances: 'well,' 'I think,' 'hmm,' 'oh,' 'ah,' and 'by the way.' However, female and male students have differences in choosing discourse markers to share their opinion or their feeling, especially in expressing their hesitations. Those are discussed one by one.

The first discourse marker found in students' utterances is 'Hmm...'. We can see from the two utterances taken from the students' as follow.

- RW: *'I hear that your hobby is climbing mountains?'*
- IH : *'Hmm..., I don't know what to say. I am confused about whether it is my hobby or not. Why do you ask me that?'*
- RW: *'Well..., I just wonder because usually hiking is a men's hobby.'*
- IH : *'Hmm..., I do not agree with you. Some women also like traveling and climbing, or hiking.'*
- RW: *'Well, you are right. But my point is you are very feminine, so I doubt hiking is your hobby.'*
- IH : *'Aah... I see, 'hmm...' actually I only joined my brother for the first time, but later, I liked it.'*
- RW: *'He... he... (smiling). Your brother or your boyfriend?'*
- IH : *'Aah...' don't say that....'*

Another students' utterance used 'hmm' to show hesitation is here:

- TK : *'D*** is sick, do you know that?'*
- RF : *'Oh...' really, I don't know that she is sick. Who says so?'*
- TK : *'N*** told me, I guess D*** informed her. Do you know where she lives, so we can visit her?'*
- RF : *'Hmm...' I know the street, but I don't know exactly the number.'*

IH and RF are female students. They use 'hmm' to express their hesitation when another participant asks them things. Both IH and RF hesitate to reply because they don't know the correct answer. Meanwhile, another 'hmm' that is uttered by IH in *'Aah..., I see, 'hmm'...actually...'* functions as a pause filler.

From the two utterances, we can see that the use of all 'hmm' above shows the speaker's hesitation, proving that the theory of Aijmer on 'hmm' expresses hesitation works well.²² Another students' utterance that shows speaker's hesitation can be read below:

- FR : *'Have you bought Grammar book recommended by ibu R****?'*
- RG : *'Well,' ... I think I will not buy it....'*
- FR : *'Why? It is not as expensive as we think. It is only Rp75.000.'*
- RG : *'The problem is not about money, but I have that book though it is the old edition. 'Well...' I think I must go to Palasari to compare to the new edition.'*
- FR : *'Wow..., that's a great idea.'*
- RG : *'Thank you. Anyway, I haven't gone there before, so I will ask*

²² Aijmer, *English Discourse Particles*, 10:142-45.

my brother to accompany me. I heard there are a lot of pickpockets there. 'Well...' I am afraid my brother is busy.'

FR : *'You must be careful because you are new here. If I buy that book tomorrow, you may compare it to mine.'*

RG : *'Oh...', Okay. Thank you for your kindness.'*

The next utterance that uses 'well':

TK : *'I watched on TV last night that Corona Virus has spread to Singapore.'*

NH : *'Oh...', really? I missed that information.'*

TK : *'I am afraid it spreads to our country... really.'*

NH : *'Hmm... 'Well...', I think it won't happen though I am scared also, but...'*

The two utterances above show RG and NH, the male students respond to the speakers' questions using 'well.' The first 'well' functions as a pause filler, and the rest of 'well' show hesitations. Indeed, the two functions of 'well' in above utterances show that Brown & Levinson's theory on 'well' could be applied correctly.²³ The use of 'well' increases speakers' hesitation level if followed by 'I think...'

However, the use of 'well... I think' shows that speaker has more self-confident than 'hmm..., I think...'. The use of 'well' and 'well...I think' create the flow of utterance run smoothly though speaker hesitates to answer. It will be different from the use of 'hmm' because it

significantly shows that the speaker has less confidence and makes the flow of utterance clumsy and boring. However, 'hmm...' followed by 'I think...' shows the speaker's politeness than 'hmm...' only.²⁴

The use of 'Well' with a face threat mitigator functions employed in utterances below:

YI : *'Wow...you are wearing a new dress.'*

TR : *'Hehehe...' Thank you, Y****. I don't like the color actually. What do you think?'*

YI : *'Well...', the color is good, but...sorry to say perhaps it will suit you more if it is red.'*

TR : *'Unfortunately, the red ones have been sold out. I am a little bit disappointed....'*

YI : *'Don't be disappointed. Look at you....'*

RP : *'Watch a movie in my house tonight, Bro?'*

AH : *'what's the movie you have?'*

RP : *'B****, it is about a scientist who fails to make a new vaccine for wild animal.'*

AH : *'Well..., I don't like the genre...but still, I want to watch to learn the subtitle....'*

RP : *'Good, that's what I like from you, Bro....'*

In the first utterance, YI answers 'well...but...sorry' to mitigate the imposition of utterance as she wants to tell the truth about the color that does not suit TR. The presence of 'well' makes the utterance more polite. If 'well' is absent it will not be as polite as the first, for

²³ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 167–68.

²⁴ Brown and Levinson, 169–70.

example if RP says '...but...sorry'. YI's answers also show that she wants to maintain her social bond with her friend, TR.

The second utterance also uses 'well...' as a face threat mitigator, as uttered by AH, who responds to RP's invitation to come to his house. AH uses 'well...' to express that he does not like the movie genre. The presence of 'well' makes the imposition of his utterance low, and it is more polite, but it will be different if 'well' is absent. For example: 'I don't like the genre....' The absence of 'well' makes the imposition of utterance will be high. RP's response also shows his familiarity and closeness to AH by addressing him 'Bro...'. RP also uses imperative to invite AH to watch a movie at his house. The uses of 'well' above show Brown & Levinson's theory as one of the negative politeness strategies that can be applied as a discourse marker.²⁵

Another discourse marker mainly found in students' utterances is 'oh', as we can see from two utterances below:

- DA : *'Did you come to ***'s birthday party last night? I did not see you.'*
- UT : *'No, my mom was a little bit sick, so I could not leave her alone.'*
- DA : *'Oh ..., 'is she okay, now?'*
- UT : *'Alhamdulillah.' she is getting better after she consumed what is the name...the cover is yellow.'*
- DA : *'Oh...A*****N. Yes, that is a good pill.'*
- UT : *'Aah... yeah, that is the name'. Yes, I think so.'*

The first use of 'oh,' uttered by DA functions as a pure surprise because DA is really surprised to hear that UT's mom is sick. The second use of 'oh' functions as arriving at a realization as UT forgets the name of the pill consumed by her mom, and DA knows what UT wants to say, then she mentions it. The use of 'oh' from the utterance above shows that Aijmer's theory on 'oh' as a discourse marker can be proved well.²⁶

- MK: *'Ibu ***** is having a meeting tomorrow, and perhaps she could not teach us.'*
- HH: *'Oh..., really? She usually will inform us if she could not teach.'*
- MK: *'Yes, we know her well.' 'She is never away from the class without any reason.'*
- HH: *'Oh...' our senior friends also say that.'*

In the second utterance, 'oh' functions as a pure surprise, and another 'oh' is misused by the student. 'Oh' stated by HH is not used correctly because what HH wants to confirm is about an agreement. It will be better if HH uses 'Yes,' or 'Yes, that's correct.'

'By the way' is another discourse marker used by female and male students. Two utterances are taken as examples:

- LT : *'Hey, look! Is she, M*****? wow, she looks so pretty!'*
- MR : *'Aaah..., she looks so amazing. She cut her hair, and it makes her more beautiful.'*

²⁵ Brown and Levinson, 167–68.

²⁶ Aijmer, *English Discourse Particles*, 10:155–58.

- LT : *'Yes..., sorry, by the way, who will join the A**** seminar next week from our class?'*
- MR : *'Oh, sorry, I don't know about that.'*
Another is the use of 'by the way.'
- OP : *'I don't like sitting here. The chair is wet and dirty.'*
- WT : *'Don't complain too much. It is not wet and dirty anymore. The office boy has cleaned it.'*
- OP : *'Really?', but it is still dirty....'*
- WT : *'Oh...' you are really a big complainer, by the way, I don't bring my dictionary.'*

From the first utterance, LT, who is a female student, tries to be careful when she wants to change the topic. She uses 'sorry... by the way' as she wants to introduce a new topic, and it is more polite than only saying 'by the way....' In the second utterance, as the hearer, WT is a male student. He uses 'by the way' to introduce a new topic. From the utterance, we can see that Brown & Levinson's theory on politeness, relevance hedges, is applicable.²⁷

Both female and male students will change the topic if they think it is difficult to answer, as we can see from the utterances among LT and MR, then OP and WT.

From all utterances using discourse markers, we can analyze that females' utterances are more polite as they do not want to threaten someone's negative face. Being polite and formal in expressing and sharing their ideas is the characteristic of

women as has been stated by Lakoff in Brown and Levinson that '... intuitively it seems reasonable to predict that women, in general, will speak more formally and more politely in many situations.'²⁸Lakoff's statement was also strongly supported by Yeganeh and Ghoreyshi that gender differences take an important role in employing discourse.²⁹

Another finding found in students' utterances is that students use discourse markers wrongly. The two utterances below are only examples among some other ones.

- KU : *'Is he your brother? Does he study here also?'*
- RT : *'Yes, he is my brother, but he does not study here.'*
- KU : *'It seems that I have ever met him before. What is his name?'*
- RT : *'Well..., his name is W*****.'*

The utterance above shows the use of 'well' employed wrongly because if we ask someone's name, of course, she/he will answer at once, so the use of 'well' in the utterance above is incorrect. It will be better if RT responds with: 'His name is....'

Below are other utterances from students:

²⁸ Brown and Levinson, 49.

²⁹ Maryam Tafaraji Yeganeh and Seyedeh Marzieh Ghoreyshi, "Exploring Gender Differences in the Use of Discourse Markers in Iranian Academic Research Articles," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, The Proceedings of 2nd Global Conference on Conference on Linguistics and Foreign Language Teaching, 192 (2015): 684–89, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.104>.

²⁷ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 169.

TE : *'Does she live near your house?'*
 HR : *'Yes, she does. We often hang out if we don't have any work.'*
 TE : *'By the way, I don't know where you live. I mean the street where you live.'*
 HR : *'Oh..., I live on Jl...C*****.'*

MU : *'How about C****? Is that also your favorite food?'*
 LK : *'Yeei...it is not anymore.'*
(giggling)

The above utterance shows that LK replies by saying 'Yeeiii...'. 'Yeei...is also a discourse marker considered from the Sundanese language (Sundanese is one of the ethnics that mostly live in West Java, Indonesia). It shows that something does not stay the same again as before.

There are two discourse markers used incorrectly by the students. The first is when TE says, 'By the way.' The function of 'by the way' is to introduce a new topic or if we want to interrupt. In the above utterance, TE does not introduce a new topic, nor does he interrupt HR. The second mistake is when HR responds to TE's question about where she lives, HR answers, 'Oh..., I live on....'. One of the functions of 'oh' is to express pure surprise. It could be natural if HR responds, 'I live on....' directly, without using any discourse markers because we know where we live permanently.

Another discourse marker influenced by local language shows below:

The last finding found is Indonesian influence on students' utterances, two of them shown below:

AF : *'Hey..., do not walk like that. It is not good....'*
 RW : *'Oh...ya...ya...ya...ya, I forget ...'*

KY : *'We must join EPT Test next week. Have you heard that?'*
 RE : *'No, not yet. I have not heard that. How do you know?'*
 KY : *'From maam L****. She told me this morning, and the test will be held on Saturday.'*
 RE : *'Weleeh...' (RE says sorry for using 'Weleeh' in class)...Oh, but Saturday is my holiday.'*

'Ya...ya...ya ...' is an Indonesian discourse marker, usually showing the speaker's agreement. Another Indonesian's influence shows in the utterance below:

'Weleeh' is a discourse marker derived from the Javanese language, and one function of it is to express the speaker's reluctance.

MU : *'What is your favorite food?'*
 LK : *'I like meatball most....'*

From the students' utterances above, we can see gender differences in employing discourse markers as some researchers have conducted, such as Escalera, Matei, Subon, and Shirzad & Jamal.³⁰ This present research reveals

³⁰ T. A. Pasaribu, "Male and Female Students' Use of Textual Discourse Markers in Writing Academic Essays," *Journal of Language and Literature* 17, no. 1 (2017): 74–81, <https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v17i1.587>.

discourse markers such as: 'well,' 'I think...,' 'oh...,' 'aah...,' 'wow,' and 'by the way...,' appear mostly in students' utterances. Female students use 'hmm...,' (20%), 'I think...,' (17%), and 'well...,' (15%) to show their hesitation, whereas male students use 'hmm...,' (10%), 'I think...,' (20%), and 'well...,' (19%) to express that they are not sure with their opinion. 'Well' as a face threat mitigator is also employed by both, (12%) appear in female students' utterances and (7%) come up on male students.'

For expressing surprise, both use 'Oh' as a pure surprise (9%) and (6%). Female students prefer to use discourse markers 'Wow...,' (7 %) if they feel amazed, while male students apply 'Aah...,'(6%). Both female and male students employ 'By the way...,' (8 %) to change the topic or interrupt; furthermore, female students can show their politeness more than males by saying '...Sorry, by the way...'.

From the discussion above, there is a table below that summarizes the result:

Table 1.
The Result of Discourse Markers on Female Students

No	Discourse Markers (DMs)	Percentage of Appearance	
1.	Expression of hesitation	Hmm...	20%
		I think...	17%
		Well...	15%
2.	A face threat mitigator	Sorry...	12%
3.	Expression of surprise	Oh	9%
4.	Expression of amaze	Wow	7%
5.	Changing topic/ interrupting	By the way...	8%

Table 2.
The Results of Discourse Markers on Male Students

No	Discourse Markers (DMs)	Percentage of Appearance	
1.	Expression of hesitation	Hmm...	10%
		I think...	20%
		Well...	19%
2.	Imposition of utterance	Well...	7%
3.	Expression of surprise	Oh	6%
4.	Expression of amaze	Aah...	6%
5.	Changing topic/ interrupting	By the way...	8%

The comparison between female and male students regarding the appearance of discourse markers can be seen clearly from the chart.

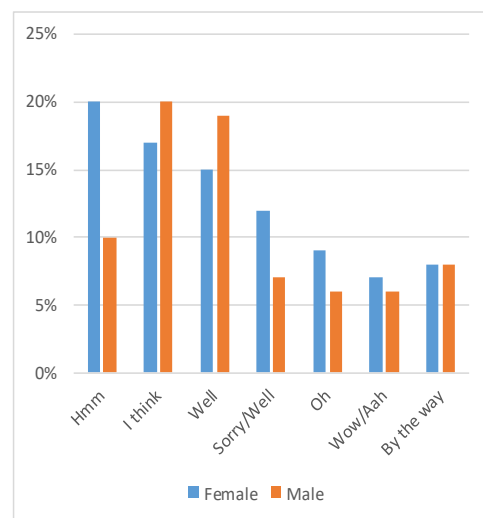


Fig 1. The Comparison of the Use of DMs on Female and Male Students

From the result, we can see that five discourse markers were found mostly in students' utterances, and one of them is the expression of hesitation. It is not a surprise since most students come from different small towns of west Java, few from Jakarta, Bandung, and Central Java,

so they have not adapted well to the new place where they study now. Most of them use Indonesian, Sundanese, and Javanese languages to communicate with their friends outside class. Thus, they sometimes combine those languages besides English.

Female students from small towns outside Bandung convey their hesitations very clearly than those from big towns of west Java, Jakarta, and central Java. On the other hand, male students who come from small towns, in average, have good self-confidence. Male students often go wherever they like when there are no classes, whereas some female students separately living with their families prefer living in a boarding school for safety as one of the rules is that students must return to boarding school before 6 p.m. Thus, it could be understood why their socialization is not as comprehensive as those living in their own houses, so they sometimes get difficulties adapting to the new situations. The research relating to gender of students, social condition, and communication has been conducted by Robson et al.³¹

From the use of discourse markers, we also know that females mostly avoid confrontation with their friends. They try to keep their social relationship with their friends by responding to hearers' utterances sympathetically and friendly, and the use of discourse markers makes it

³¹ J Robson, B Francis, and B Read, "Gender, Student Confidence and Communicative Styles at University: The Views of Lecturers in History and Psychology," *Studies in Higher Education* 29, no. 1 (2004): 7–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1234567032000164840>.

clearer; thus, it is in line with Merchant's research.³²

After analyzing students' utterances, it could also be found that males applied more informal and slang language. This result is similar to what was concluded by Robson et al.³³ Vanda & Peter have proved that, indeed men and women have significant differences in expressing their idea in the use of discourse markers³⁴. While McIntyre et al. pointed out in their contrastive study that the fear of losing face or making mistakes makes interaction or communication different and not gender differences.³⁵

From the previous research, we can see that the present research is different from the earlier ones because this research does not only explain the use of discourse markers employed by students but also reveals the meaning and function of each in detail. From the detailed explanations, it is hoped that the reader will understand better to exemplify them in their daily utterances.

³² Karima Merchant, "How Men and Women Differ: Gender Differences in Communication Styles, Influence Tactics, and Leadership Styles" (Senior Theses, Claremont McKenna College, 2012), 17-22.

http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmcc_theses/513.

³³ Robson, Francis, and Read, "Gender, Student Confidence and Communicative Styles at University: The Views of Lecturers in History and Psychology." 28-29

³⁴ K. H. Vanda and F. B. Péter, "Gender Differences in the Use of the Discourse Markers You Know and I Mean," *Argumentum* 7 (2011): 1–18

³⁵ Alia Alshebl, "Journal of Language Relationship," *Journal of Language Relationship* 17, no. 1 (2021): 534–52.

D. Conclusion

Having analyzed all the data, we can find out that there are some reasons for creating gender differences in utterances, and the use of discourse markers makes it sharper. Female students use 'hmm...', as they doubt what to say, and they mostly do not know how to anticipate it. Nonetheless, female students are more polite in expressing their ideas, and it seems that they try to be more careful to maintain social bonds. However, the use of 'hmm...' could be lessened because 'hmm/Uhm...', is not the only way to express the speaker's doubt; besides, the use of 'hmm...' a lot could make utterance uninteresting. Another finding that appears in this research is that the use of local language as discourse markers could be developed widely to enrich the kinds and functions of discourse markers globally.

This present research will contribute to the readers toward the development of discourse markers such as the different functions of 'well,' 'oh,' and 'hmm.' In addition, readers will learn hedges that are rarely exposed as discourse markers. Those contributions enrich the topics to research. It will also give more knowledge and develop teaching materials for lecturers to teach students relating hedges as negative politeness and discourse markers. This research focuses only on spoken or in utterances. Future research recommends analyzing discourse markers employed in spoken and written communication as more functions of discourse markers might be found.

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