



Allameh Tabataba'i University

Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages
Department of English Language and Literature

**Investigating Discourse Markers Use in Spoken
Language between Iranian TEFL Students and
English Native Speakers**

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Language and
Literature in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Advisor: Dr. Mansoor Fahim

Reader: Dr. Mohammad Khatib

By: Masoomeh Moosapoor

Tehran, Iran
February, 2010

IN THE NAME OF GOD



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We hereby recommend that this thesis by Masoomeh Moosaapoor entitled

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Be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (M.A.) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

Committee of Evaluation:

Advisor: Dr. Mansoor Fahim

Reader: Dr. Mohammad Khatib

Examiner: Dr. Fahimeh Marefat

Head of English Department: Dr. Zia Tajeddin

To my parents to whom I am indebted for all my success forever

and

To my husband for his kindly assistance through the path of my Master's study

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ABSTRACT

The theoretical framework of this study embraces a functionally-based account and is grounded on Schiffrin's (1987) notion of a multi-dimensional model of coherence. It classifies ten discourse markers (*so, yeah, right, Ok, you know, well, because, I think, I mean, actually*) according to Maschler's (1994) functional paradigm of discourse markers. This study explores the profile of occurrence of these elements in Iranian TEFL students' spontaneous speech and contrasts it with the profile of occurrence of the same markers in the spontaneous speech of English native speakers. It also examines the effect of sex on the use of discourse markers in each group (thirty Iranian TEFL learners and thirty English native speakers), and Iranian TEFL students' awareness of the pragmatic functions of discourse markers in their speech. The analysis shows the following results: There are differences in the use of discourse markers between two groups; Iranian TEFL students tend to use discourse markers more than native speakers of English; among Iranian TEFL males and females, some discourse markers were produced more in males' speech and some other discourse markers were more frequent in females' speech; native male and female speakers have made almost the same use of all discourse markers; and finally, it is shown that although Iranian TEFL students have almost the same awareness of the pragmatic functions of discourse markers in their speech as native speakers of English have, since they are overgeneralizing the use of discourse markers in their speech, they may not have acquired the "pragmatics of discourse marker use" as native speakers have and they sound non-native. This study suggests a need to strengthen TEFL students' pragmatic competence in spoken language.

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Chapter One

Introduction