much guidance from previous analyses. Although this is partially because of the vast and ambiguous nature of discourse analysis (Chapter 1, 1.1), I believe that this openness is also an intentional and valuable part of discourse analysis because of the reciprocal relationships that it assumes will hold among theory, analysis, and data. As I stated in (2.1.4), my theoretical definition of discourse markers will follow my analysis. This allows me, first, to ground my answers to definitional questions and my general conclusions about markers in what speakers and hearers do with these elements. Second, and more generally, it allows me to make a claim about what linguistic categories and analyses are supposed to represent: how people use language, and what they use language for. Note, then, that people are necessarily involved in this approach to linguistics – people who are inherently subjective and individual. It is because of these qualities that it is difficult to imagine any *a priori* answers about whose discourse to study, and about which qualities of those speakers will turn out to be important. But, again, this can be a gain, not only because data and analysis can again inform theory in surprising and unexpected ways, but because continual attention to the tremendously rich and varied resources which people draw upon in talk, and the continual search for ways to understand and explain what people say, mean, and do, cannot help but enrich our appreciation of human wisdom and creativity.

3 Questions: Why analyze discourse markers?

The analysis of discourse markers is part of the more general analysis of discourse coherence – how speakers and hearers jointly integrate forms, meanings, and actions to make overall sense out of what is said (see Chapter 1). Within this very general domain of analysis, however, there are several more specific issues which are also addressed through the study of discourse markers. I will illustrate these issues by discussing the markers in several segments of discourse in (3.1) and (3.2), and then summarize them in (3.3). The particular problems raised by markers suggest a method of analysis which builds on the complementary strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and which aims to be both sequentially and distributionally accountable (3.4).

3.1 Markers and the emergence of coherence

The discourse in (1) is a rhetorical argument through which a speaker (Irene) is defending a position – her belief in fate – by presenting personal experiences to serve as evidence, or support, for that position.

(1)   a.   I believe in that. Whatever's gonna happen is gonna happen.
       b.   I believe. . .that. . .**y'know** it's fate.
       c.   It really is.
       d.   **Because** eh my husband has a brother, that was killed in an automobile accident,
       e.   **and** at the same time there was another fellow, in there, that walked away with not even a *scratch* on him.
       f.   **And** I really fee–
       g.   I don't feel y'can *push* fate,
       h.   **and** I think a lot of people *do*.
       i.   **But** I feel that you were put here for so many, years or whatever the case is,
       j.   **and** that's how it was meant to be.
       k.   **Because** like when *we* got married,
       l.   we were supposed t'get married uh: like about five months later.

Discourse markers – the particles *oh, well, now, then, you know and I mean*, and the connectives *so, because, and, but and or* – perform important functions in conversation and have called for the rigorous analysis which this study provides. Dr Schiffrin's approach is firmly interdisciplinary, within linguistics and sociology, and she clearly demonstrates that neither the markers, nor the discourse within which they function, can be understood from one point of view alone, but only as an integration of structural, semantic, pragmatic, and social factors.

The core of the book is a comparative analysis of markers within conversational discourse collected by Dr Schiffrin during sociolinguistic fieldwork. The study concludes that markers provide contextual coordinates which aid in the production and interpretation of coherent conversation at both local and global levels of organization. It raises a wide range of theoretical and methodological issues important to discourse analysis – including the relationship between meaning and use, the role of qualitive and quantitative analyses – and the insights it offers will be of particular value to readers confronting the very substantial problems presented by the search for a model of discourse which is based on what people actually say, mean, and do with words in everyday social interaction.

DEBORAH SC[HIFFRIN]

well now so
but oh because
or I mean and
y'know then

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m.   My husband got a notice t'go into the service
n.   **and** we moved it up.
o.   **And** my father died the week. . .after we got married.
p.   While we were on our honeymoon.
q.   **And** I just felt, that *move* was meant to be,
r.   **because** if not, he wouldn't have been there.
s.   **So** eh y'know it just s— seems that that's how things work.

For the most part, I will infer the role of the markers in the argument by seeing where in the discourse they occur, and with what they co-occur. This method itself raises certain questions which I also note in later discussion.

Consider, first, that (1) forms an **argument** because it contains two informationally differentiated parts (see also Chapter 1). The main part of an argument is a **position**: a general statement toward whose truth a speaker is committed. Subordinate to the position is support: any information, e.g. personal experience, others' testimony, logical reasoning, which justifies either the truth of the statement or the speaker's commitment toward that truth. Irene's position in (1) is that she believes in fate; she states this in various ways in several locations: lines (a)–(c), (f)–(j) and (s). Support for this position is given through brief description of two experiences in which coincident events had no rational explanation, and are thus interpreted as *meant to be*. This evidence is presented (in lines d–e, k–r) between paraphrases of the position. Thus the position is the main point of the argument, and it brackets the specific experiences serving as support:

(1a)   STRUCTURE OF (1)
            POSITION   (a–c)
                SUPPORT (experience)   (d–e)
            POSITION   (f–j)
                SUPPORT (experience)   (k–r)
            POSITION   (s)

Several markers in (1) play a role in its formation as an argument. First, we find *because* preceding the support in (d) and (k). *Because* often precedes not just evidence, but other causally related discourse material, e.g. background information in narratives. We find *and* in (f): *and* precedes a self-interrupted restatement of the position. We will see that *and* often precedes material which continues an earlier part of the discourse – especially material which is not subordinate to the overall structure of the discourse (certainly not the case here for the speaker's statement of her position).

Finally, we find *so* in (s), preceding the final paraphrase of the position. We will see that *so* often precedes information understood as resultative (the outcome of connections between reported events) or conclusive (the outcome of inferential connections). Thus, conjunctive markers precede two separate pieces of support, as well as two presentations of the position:

(1b)   POSITION   (a–c)
            Because SUPPORT (experience)   (d–e)
            And POSITION   (f–j)
            Because SUPPORT (experience)   (k–r)
            So POSITION   (s)

(1) thus suggests that the markers *because, and,* and *so* differentiate ideational segments of the discourse, with the subordinate conjunction *because* marking a subordinate part of the discourse (support) and the coordinators *and* and *so* marking a more dominant part of the discourse (the position).

Several questions are raised by these observations. Does the role played by these conjunctions in defining and connecting idea units within an argument parallel their connecting role within sentences? And although we may speak of these elements as marking the idea structure, they do not provide the sole defining features of that structure: certainly the informational segmentation of the argument would remain intact without the markers.

Markers also occur **within** the position and the support. Is their role here also to differentiate ideationally distinct sections of the argument? If so, what would those units be: are there smaller units which combine to form the position and support? (1c) shows the markers which occur within the position and within its support.

(1c)   POSITION: **y'know**   (b)
                SUPPORT: **and**   (e)
            POSITION: **and, but**   (h, i, j)
                SUPPORT: **and, because**   (k, n, o, q, r)
            POSITION: **y'know**   (s)

Look first at the markers *and* and *but* within the position:

f.   And I really fee–
g.   I don't feel y'can *push* fate
h.   **and** I think a lot of people *do*.
i.   **But** I feel that you were put here for so many, years or whatever the case is,
j.   **and** that's how it was meant to be.

In both (h) and (j), *and* links ideas which seem closely related to just prior ideas. In (h), the speaker is contrasting a feeling of her own (about *pushing*

fate) with the actions of others. Note the cohesive devices which help convey this relation: the pro-verb *do*, the use of similar stance verbs *feel*, *think*. In (j), we find *and* continuing a segment which is also both ideationally related to, and cohesive with, the prior discourse. Here the common theme is the speaker's stance toward the proposition *you were put here for so many years*: she feels it (i), and *it was meant to be* (j). (Note the proform *that*.) Thus, within the position, *and* seems to have a role in linking related ideas when the union of those ideas plays a role in the larger ideational structure of the argument: *and* links thematically related material within the position.

We also find *but* in *i*:

i.   **But** I feel that you were put here for so many, years or whatever the case is

That *but* is an adversative conjunction suggests that what follows *but* is an idea which contrasts with what has preceded. Like *and*, then, it seems that *but* could have a cohesive function within the position.

But in (i) also poses two further questions. First, how much discourse can be included within the scope of a marker? Two different interpretations of the scope of *but* are possible here. The speaker could be contrasting her position with what was presented in one prior clause – *a lot of people do (push fate)*. Or, she could be contrasting her position with what was presented in two prior clauses – what she feels in contrast to what she doesn't feel. The second question posed by *but* in (i) is this: at what level of discourse can a relationship such as contrast be marked? Instead of interpreting contrast at a local ideational level, we could locate the contrast at a more global level of discourse topic, since the speaker is here returning to the main point of her argument. So *but* could be marking a contrast between the main point and prior discourse which is slightly tangential to that point, i.e. what the speaker believes vs. what she doesn't believe. If all markers have variable scope in discourse, as well as the ability to mark relationships at different discourse levels, then what fixes the range and level of discourse over which they operate?

Look next at the conjunctive markers within the support sections. In (e), *and* precedes an event whose coincidence with the prior mentioned event establishes the experience as an instance of fate.

d.   Because eh my husband has a brother, that was killed in an automobile accident,

e.   **and** at the same time there was another fellow, in there, that walked away with not even a *scratch* on him.

And in both (n) and (o) is parallel:

m.   My husband got a notice t'go into the service

n.   **and** we moved it up.

o.   **And** my father died the week...after we got married.

Here we can argue that *and* has both a cohesive role and a larger structural role. First, *and* has a structural role because it links together events which together function as support for the position. Second, *and* has a cohesive role because interpretation of those events as fateful hinges on their being understood as part of a single, larger situation. In other words, it is the union of the two events that makes them indicative of fate.

What then of *and* in (q):

q.   **And** I just felt, that *move* was meant to be,

r.   because if not, he wouldn't have been there.

Lines (q) and (r) do not actually report fateful events; rather, they present the speaker's interpretation of the situation as one which is due to fate (*meant to be*). Repetition of the phrase *meant to be* from the earlier position statement in (j) provides an important clue to the function of these lines:

i.   But I feel that you were put here for so many, years or whatever the case is,

j.   and that's how it was **meant to be**. [lines k–p]

q.   And I just felt that *move* was **meant to be**.

Meant to be is a formulaic phrase conveying a sense of individual helplessness over life events. Its repetition from (j) into (q) has two effects. First, since it is repeated from the position into the support, it conveys an ideational and cohesive link between these two argument sections. Second, it warrants the speaker's use of this particular experience as evidence for her belief in fate: describing the specific experience and the general belief with the same formula establishes the eligibility of the experience as evidence for the belief. (See Toulmin 1958 for discussion of warrants.) Thus, although the speaker is subjectively assessing the situation – rather than objectively reporting the events (as in k–p) – this interpretation has no less a role in establishing the experience as evidence than did the report. What the interpretation does is justify use of this particular experience as one which counts as an instance of the workings of fate.[1] This switch from reporting to interpreting events, then, is a shift in speaker orientation within the support section of the argument – within a single ideational segment. And it is here that we find *and*.

We also find *because* within the support section in (r):

q.   And I just felt, that *move* was meant to be,
r.   **because** if not, he wouldn't have been there.

Here *because* has a local scope: in contrast to (d) and (k), where *because* marked a whole section of the discourse as support, *because* in (r) causally links just the propositions in (q) and (r).

There is one other marker in (1) which I have not yet discussed: *y'know* within the position.

b.   I believe…that…**y'know** it's fate. [lines c–r]
s.   So eh **y'know** it just s– seems that that's how things work.

Y'know is directed toward gaining hearer involvement in an interaction. In (b) and (s), *y'know* seems to be marking some kind of appeal from speaker to hearer for consensus, e.g. for understanding as to the meaning of fate, or even, for agreement on the position being taken about fate. We will see that *y'know* is widely used throughout talk at locations in which discourse tasks hinge on special cooperative effort between speaker and hearer; I will propose that *y'know* marks speaker/hearer alignment and that it contrasts with *I mean*, which marks speaker orientation.

Note that here I am beginning to use information other than co-occurrence to infer the role of markers: I have tacitly assumed that the semantic meaning of *y'know* contributes something to its role as discourse marker. We will return to this general question again and again: is there some property of the elements used as markers that contributes to their function?

(1d) summarizes the markers which we have discussed:

(1d)	MARKERS IN ARGUMENT 1	location
	POSITION: **y'know**	(a–c)
	Because SUPPORT	(d–e)
	event **and** event	(e)
	And POSITION	(f–j)
	state **and** contrasting state	(h)
	state **but** contrasting state	(i)
	state **and** interpretation of state	(j)
	Because SUPPORT	(k–r)
	event/event/**and** event	(n)
	event **and** event	(o)
	events **and** state interpreting events	(q)
	event **because** event	(r)
	So y'know POSITION	(s)

3.2 Markers as coherence options

Although the markers in (1) add to its overall structure and interpretation, they are hardly the only devices which either form the argument, or convey its meaning. A brief look at several other arguments shows that their structure and meaning is certainly not dependent on just those markers that we have seen in (1); in fact, the structure and meaning of arguments can be preserved even without markers.

3.2.1 Coherence options: choosing among markers

(2) presents an argument in which the speaker (Zelda) justifies a rule (*you have to start in the beginning*) by presenting specific cases which show that compliance with the rule had a desired effect. The desired effect of the rule is for married children to call their mothers-in-law by some term of address – either 'Mom' or first name. Thus, the rule is Zelda's position; the three cases presented are support for the position. It is important to note that prior to this argument, Zelda had been complaining about her younger daughter-in-law's inability to call her 'Mom': because 'Mom' is an address term which ratifies Zelda's status as a mother – a status that is very important to her – her daughter-in-law's failure to do so is an offense.

(2)   Zelda: a.   And y'have t'start in the beginning.
                    b.   **Now** my daughter in law *did*.
                    c.   My older daughter in law from the very beginning she said Mom,
                    d.   so she's used to it.
                    e.   Mom and Dad.
                    f.   See it does m– it's only a name!
                    g.   **And** Sam– we told Samuel *too*,
                    h.   in the beginning, you call– if you can't say Mom and Dad,
                    i.   call 'em by their first name.
                    j.   But call 'em *some*thing.
                    k.   Not 'uh:::::'
        Debby: Yeh! And wait for them t'hear ⎡'uh!' ⎤
        Zelda: ⎣Right!⎦
                    l.   And she's an intelligent girl
                    m.   and she's a *nice* girl.
                    n.   She gives us the biggest respect.
                    o.   And she's really nice.
                    p.   I like her very much.

q.   It's just that she can't say it.
r.   **Now** I remember when I first got married,
s.   and I was in that situation.
t.   And eh the first– like the first. . .few times, I wouldn't say anything.
u.   And my husband said to me, 'Now look, it isn't hard, just say "Mom"'.
v.   He says, 'And I want you t'do it.'
w.   And I *did* it.
x.   And I got *used* to it.

Although there are many markers within this argument, I will focus only on those which precede the support so as to contrast them with markers in parallel positions in argument (1). (I do not examine *and* in the position because its scope goes beyond the argument.)

Note, first, that (2) has a structure similar to (1) in that multiple instances of support follow the position. The structure also differs, however, because there is no restatement of the position either between the supporting cases or at the end of the argument. Recall that (2) presents a rule, which had it been followed would have avoided an offense committed by Zelda's daughter-in-law. Because Zelda has just complained about that offense, she now has to strike a somewhat delicate balance between sounding tolerant and intolerant: if she is too tolerant, her hearer may very well wonder why the offense was an issue in the first place; but if she complains too much, she can be heard as overly critical of her family to someone who is a relative outsider. Having to strike this balance affects the structure of the argument: Zelda either minimizes the offense, or praises the offender between each piece of support. Both tactics work to convey the closeness of Zelda's relationship with her family, despite the breach (or in one of Zelda's prior descriptions, *the sore spot*) caused by her daughter-in-law's inability to use a term of address which would have ratified Zelda's family status. The structure of (2) is thus the following:

STRUCTURE OF 2
POSITION   (a)
   Now SUPPORT (experience)   (b–e)
EVALUATION (minimization of offense)   (f)
   And SUPPORT (experience)   (g–k)
EVALUATION (praise for offender)   (l–p)
    (minimization of offense)   (q)
Now SUPPORT (experience)   (r–x)

Note, now, that the discourse markers used to bracket the support are

now (b, r) and *and* (g). Does this mean that these two markers are discourse alternants for *because* – the marker of support in (1)? Certainly they are marking the same informational segment of a similarly structured discourse. Thus, if they are options, why use one marker rather than another? There are also many other discourse slots in which *and* and *because* could not alternate: for example, we have seen *and* marking the position in an argument, clearly a location in which *because* would not occur. And we also find *now* within the support: *And my husband said to me, 'Now look. . .'*. Are the possible substitutes here the same, e.g. *and, because*? If not, why should *and, now,* and *because* be coherence options in one discourse slot, but not in others? Exactly what is the contribution of the discourse slot, and what is the contribution of the meaning (or other property) of the word itself?

3.2.2 Coherence options: choosing among markers and other devices

Other linguistic devices can accomplish many of the discourse tasks performed by markers. In (3), the speaker (Zelda) is defending her upbringing of her daughter. Her position is that she is strict with her children when it is needed. (The position had been presented earlier in the conversation.) She begins supporting this position with *see*, and then gives reasons for specific actions within the supporting cases with *because*.

(3) a.   **See**, she is at the point now where she really doesn't run out that much so that there–
    b.   she's not driving a car or anything.
    c.   we *did* have it with the boys, uh: they weren't–they–y–
    d.   when they first started t'drive, they *did* have t'be in by twelve,
    e.   **because** they had a learner's permit.
    f.   We always did tell the boys. . .
    g.   I always stressed that
    h.   **because** I went through more with the boys than I did with JoAnn.

STRUCTURE OF 3
POSITION /stated earlier/
  See SUPPORT 1 [reason]
  SUPPORT 2 [alternative]   (a–b)
    event **because** event   (c–f)
  SUPPORT 2 [alternative]   (d–e)
    because event   (f–h)
                   (h)

What gives textual structure and cohesion to this argument is lexical rep-

etition (stressed *did*) in (c) and (d), and reiteration of part of the support in (c) (*we did have it with the boys*) and (f) (*we always did tell the boys*). The speaker also maintains thematic continuity on a local, clause by clause basis: topic is continued from the clauses in (a) to (b); a new topic, *the boys*, is introduced in predicate position in (c) and then continued through (e); a new topic, *Well* is introduced in (f) and then maintained through (h). Clearly the speaker could have used markers for the structural and ideational tasks of the argument, e.g. *now, because, y'know* or *but* in (c), *so* or *but* in (f) and (g), and so on.

(4) illustrates still other structural and cohesive devices used in argument. Here, the speaker (Henry) is arguing that there is a difference between two religious groups (his own – Jewish – and others).

(4) a.   There is a difference.
     b.   Listen to me.
     c.   There is a big difference.
     d.   **Because** you hear the knocks, when you're in a crowd,
     e.   **and** they'll say you're *different*.
     f.   *This* is the thing you're gonna hear.
     g.   You're *different*.
     h.   My brother heard it in the Marine Corps,
     i.   my younger brother heard it in the Army,
     j.   **and** I heard it in the Army,
     k.   **and** here's my wife here,
     l.   she was in the Navy,
     m.   *she* heard it.
     n.   Everyone of us.
     o.   You got– you could pull out *ten* Jewish guys,
     p.   **and** if they're nice guys everyone of em'll say that somebody said it.

STRUCTURE OF 4
  POSITION   (a–c)
  Because GENERAL SUPPORT (experience)   (d–g)
    SPECIFIC SUPPORT (experience)   (h–n)
      event/event/**and** event **and** event   (j, k)
  GENERAL SUPPORT (experience)   (o–p)
    state **and** event   (p)

Henry presents his position in (a–c) and his support in (d–p). Because his support consists of a generalization (in d–g), which is itself buttressed through more specific support (four experiences in h–m which are summarized in n), Henry's argument is more complex than (1), (2), (3): (4) actually contains an embedded argument in which the support is itself sup-

ported. The specific experiences are then reframed as general support in (o–p). What provides textual unity in (4) is a meta-linguistic phrase in (f), syntactic parallels in (h–j), and (m), and repetition in (a) and (c), (e) and (g). Thus ideational structure and cohesion in Henry's argument are provided through a variety of devices other than markers.

If ideational structure and cohesion can be provided through so many different devices, what do discourse markers add to overall coherence? Identifying the contribution of markers to coherence becomes even more difficult when we consider interactional structures and speaker/hearer alignments. In (5), Henry has been arguing with his wife Zelda and their neighbor Irene about women's roles. He has just conceded that having additional children is not a solution to women's boredom. Although there is a rhetorical argument hidden in this interaction (Henry's position about women and his support for that position), we will focus here primarily on the challenges that are presented to Henry's position via attacks on its support.

(5) Henry: a.   All right maybe that's a foolish statement.
              b.   **But** let's put it this way.
              c.   A woman is needed in the house t'clean the house, and t'cook the hou– uh cook the meals, and clean the clothes, there is a tremendous amount of work ⎡ for a woman ⎤
                               ⎣ That's off ⎦ Henry.
     Zelda: d.
     Henry: e.   You don't think there's a d– a lot of work for yourself?
     Zelda: f.   You can get– you can get anybody t'come in and clean: the ⎡ house. ⎤
                             ⎣ All week? ⎦
     Henry: g.
     Zelda: h.   *That is not the point.*
     Irene: i.   That's not r– no ⎡ that's not true. ⎤
     Zelda: j.   ⎣ That's off. ⎦ No.
          k.   That's off ⎡ Henry. ⎤
     Henry: l.   ⎣ You say ⎦ that's wrong?
     Zelda: m.   Yep. That's not a mother's duty.
              n.   Just ⎡ t'clean and cook and clean. ⎤
     Henry: o.   ⎣ **Well** what would you call a ⎦ mother's duty that– now that you ⎡ *are* a ⎤ mother?
                              ⎣ When ⎦ you supervise the children and
     Zelda: p.   ask them, and talk to them,
              q.   but with the cleaning bit, anybody can do the cleaning bit.
     Henry: r.   **But** ⎡ it's still– ⎤ it's still a job regardless=
     Zelda: s.   ⎣ Anybody. ⎦
     Henry: =of the– it's in that– your house!

But in (b) and (r) precedes Henry's reiteration of his position, and thus, could be said to mark a prominent idea unit in the discourse. *But* also establishes Henry's position as a contrast to Zelda's challenges. Thus, *but* prefaces a particular interactional move: a defense. Similarly, *well* in (o) prefaces a new attack on Zelda from Henry, and thus, a new interactional move: counterattack.

Zelda and Irene are also challenging Henry; in fact, Henry has presented the argument in (5) in response to their earlier challenges (not included here). The opposing moves, however, are not preceded by discourse markers. Rather, the challenges from Zelda and Irene are enacted through added volume, negatives, and meta-talk – *that's off* (d, j), *that is not the point* (h), *that's not a mother's duty* (m), *that's not true* (i), *no* (i,j) – and a semantic generalization opposing Henry's *a woman is needed* (c) with *anybody* (f). Why do discourse markers preface some moves and not others? And would we interpret the same move were a marker to preface Irene's challenge, or were a marker not to preface Henry's challenge? And, finally, which markers are discourse options: *but* and *well* both prefaced adversative moves, but are interactional moves prefaced by *but* really equivalent to those prefaced by *well*?

Thus far, we have begun discussion of each marker with description of its role at a single level of analysis: ideational structure, cohesive meaning, interactional move. But we have ended discussion of so many markers with mention of additional roles that it is time to explicitly address the form/function relationship. Can one form have several functions simultaneously? After distinguishing six functions of language, Jakobson (1960: 353) states:

we could, however, hardly find verbal messages that would fulfill only one function. The diversity lies not in a monopoly of some one of these several functions but in a different hierarchical order of functions. The verbal structure of a message depends primarily on the predominant function.

Jakobson's point suggests not only that a single marker might have multiple functions, but that a marker might have a predominant function: perhaps some markers are specialized for interactional functions, others for ideational functions.

Let us examine (6), an earlier exchange from the disagreement which we just saw as (5). Henry has been arguing that the lack of respect for fathers produced general family and social disorganization. Irene opposes this position by finding a different cause for the agreed-upon disorganization: she argues that standards have changed.

(6)   Irene: a.   The standards though are different today.
       Henry: b.   Heh?
       Irene: c.   The standards are different today.
       Henry: d.   Standards are different.
                 e.   **But** I'm tellin' y' if the father is respected
                       an ⌈ :d eh: ⌉
       Irene: f.   ⌊ Henry, lemme ⌋ ask you a question.

But in (e) prefaces the meta-linguistic phrase *I'm tellin' you* which intensifies an already disputed position (Schiffrin 1980). Thus, *but* precedes a structurally dominant part of Henry's argument, and could thus be said to have a function in the **ideational structure** of the discourse. Because *but* has an adversative sense, however, it is also a **cohesive** device which adds to our interpretation of the meaning of what Henry is about to say, marking it as a contrast with what Irene has just said. Finally, Henry's remark is a defense against Irene's challenge, and thus, *but* also prefaces a new **interactional move**. Although it would be quite difficult to argue that any one of these roles were predominant within this particular argument, it seems impossible not to argue that *but* is here functioning simultaneously on several planes of discourse. Although it is still an open question as to whether some markers are specialized for particular functions, we can hardly argue either that markers have only one function, or that a single marker has only a single function.

3.3 Why are discourse markers used?

I have illustrated several general questions about markers. Why are discourse markers used? Do they add anything? Or, are they merely redundant features which reflect already existing discourse relationships? If so, what underlying relationships do they reflect? Why use one marker instead of another? And if other devices are alternatives to markers, what conditions delimit the choices among such alternatives?

These general questions are relevant to several additional issues. Consider what happens if we say that markers are cohesive devices. We saw in our discussion of cohesion in Chapter 1, that cohesive devices **reflect** underlying connections between propositions – connections that are inferred by producers and interpreters of a text. But can markers ever **create** cohesion? That is, can they lead a hearer to search for underlying connections that would not otherwise be inferred, or to prefer one reading out of a set of equally plausible readings? We might propose that if any markers were to add cohesion to a discourse, it would be conjunctive markers.

Yet, the literature on *and* is full of conflicting analyses revolving around the very same issue: does *and* have several different distinct senses (in which case *and* could create cohesion), or are its various interpretations (e.g. as a temporal connection, a causal connection) determined only by the meanings of the connected propositions (in which case *and* would reflect cohesion)? As Dik (1968: 250) observes, 'whether particles like prepositions, articles, and connectives have meaning (and if so, what kind of meaning) has been a moot point since antiquity.' Thus, we can hardly turn to traditional scholarship about conjunctions to help answer the question of whether conjuctive markers reflect or create cohesion.

Our initial questions about what discourse markers add also lead to questions concerning markers and discourse structures. Conjunctions either coordinate or subordinate clauses within a sentence grammar. Does this difference apply in discourse as well? Although we hinted that it did – *and* and *so* prefaced the main point of the argument in (1), and *because* prefaced the subordinate part of the argument – it is not at all clear that this distinction either appears in the same way in discourse, or has the same ramifications (e.g. Thompson 1984). Is the way in which conjunctive markers define and connect idea units within argument (and other discourse units) parallel to the way they connect clauses within sentences? Furthermore, is their role in marking connections between smaller units – either units which are syntactically defined such as clauses, or ideationally defined such as events in the support section of an argument – also structural? Although we may speak of these elements as marking structure, we have seen briefly that they do not always provide the sole defining features of the structure. Thus, we have a question analogous to our cohesion question: do markers display structure or create structure?

Other issues to which our initial questions are relevant concern the kind of meaning(s) that markers reflect (or add). Cohesion has to do with semantic meaning, i.e. referential meaning. But linguists commonly distinguish referential meaning from non-referential meaning. Halliday and Hasan (1976), for example, differentiate internal from external meaning; their distinction centers around the location of meaning – in the facts which are being reported (external) or in the speaker's inferences about that report (internal).[2] Non-referential meaning is often viewed as social and/or expressive meaning (see Chapter 1, 1.3.3): this captures its non-representational quality, but focuses more on conventionalized linguistic ways of conveying non-representational aspects of a message, than on either speaker intentions or hearers' inferential procedures designed to infer those intentions (cf. Bach and Harnish 1982).

My brief discussion of *y'know* suggested that *y'know* has expressive meaning, i.e. as a speaker appeal for hearer cooperation in a discourse task. But this expressive meaning may very well include some component, or residue, of referential meaning. We really do not know how – or if – the referential meanings of markers contribute to the way that they are used in discourse. Changes from referential to non-referential meanings are well-documented (see, e.g. Cole (1975), Horn (1984)). Indeed, as Hymes (1974: 149) observes: 'lexical elements and phrases, if they acquire grammatical function in a social or stylistic sense, may lose their earlier lexical force in their new paradigmatic relationships'. But does referential sense or lexical force ever remain to contribute to expressive meaning? Different positions on this question as it bears on the historical present tense, for example, are taken by Schiffrin (1981), Silva-Corvalan (1983), and Wolfson (1979, 1982). Nor is it clear what expressive meanings develop. Clark's (1979, 1980) work on indirect speech acts suggests, for example, that requests are interpreted as more polite (which touches on both expressive and social meanings) the more they contain words and phrases whose lexical meaning makes no contribution. Thus, we have to ask the following question about markers which have referential meaning: does that meaning contribute to their function as discourse markers?

Consider now that my preliminary observations about what markers add to discourse have been based largely on their locations within discourse – where markers occur, and with what markers co-occur. I have just stated, however, that referential meaning may influence discourse function by contributing to expressive and/or social meaning. A broader question stemming out of these observations is this: how do the meanings (or any other properties) of a specific marker combine with its location to produce its discourse function? This question has immediate methodological implications: would we have been as ready to interpret *y'know* as a coordinating structural device as we were to so interpret *and*? Probably not: just as there are features of *y'know* that lead away from such a conclusion, so too, there are features of *and* that contribute to that conclusion. It is here, then, that our questions about markers force us to face one of the most difficult questions in pragmatics: how does context interact with meaning to produce the total communicative force of an expression?

There is still another issue: markers as coherence options. If both referential meaning and context do indeed contribute to the functions of discourse markers, this may greatly reduce the degree to which markers can be coherence options for one another. Although options, or alternative ways of saying the same thing (Labov 1978), are present at all levels of

language, defining 'the same thing' is difficult once our level of analysis extends into discourse, and once our notions of same and different go beyond referential meaning. In fact, trying to replace referential equivalence as a requirement for linguistic alternation has been a problem whose lack of easy resolution has greatly hampered efforts to extend the study of linguistic variation beyond phonology (Dines 1980, Labov 1978, Lavandera 1978, Romaine 1981, Schiffrin 1985b).

Often suggested as a replacement for referential equivalence is functional equivalence. Linguistic elements and structures have often been assigned either a cognitive or a communicative function. The assignment of particular functions, however, presupposes knowledge of a larger system, e.g. a cognitive system for processing information, a communication system for transmitting information, within which fulfillment of those functions maintains the system. But functions are often assigned without consideration of the larger system within which any one function has to be located, and with tacit assumption that all functions are fulfilled in some way. It was partially to remedy this unsystemic use of the concept of function that I proposed a model of discourse in Chapter 1: this model can be seen as an outline of the underlying components of talk (exchange, action, ideational, information, and participation) whose systemic interaction with one another produces coherent discourse (see comments on integration of discourse in 1.4).

Even if we can identify functions in a systemic way, there are three additional properties of markers which complicate the search for functional equivalents. First is their apparent multifunctionality. As we have seen, markers may be used in several different discourse capacities simultaneously. This may reduce the degree to which markers are interchangeable, e.g. ideational equivalence may not always mean interactional equivalence. Thus, functionally equivalent options may be found within only one discourse component at a time. Second, markers are never obligatory. What this means is that any utterance preceded by a marker may also have occurred without that marker. But does the absence of a marker also have functions? Third is the syntactic diversity found in the elements used as markers. We do not know, for example, whether syntactic distinctions between adverbs (e.g. *now*) and conjunctions (e.g. *and*) are neutralized at discourse levels, or whether syntactic properties remain to differentiate markers from one another in some way. Although various scholars (e.g. Givón 1979, Sankoff and Brown 1976, Traugott 1979), have argued that syntactic change may originate in discourse structure and communicative

processes associated with discourse, the way in which grammatical elements are utilized in the synchronic organization of discourse is largely unknown (but see Thompson 1984).

Talking about markers as coherence options for each other – as alternative ways of saying the same thing – also raises the problem of whether elements as diverse as *and, now,* and *y'know* can form one class of items in a discourse paradigm. In traditional linguistic analysis, items which occur in the same environment and produce a different meaning are in contrast, whereas items which occur in the same environment but do not produce a difference in meaning are in free variation. Are the differences in meaning between markers such as *and, now,* and *y'know* discrete enough to produce contrast? Or, are such markers options which ignore small differences in meaning in the service of larger functional equivalences, such as discourse coherence? Merely having to pose such questions means that even if we could define a paradigm of discourse markers, it is not likely to exhibit the more traditional requirements of some identity of form and some identity of meaning. Rather, it would group together elements with various degrees of functional similarities and partially overlapping distributions.

Thus far, many of our questions have indirectly touched on issues which are important in attempts to define boundaries between subdisciplines within linguistics: syntax and discourse analysis, semantics and pragmatics. Additional questions also touch on these attempts. First, how much discourse beyond a sentence can be included within the scope of a marker? And how is such a range decided? Second, at what level of discourse can a relationship between units be marked? Is it possible to speak of relationships such as contrast, result, and addition not only at a local level of idea structures, but at more global levels? And can we also speak of such relationships on pragmatic planes of talk?

In sum, there are numerous questions which an analysis of discourse markers is forced to address. Since the scope of some questions go well beyond discourse markers *per se*, however, I cannot hope to fully answer each question. Furthermore, some questions are more relevant to particular discourse markers than others, e.g. since *oh* and *well* have no semantic meaning *per se*, my questions about referential meaning have little relevance to their analysis. Nevertheless, the questions posed in this chapter illustrate the general issues which my specific analyses in Chapters 4–9 will address. Chapter 10 will then return to these issues.

3.4 Methodological issues

We have seen that the study of discourse markers is part of the more general study of discourse coherence. In this section, I will discuss how to approach this very broad domain of study. I will be distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative approaches to analysis, but I want to stress before doing so, that these terms represent a somewhat artificial dichotomy. That is, most analyses combine facets of both quantitative and qualitative approaches if not in their actual procedures, in their underlying assumptions. Quantitative analyses, for example, depend on a great deal of qualitative description prior to counting (in order to empirically ground ones' categories) as well as **after** counting (statistical tendencies have to be interpreted as to what they reveal about causal relations). And qualitative approaches often have an implicit belief in the notion that 'more is better', i.e. the more instances of a phenomenon one finds, the more one can trust one's interpretation of an underlying pattern (e.g. Tannen 1984: 37). This is the very same belief which underlies quantitative reasoning and tests of statistical significance.

Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative analyses often assume that co-occurrences provide supportive evidence. (If one proposes, for example, that the historical present tense in narrative has an evaluative function (Wolfson 1979, Schiffrin 1981), then supportive evidence for this proposal – from either quantitative or qualitative perspectives – would be the discovery of this tense with other evaluative devices.) What underlies this assumption is another assumption: messages are multiply reinforced and internally consistent. Yet, instead of assuming that messages are created through **redundancy**, one can assume that they are created through **complementarism**. That is, it is by no means necessary to assume that all elements in a message contribute in an equal way to the communicative force of that message: not only is it possible that not all parts of a message are multiply conveyed, but it is also possible that the presence of one element which conveys a particular component of a message actually frees other elements from the need to duplicate that component of the message. (Schiffrin 1985b discusses this in relation to the temporal ordering of causal sequences.) My point here is not to justify the validity of either the redundancy or the complementarism assumption. I merely want to note that an implicit belief that co-occurrences are supportive evidence, as well as a deeper assumption about the redundancy of messages, are shared by both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Qualitative and quantitative analyses make complementary contri-

butions to the study of discourse markers, and more generally, to the study of discourse coherence. We need qualitative analysis, for example, to uncover the idea structures of arguments within which markers have a role, or to interpret speakers' use of evaluation in their argument (as in Zelda's argument about her daughter-in-law in (2)). We also need qualitative analysis to be able to identify particular interactional moves: when does an utterance perform a challenge? But we also need quantitative analysis. Recall that coherence options are neither categorically required nor prohibited (Chapter 1, 1.4). Quantitative analysis of the frequencies with which particular options are used would allow us to show speakers' **preferences** for the use of one option rather than another. Through the use of quantitative analysis, we may also be able to account for why a particular item has a certain function by separating the effect of its referential meaning from the effect of the discourse slot in which it occurs.

Unfortunately, the characteristics of discourse which support one type of analysis are all too often the same characteristics that make it difficult to carry out the other type of analysis – let alone work toward the kind of combined approach that is required to answer the questions raised by discourse markers. For example, one of the features of discourse which hinders quantification is that talk is an ongoing joint creation, in which both forms and meanings are subject to continual negotiation and participant interpretation (see discussion in Chapter 1, 1.4). It is just this quality that can lead an investigator to seat him or herself in the minds of the conversationalists (or even to be a conversationalist) and interpret from the participants' point of view just what is going on. But this quality makes counting exceedingly difficult: for example, even if one wanted to count speaker intentions, how would they be identified with enough objectivity and certainty to do so? Another feature of discourse which hinders quantification is that identification of many conversational regularities depends on a detailed characterization – and interpretation – of their locations in sequential structures. However, one result of such attention to sequential structure is an unwillingness to view the emergent regularities as tokens of the same underlying type. Unfortunately, it is just such a view which would be required for the quantitative analysis of such structures.

On a more general level, qualitative and quantitative analytical approaches are rooted in different theoretical approaches to linguistic inquiry. The former is rooted in a more humanistic, subjective approach in which interpretations of both the observer and the observed so permeate the **particularities** of a description as to defy attempts at generalizations or statements of universals (Becker 1984). The latter is rooted in a more

scientific, objective approach in which particular descriptions are categorized so as to provide a basis for aggregate data and a foundation for **generalizations** about shared properties.

The tension between particularity and generalization which differentiates qualitative from quantitative approaches can be seen in the way each treats the notion of 'typical instance'. Let us assume that one has increased confidence in the non-randomness of a particular observation if one finds more than one instance of such an occurrence, for then the observation can be seen as representative of a more general pattern. Quantitative approaches can measure the degree to which a pattern is widespread because they assume that different observations are in some underlying sense the same – that they share certain objective properties. But for extreme versions of qualitative approaches, particular observations are so different from each other that they can be typical instances of widespread patterns at only the most superficial level of description.

Much of my analysis depends upon the belief that one can find typical instances of an occurrence which represent more general patterns. Thus, nothing that I report in the coming chapters is based on only a **single** occurrence: each observation is backed by multiple examples in my data. Another way of saying this is that my particular observations are typical instances of a more widespread pattern.

But at the same time, I will remain aware of the possibility that a **single** instance of a phenomenon can be as revealing as multiple instances. Hymes (1972: 35), following Sapir (1916), discusses this point in relation to the search for cultural patterns. Despite a tendency to place more trust in an observation that one makes over and over again, a single observation may be construed as just as real a cultural product: a sonnet, for example, is as much a cultural product as a kinship system, even though the former is produced only once and the latter is replicated again and again.

A single instance can be revealing for another reason: it can suggest the need for an explanation which covers a wider variety of phenomena. Schegloff (1972), for example, reports how a single example which did not fit his explanation of summons/answer sequences forced him to reconsider all of his other observations, and consequently, to recast his entire description. The danger with quantitative approaches, of course, is that they would assign a single instance less significance than repeated instances. And the danger with qualitative approaches is that each instance would be seen as a single instance.

Despite these differences (and remembering that the quantitative/ qualitative distinction is a somewhat false dichotomy), it is important to try

to combine both approaches for the analysis of discourse markers. I approach this methodological problem by arguing that discourse analysis can be made accountable to a data base in two different, but complementary ways.

First, by limiting one's analysis to a particular discourse context, e.g. a genre, an episode, an exchange, an analysis can approach **sequential accountability**. As Labov and Fanshel (1977: 354) suggest, an analysis can become 'accountable to an entire body of conversation, attempting to account for the interpretation of all utterances and the coherent sequencing among them'. In such analyses, one's data consist of a limited set of discourses on which attention and interpretation is focused.

Many of the problems raised by discourse markers suggest an approach which aims for sequential accountability. I suggested that form, meaning, and action are interwoven, and jointly negotiated, components of discourse coherence, and thus, that analyzing the contribution of a particular item to coherence should attend to each of these components. Knowledge of these different aspects of discourse may be much easier to acquire in a limited discourse type. Thus, we have one reason to focus a great deal of qualitative description on very limited domains – as we did in this chapter, for example, in our discussion of markers in arguments.

There are equally compelling reasons, however, to aim not for sequential accountability, but for **distributional accountability**. This second approach requires that one's analysis be based on the full range of environments in which a particular item occurs. Note that in analyzing some linguistic elements, we can quite safely restrict our attention to limited discourse types. To understand the historical present tense, for example, we can restrict our attention to narrative since this tense is a feature of that particular genre (although even here we may bring in observations about the present tense in other discourse). But confining an analysis of discourse markers to a limited domain is misleading because markers occur throughout conversation, e.g. in question/answer pairs:

(7)   Freda: How m– long has your mother been teaching?
       Debby: **Well** she hasn't been teaching that long.

in turn-transition spaces:

(8)   Debby: That seems to happen to people a lot, doesn't it?
                 ⌈ **I mean**. . . ⌉
       Jan: ⌊ Quite often. ⌋ Y'never realize it until it happens t'you.

A variety of markers also occurs in direct quotes:

(9)   Jack: Even the teacher admitted it.
                  She says, 'Well it was– y'shouldn't do it! But it was nice!'

in self-repairs:

(10)   Irene: Look at Bob's par– eh father and mo– well I don't think his
                  father accepted it, his mother.

in introductions of new discourse topics:

(11)   Henry: Y'know I got a cousin– I got a cousin, a girl that speaks eleven
                  languages.

in comparisons:

(12)   Jan: They aren't brought up the same way. Now Italian people are
                  very outgoing, they're very generous. When they put a meal on
                  the table it's a meal. Now these boys were Irish. They lived
                  different.

Because discourse markers occur throughout discourse, focusing only on a limited type of talk creates a risk: one can mistakenly equate the general function of a marker with its particular use within a specific discourse type. In other words, one may become so subsumed by the particularities of a discourse whose description is sequentially accountable, that the underlying similarities of that discourse to other forms of talk may be overlooked – as may general functional similarities between the markers in those different discourse types. Thus, a distributionally accountable analysis also requires that one focus less on the particularities of a single discourse than on the categorization of that discourse as a 'typical instance' of a more general type.

Another reason to consider markers wherever they occur is that context and meaning interact to produce the full communicative force of the expressions used as discourse markers. We saw that markers may have referential meaning that acts in concert with their discourse location. But without considering markers in a variety of discourse locations, we would not be able to tease apart the contribution made by meaning from that made by context, or, to see what meaning and context contribute together. It is here that quantitative analyses become particularly useful, for by comparing the frequencies with which a marker occurs in different discourse slots, we can test different hypotheses about the marker – and the contribution of meaning versus location to its function.

Still another reason to examine markers wherever they occur concerns the fluid and open nature of conversational genres. Although we may define such genres as mutually exclusive types, e.g. narrative versus argument, it is unlikely that everyday conversation contains genres that are totally distinct from each other. Conversational arguments, for example, often resemble descriptions in some respects and explanations in others. Furthermore, arguments and narratives may overlap, as when a story is told to support a position (cf. Irene's two brief experiences in 1). Focusing on markers wherever they occur alleviates the problems that may develop when the discourse which we think of as a closed genre really turns out to be a much more open and fluid combination of diverse types.

How do sequential and distributional accountability intersect? I suggest that they are complementary approaches to discourse analysis. Consider, first, that although distributional accountability is a familiar requirement of quantitative studies of phonological and morphological variation, it has not been applied with the same rigor to the analysis of discourse phenomena. In part, this is due to the nature of such phenomena themselves: although counting all the occurrences of an item requires being able to identify all those occurrences as members of a closed set, many phenomena of interest to discourse analysts do not form mutually exclusive sets. Distributional accountability has been hindered in discourse analysis for another reason: discourse analysis does not provide a ready made checklist of what features of discourse are likely to constrain variation within a particular discourse slot (as do, for example, phonological and syntactic analyses). In short, we can identify neither the item, nor its environments, precisely enough to account for constraints on its distribution.

By being sequentially accountable to a particular discourse, however, we can begin to overcome both of these initial obstacles. First, we can understand where a particular item fits within the different components which underlie discourse coherence. This helps in our identification of other members of a set of such items. Second, we can identify the more general features that our particular discourse shares with other discourse. This helps in our identification and categorization of discourse constraints. In short, it is in order to carry out these preliminary but crucial steps in a distributional analysis – to identify an item precisely enough to be able to locate other members of its set, and to categorize its environments – that we are led back to sequential analyses. Thus, distributional and sequential accountability are complementary approaches to discourse analysis.

3.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented several sample analyses in order to illustrate the general questions which my analysis of discourse markers will address. The questions are as follows:

What do discourse markers add to coherence?

> Do they create, or display, relationships between units of talk (ideas, actions, turns, etc.)?

Do markers have meanings?

> If so, are those meanings referential and/or social and/or expressive?
>
> If so, how do those meanings interact with the discourse slot to influence the total communicative force of an expression?

Do markers have functions?

> If so, in what component of a discourse system (exchange, action, ideational, information, participation)?
> Are markers multi-functional?
> Are markers functional equivalents?

These questions are not only important guidelines for my analysis; they also place the study of discourse markers in a broader analytical context, and their answers will lead toward a theoretical definition of discourse markers (cf. Chapter 3). I concluded this chapter by comparing different approaches to the analysis of discourse markers, and suggesting an approach which builds on the complementary strengths of both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

4 *Oh*: Marker of information management

As we saw in Chapter 3, understanding discourse markers requires separating the contribution made by the marker itself, from the contribution made by characteristics of the discourse slot in which the marker occurs. We posed the following questions. Does an item used as a marker have semantic meaning and/or grammatical status which contributes to its discourse function? And how does such meaning interact with the sequential context of the marker to influence production and interpretation?

I examine two discourse markers in this chapter and the next – *oh* and *well* – whose uses are not clearly based on semantic meaning or grammatical status. Beginning our analysis with these markers will force us to pay particularly close attention to the discourse slot itself. This will put us on firmer methodological ground for analysis of markers whose semantic meaning and/or grammatical status interacts with their sequential location to produce their function.

This chapter focuses on *oh*. *Oh* is traditionally viewed as an exclamation or interjection. When used alone, without the syntactic support of a sentence, *oh* is said to indicate strong emotional states, e.g. surprise, fear, or pain (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1971, Fries 1952). (1) and (2) illustrate *oh* as exclamation:

(1)   Jack: Was that a serious picture?
          Freda: **Oh**:! Gosh yes!
(2)   Jack: Like I'd say, 'What d'y'mean you don't like classical music?'
                      '**Oh**! I can't stand it! It's draggy.'

Oh can also initiate utterances, either followed by a brief pause:

(3)   Freda: **Oh**, well they came when they were a year.

or with no pause preceding the rest of the tone unit:[1]

(4)   Jack: Does he like opera? **Oh** maybe he's too young.

We will see, regardless of its syntactic status or intonational contour, that