

# The Use of Discourse Markers in Jordanian Spoken Arabic

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## Abstract

This corpus-driven study analyzes the use of discourse markers in conversations between 14 native speakers of Jordanian Spoken Arabic (JSA). The data are collected from one Jordanian talk show, namely Caravan. This show is chosen because it is based on live conversations between a group of males and females in their twenties and thirties. The study aims at identifying the discourse markers that are used in the targeted conversations and examining the pragmatic functions that are performed by each discourse marker. The results revealed the subjects relied heavily on various multifunctional discourse markers to fulfill a wide range of pragmatic functions on the textual, interpersonal and cognitive levels of discourse.

**Keywords:** Conversations, Discourse markers, Jordanian Spoken Arabic, Pragmatic functions, Corpus study

## 1. Introduction

Discourse makers (DMs) are grammatically and semantically optional linguistic items that serve various and important pragmatic functions on the textual, interpersonal and cognitive levels of discourse. Examples of the textual functions that DMs serve include signaling the interlocutor's desire to open and close units of discourse or marking transitions between these units. The DMs *well*, *right* and *ok* frequently serve the aforementioned textual functions. DMs might also fulfill a wide range of functions on the interpersonal level of discourse such as serving as back-channel signals (e.g. *yeah*), agreement markers (e.g. *I know*) and response markers (e.g. *really*). Indicating reformulation (e.g. *I mean*), signaling hesitation (e.g. *well*) and denoting the thinking process (e.g. *I see*) are examples of the functions that DMs perform on the cognitive level of discourse.

The functional class of discourse markers is drawn from various syntactic categories and it is more frequent in oral than in written discourse and in informal than in formal interactions

(Schourup 1999: 234). One of the main characteristics of DMs is performing the function of establishing connections between utterances on the local and global levels of discourse (ibid: 230). The multifunctional nature of these linguistic items is attributed to their context-dependency which enables them to perform different roles in different contexts (Fung 2003:65). Furthermore, DMs are generally short and phonologically reduced linguistic units that do not change the truth-conditions of their host utterances and that occur outside the syntactic structure of the discourse units that contain them (Schourup 1999: 232-233). The tendency of these items to occur in the initial position of utterances is ascribed to “their ‘subordinate’ use to restrict the contextual interpretation of an utterance.” (ibid: 233).

The characteristics of DMs include orality, multi-categoriality, optionality, weak clause association, connectivity, initiality, optionality and non-truth-conditionality (Schourup 1999: 230-234). It should be indicated that not all of these characteristics are to be necessarily displayed by a linguistic item that is identified as a DM. In this vein, Lam (2007: 12) argues that DMs form “a continuum with prototypical members on one end and peripheral members on the other.” The members of the DM class that display more of the agreed upon characteristics are considered better exemplars of this class than those that exhibit fewer characteristics. The tendency of DMs to be classified on a continuum of prototypically prompted the need for relying on a set of necessary and sufficient features that are to be shared by all the potential members of this class. Semantic and syntactic optionality, connectivity and non-truth-conditionality are commonly considered the necessary and sufficient features for membership in the class of DMs (Schourup 1999: 232).

## 2. Literature Review

In accordance with the fact that DMs display a wide variety of characteristics and perform a diverse range of functions, these linguistic items have been analyzed using various approaches. Examples of the approaches that have been employed in analyzing DM use include the coherence, relevance, grammatical, functional, corpus-driven, corpus-based and pragmatic approaches. Most studies on DMs describe quantitatively and qualitatively the use of these items by native speakers of English. Such studies mainly aim at exploring the frequency of DM use and developing taxonomies of the functions these items perform in English oral discourse (Blakemore 1987; Schiffrin 1987; Brinton 1996; Fraser 1999; Aijmer 2002, among others). Other studies on DMs examine the acquisition of these devices by EFL learners (Fuller 2003; Fung 2003; Lam 2007; Castro 2009; Ali and Mahadin 2015, among others).

Few studies have been conducted on the use of Arabic DMs. A number of these studies analyzed the use of these linguistic devices in written discourse. For instance, Al Kohlani (2010) analyzed the use of DMs in 50 Arabic newspaper opinion articles. The first step in the analysis was segmenting the texts into sentences and paragraphs. This step was followed by identifying the DMs that were employed in the targeted texts. The identification of DMs involved distinguishing them from other linguistic items and this was primarily based on their non-truth-conditionality (ibid: 161). After the identification of the utilized DMs, the researcher examined the textual functions that these items performed on the local and global

levels of discourse. Based on the functions that they perform, the DMs were classified under various functional categories. The results revealed that DMs were frequently used in the analyzed articles. These items were found to be more frequent on the local level of discourse than they are on the global level. The additive category of DM functions had the highest percentage of use, followed by the explanatory then the interpersonal categories. Another finding of the study was that the DM *wa* was “indisputably of the highest frequency of all discourse markers in the data” (ibid: 278). The frequent use of this DM on the local and global levels of discourse was attributed to the fact “*wa* functions as a discourse marker that indicates continuity of ideas and hence maintains the flow of the text” (ibid).

Al-Khawaldeh, Awal and Zainudin (2014) conducted a corpus-based analysis of the use of Arabic DMs in 80 sport journalistic texts. The researchers first employed two criteria, namely connectivity and non-truth conditionality, to identify instances of DM use in the targeted texts. The identified instances of DMs were then classified under four functional categories proposed by Fraser (2005). The four categories were elaborative, contrastive, inferential, and temporal. The analysis revealed that 73 instances of DMs were employed in the analyzed corpus. The most frequently employed category of DMs was the elaborative category. The DM *wa* ‘and’ had the highest percentage of use and it was predominantly grouped under this category (Al-Khawaldeh, Awal and Zainudin 2014: 206-207). The researchers stated that the high frequency of *wa* is “not surprising since many studies on Arabic DMs confirm that that [sic] *wa* is the most commonly used one in Arabic” (ibid: 208). Seventeen instances of *wa* were observed to co-occur with other DMs such as *lakkin* ‘but’ and *raghma* ‘despite’. It was argued that *wa* was “superseded’ when it co-occurred with other DMs in the sense that it was “neutralized” by the functions performed by its co-occurring DMs (ibid). For instance, when *wa lakkin* was used to establish connections between two sentences, the relationship between these sentences was found to be elaborative rather than contrastive. This was attributed to the assumption that the “the contrastive sense of *lakkin* is stronger than the elaborative sense of *wa*” (ibid).

In addition to analyzing the use of these pragmatic devices in written discourse, other studies focused on examining the pragmatic functions of individual DMs in oral discourse. For instance, Owens and Rockwood (2007) conducted a corpus-based study on the functions performed by the DM *ya<sup>c</sup>ni*. The corpus consisted of “about 27,000 words of Spoken Arabian peninsular Arabic” (ibid: 86). The researchers first reviewed the most frequent functions of this DM in previous literature. Examples of these functions include requesting and giving clarification, holding turns and signaling non-committal responses (ibid: 85). The results of the study revealed that one of the general functions of *ya<sup>c</sup>ni* was signaling elaboration. This function was divided into three sub-functions. The first and the most frequent sub-function involved giving more specific information about previous utterances. Providing general information about previous discourse segments was identified as the second sub-function under elaboration. The last sub-function was referred to as signaling continuation of what has been said before with “what comes after *ya<sup>c</sup>ni* is neither more or nor less specific what precedes” (ibid: 92). Other examples of the functions performed by this DM were focusing a particular discourse unit, signaling repair and hesitation and marking politeness.

Yagi and Ali (2008) employed the Gricean conversational maxims to investigate the pragmatic use of *wa* ‘and’ to signal sequencing. The main aim of the study was to determine why native speakers of Arabic tend to utilize and interpret *wa* as an indicator of sequencing while there are two other DMs, namely *fa* ‘as soon as’ and *thumma* ‘then’, primarily dedicated for serving this function (ibid:618). The analysis revealed that interpreting *wa* as a sequencing marker can be based on the Gricean maxim of manner. Consequently, the hearer’s interpretation of *wa* as a device that implies ordering might be ascribed to the assumption that the speaker aims at abiding by the Gricean maxim of manner by being orderly (ibid: 626). The functions performed by *wa* were also analyzed by Taha, Jarrah and Al-Jarrah (2014). The researchers explored the discursal functions that *wa* fulfilled in 10 Jordanian preliminary speeches. They came to the conclusion that “*wa* has a single meaning of addition despite the fact that it would serve different functions such as concession, continuity, etc. given that all of these functions are derived of its basic meaning as an addition marker” (ibid: 179).

The pragmatic functions of the DM *tayyeb* were explored by Al-Harahsheh and Kanakri (2013). This DM takes two forms, namely “*tayyib* and its cognate form *tabb*”, and its literal meaning is ‘okay, fine or good’ (ibid: 199). The data were gathered from 18 conversations between native speakers of Jordanian Arabic. The subjects were 36 students at the Yarmouk University. The DM under study was found to serve the functions of signaling agreement, showing objection, introducing a new topic, requesting a pause to understand the previous utterance(s), mitigating the disagreement force, marking a confrontation, signaling the end of discourse and giving permission (ibid: 199-201). Another example of the studies that examine the use of individual DMs is Kanakri and Al-Harahsheh’s (2013) analysis the DM *‘a:di*. The researchers adopted a discourse analysis approach to investigate the functions performed by this DM in 20 conversations in JSA. This DM was found to serve various pragmatic functions including softening the impact of sad news, expressing disapproval, asking for permission, showing disappointment, expressing curiosity, saving face, showing acceptance and expressing criticism.

Another type of DM analysis involved comparing the use of these devices in standard and colloquial varieties of Arabic. An example of such analysis was conducted by Al-Batal (1994). One of the main aims of the study was investigating the effect of the diglossic nature of Arabic on the use of DMs (referred to as discourse connectives). The low variety of Arabic language under investigation was Lebanese Arabic. The data were gathered from “Lebanese radio and TV programs as well as from recorded interviews” (ibid: 93). The targeted DMs were grouped under three categories. These categories comprise DMs that are only used in Lebanese Arabic (e.g. *ya<sup>c</sup>ni* and *tayyab*), DMs that are shared between Lebanese Arabic and Standard Arabic (e.g. *wa*, *aw*, *la?innu* and *izan*) and DMs that are borrowed from the latter variety of Arabic (e.g. *fa*) (ibid: 93-101). Several functions were found to be fulfilled by the DMs that fall under the three analyzed categories. An example of the functions fulfilled by the most frequent DM under the first category, namely *ya<sup>c</sup>ni*, was signaling explanation and reiteration. One of the DMs that were argued to be borrowed by Lebanese Arabic from Standard Arabic was *fa*. This DM was mainly utilized for signaling conclusive and causal

meanings (ibid: 100). The DM *wa* was the most frequently employed in the analyzed data. This DM was found to serve the same function in Lebanese and Standard Arabic. This function was signaling “an additive relationship between the elements it connects” (ibid: 98).

In sum, the reviewed studies either investigate the functions of individual DMs (Owens and Rockwood 2007; Yagi and Ali 2008; Al-Harashsheh and Kanakri 2013; Kanakri and Al-Harashsheh 2013; Taha, Jarrah and Al-Jarrah 2014), the comparative use of DMs in formal and informal contexts (Al-Batal 1994) or the use of DMs markers in written discourse (Al- Al Kohlani 2010; Al-Khawaldeh, Awal and Zainudin 2014). There is no single corpus-driven study that aims at analyzing the DM instances and functions in informal conversations between speakers of JSA. Such type of analysis can shed light on the DMs that have not been explored before and it can also account for the multifunctional nature of these pragmatic devices. Moreover, analyzing the use of DMs in this type of context might shed light on various communicative and interpersonal functions performed by these devices. Examples of these functions include using DMs as turn yielding, holding and taking devices or employing them for marking shared knowledge, showing responses, or signaling feedback and back-channeling. Moreover, the analysis of DMs in this type of context might also portray how these devices are used in online oral interactions where the participants need to plan their utterances within a very short time frame. Accordingly, DMs might be used to denote thinking processes, reformulation and hesitation.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

The present study aims at filling a gap in the literature by examining the use of DMs in informal conversations between native speakers of JSA. It is first concerned with identifying the DMs that are employed in the conversations and distinguishing them from their non DM counterparts. The study then attempts to analyze the functions performed by these pragmatic devices. The questions that this study aims at answering are as follows:

- 1- What are the DMs that native speakers of JSA use in conversations?
- 2- What are the functions that DMs serve in conversations between native speakers of JSA?

### 4. Methodology

This section reviews methodological issues related to the data collection and data analysis processes that are employed for conducting the current study. A description of the corpus, subjects, transcription symbols and data analysis method is provided in this section.

#### 4.1 Corpus

The analyzed data comprise forty minutes of conversations selected from a live talk show broadcasted on Roya Channel. Four live conversations between 14 participants in Caravan talk show constitute the small corpus investigated in this study. The first conversation ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pxxg\\_Khibswc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pxxg_Khibswc)) aims at analyzing the personality traits of five hosts (two females, three males) by a psychologist (a male). The second is a conversation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rCLSy-TQc0>) between two hosts (a male, a female)

and a chef (a male). The third conversation ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBJ\\_3hFzysQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBJ_3hFzysQ)) is a game played by 4 hosts (2 males, 2 females). Finally, the fourth is a conversation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDu8gff8utA>) between 3 hosts (a female, 2 males) and a Jordanian blogger (a female).

#### 4.2 Subjects

The subjects are a homogenous group of 14 (6 males, 8 females) native speakers of JSA with working knowledge of Standard Arabic. They are apparently in their 20s and 30s.

#### 4.3 Transcription

Three levels of transcription are employed in the present study. The first level involves transcribing the conversations using Arabic letters. The conversations are transcribed in accordance with their pronunciation (JSA) rather than with their spelling (Standard Arabic). Two of the transcribed sounds, namely /g/ and /v/, are not available in Arabic alphabet. As such, two symbols, namely /ج/ and /ف/, are used to represent them. The second level of transcription is based on transliteration symbols. These symbols are mainly based on English alphabet. However, the symbols which are presented on Table 1 below are used for the sounds that are not represented by individual letters in English or the sounds that have no English equivalents. The final level of transcription involves providing an English gloss to ensure understanding the linguistic context where the DMs occur. Moreover, Symbols that signal speech overlaps [ , pauses ( ), non-verbal features [ ], unfinished words = , prolonged syllables: and unintelligible utterances < > are added to enable assigning accurate functions to the analyzed DMs.

Table 1. Transliteration Symbols for Arabic Vowels and Some Consonants

Arabic Alphabet	Symbols
voiceless glottal stop	ʔ
voiceless dental fricative	th
voiced palatal affricate	j
voiceless pharyngeal fricative	<u>h</u>
voiceless velar fricative	kh
voiced dental fricative	dh
voiceless palatal fricative	sh
voiceless emphatic fricative	<u>s</u>
voiced emphatic stop	<u>d</u>

voiceless emphatic stop	t̤
voiced pharyngeal fricative	c
voiced velar fricative	gh
voiceless uvular stop	q
voiced labiovelar glide	w
voiced palatal glide	y
low back vowel	a
high back vowel	u
high front vowel	i
mid front vowel	e

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The first step in analyzing the data is identifying the instances of DMs that are used in the conversations under study. Instances of DMs are to be identified based on a set of characteristics that all these linguistic items are believed to share. This set is proposed by Schourup (1999) and it includes orality, multi-categoriality, optionality, weak clause association, connectivity, initiality, optionality and non-truth-conditionality. Two characteristics, namely, semantic and syntactic optionality and non-truth-conditionality, are utilized for distinguishing the DM functions of linguistic items from their non DM counterparts. Employing these two characteristics for spotting DM instances is based on Schourup's (1999: 232) argument that "connectivity, optionality, and non-truth-conditionality are all frequently taken together to be necessary attributes of DMs." Not relying on connectivity as a necessary characteristic of DMs is ascribed to the fact that many DMs serve functions other than indicating connections between discourse units. For instance, some DMs are used for marking shared knowledge (e.g. *you know*), signaling attitudes (e.g. *actually*) and showing active listenership (e.g. *right*).

It should be indicated that vocalizations (e.g. ?i:h and ?imm) are not considered DMs based on the fact that they are not generally viewed as being proper linguistic items. Moreover, instances of code switching to DMs that are used in English are beyond the scope of the study because the analysis is based on the DMs that are used in Arabic. Accordingly, the Arabic DMs that are analyzed in this study are semantically and syntactically optional linguistic items that do not change the truth-conditions of their host discourse units.

After spotting the instances of DMs, the function that are performed by each one of these linguistic items are analyzed and discussed by providing illustrative examples. The analyzed DMs are used on the textual (referential and structural), interpersonal and cognitive levels of discourse. Fung (2003: xiv) summarizes these functions as follows:

Discourse markers are found to serve as useful contextual coordinates to structure and organise speech on **interpersonal** (marking shared knowledge, attitudes and responses), **referential** (indicating textual relationships such as cause, contrast, coordination, digression, consequence, etc.), **structural** (summarising opinions, marking sequence, opening and closing of topics, transition and continuation of topics) and **cognitive** (denoting hesitation and thinking process, marking reformulation, self-correction or elaboration, and assessing the listener's knowledge about the utterances) realms

## 5. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the results of this quantitative analysis. It is divided into several subsections. Each subsection is dedicated for analyzing the pragmatic functions that are performed by a DM.

### 5.1 *sara:ha*

The DM *sara:ha* 'to be honest' is predominantly classified under the interpersonal category of DM functions. There are 11 instances of this DM; 9 of these instances are preceded by 'bi'. Both *sara:ha* and its cognate *bisara:ha* are employed for signaling the speakers' attitudes towards the propositional content of utterances. The following is an illustrative example:

1. معمول على عينه كثيره من البشر وفي إلو كثير بروسيس بصراحه كثير صعبه (6)

ma<sup>c</sup>mu:l <sup>c</sup>ala <sup>c</sup>ayyineh kti:reh min ilbasha<sup>r</sup> ?u fi: ?ilu kti:r broses *bisara:ha* kti:r si<sup>c</sup>beh

'It is conducted on a large sample of people and it relies on many processes that are, *to be honest*, very difficult'

### 5.2 *bass*

The analysis revealed that there are 34 instances of the DM *bass* that serve functions on the textual, cognitive and interpersonal levels of discourse. One of the textual functions of *bass* is constraining the potential interpretations of an utterance. As can be noticed in example 2 below, the DM *bass* 'just' specifies the purpose of the discussed tests, i.e. performed for no other reason but fun.

2. هاي اختبارات لتسليه بس (1)

ha:y ikhtiba:ra:t lattsleyah *bass*

'These tests are *just* for fun'

Another form of specification expressed by this DM involves setting conditions for acceptance. This can be illustrated by the example below:

3. بس إنت دعموس إذا ما بتعرف الكلمه ما بتتاسب (4)

*bass* ?inta da<sup>c</sup>mu:s ?iza ma bt<sup>c</sup>raf ilklmeh ma btn<sup>h</sup>asab

'But if you do not know the word, Daamous, it is not accepted'



In example 3 above, the speaker is proposing a condition for accepting an answer and this condition is introduced by the DM *bass*. Another function of The DM *bass* is signaling a contrastive relationship between two discourse units. This function of *bass* is classified under the textual category and it is exemplified by the utterance below:

4. أنا بحب أشوفه عشاشه بحب أشوف برنامج بس ما لأيت إشي يعني إنترستنج لإلي أشوفه بصفحاته على (13) التواصل الاجتماعي

?na bahib ?ashu:fuh ʿashsha:seh bahib ?shu:f barna:mjuh *bass* ma la?i:t ?ishi yaʿni la?ili ?ashufuh biʿafha:tuah ʿala iltwa:sul il?ijtima:ʿi

‘I like to watch him on TV, I like watching his shows but I found nothing interesting for me to watch on his social network’

As can be shown in example 4, the DM *bass* serves the textual function of guiding the hearer to interpret the semantic relationship between the discourse units that precedes (I like to watch him on TV, I like watching his shows) and follows (I found nothing interesting for me to watch on his social network) it as being contrastive in nature. In addition to signaling contrast between two discourse units, this relationship can be also signaled between reality and something that should have happened. In example 5 below, the host regretted that fact that the guest’s personality was not analyzed by the hosts.

5. (5) بس كان لازم نعملك إحنا كمان تحليل شوي لشخصيتك

*bass* ka:n la:zim niʿmallak ?ihna kama:n tahlili:l shwwi lashakhshyytak

‘But we should have analyzed your personality’

Contrastive *bass* is further used for marking objection. This type of objection can be understood in terms of signaling a contrastive relationship between a claim and reality. Example 6 below illustrates the use of this DM to fulfill this function. In the example the speaker argues against considering her answer incorrect on the basis of providing a synonym of the targeted word.

6. (2) بس اليردايه هييه جلاله

*bass* ilburday heyyeh jla:leh

‘But the curtain is a window hanging’

The DM *bass* is also utilized for signaling elaboration by giving specific information that clarifies the propositional content of the discourse unit that precedes it. An example is provided below:

7. (11) انا ما لحأت بس كتبت إسم الولد طارئ و نبات طماطم [ضحك] بعدين أعدت

?na ma lahha?t *bass* katabt ?isim ilwalad ta:ri? ?u naba:t tama:tim baʿde:n ?aʿadit

‘I had no time to finish I just wrote Tarii as a boy’s name and tomato as a type of vegetable then I wrote nothing’

This DM is also employed for fulfilling the cognitive function of requesting clarification in order to be able to interpret intended messages. This function is illustrated in example 5:

8. بس ايش آخر إيش = أتقبل امور لا استطيع التحكم بها (3)

bass e:sh a:khir ish= ?ataqabbal ?umu:r la ?astati:c ?atthakum biha

‘But what is the last thing? Accept things that I cannot control!’

Intensifying the emotional aspect of a proposition is an interpersonal function performed by the DM *bass*. In example 9, *bass* is employed as a focusing marker that highlights the emotional importance of the speaker’s need to know a specific girl’s name.

9. بس بدّي أشوف ايش في [إسم بنت (2)

bass bididi ?ashu:f ? e:sh fi ?isim binit

‘I just want to find a girl’s name’

Finally, the DM *bass* can be used for considering an issue. Example 10 below is an illustrative example:

10. بس عشان أهدا يعني ممكن (1)

bass °asha:n ?ahda ya°ni mumkin

‘But to calm down, I mean it is possible’

In the above mentioned utterance, the speaker is asked about whether he drinks coffee in order to calm down when he is nervous. First he said that he likes coffee in general, then he considered the possibility of answering the question with a yes and this was introduced by the DM *bass*.

### 5.3 *hilu*

There are instances of the word *hilu* that serve DM functions and there are other instances of this word that do not serve these functions. Optionality and non-thruth-conditionality are employed to distinguish the former instances from the latter. The 32 instances of this DM are observed to perform the interpersonal function of signaling active listenership by serving as back-channeling devices. Illustrative examples of the non DM and DM forms of *hilu* are provided below:

11. (8) في كثير عنا إيه إيه محلات عم تفتح بالبلد وعم بحطو مبالغ حلو الواحد برضو يحكي عنها

fi: kti:r °inna ?eh ?eh mahalla:t °am tiftah bilbalad ?u °am bihuttu maba:ligh **hilu**  
ilwa:had bardu yehki °anha

‘There are of shops that are opening in the country and spending a lot of money and it is also nice to talk about them’

12. (5) لا يعني حسب الأعدة

la? ya°ni hasab il?a°deh

‘No, I mean, it depends’

حلو (6)

*hilu*

*Nice*

#### 5.4 ?aki:d

Seven instances of the DM ?aki:d are found to serve two functions on the interpersonal level of discourse, namely signaling agreement with the another interlocutor and expressing certainty about a proposition. The following two examples, respectively, illustrate these functions:

13. فيي كمان مطاعم تانيه برضو إحنا لازم نعطيها حجّها (8)

fi: kama:n maṭ:°im ta:nyeh bardu ?ihna la:zim na°ti:ha haggha

‘There are other restaurants that we must also be appreciate ’

أكيد (7)

?aki:d

‘sure’

14. من غير ما تمسحو دموع/أكيد اليوم رح يكون التحدي مختلف اليوم (10)

min ghe:r ma timsaḥu dmu:° ?aki:d itthadi rah yku:n mukhtalif ilyu:m

‘Without wiping tears, the challenge today is going to be *definitely* different’

#### 5.5 tab°an

Twelve instances of *tab°an* are employed by the subjects. This DM is predominantly functional on the interpersonal level of discourse. The functions that are performed by this interpositional marker involve indicating agreement and intensifying the propositional content of utterances. An example of the use of *tab°an* by the native speakers of JSA is given below:

15. خصوصن إنو عم نحكي عن موضوع هلاً شاغل الرأي العام و الشعب كلّه كبار وصغار (13)

?u khuṣuṣan ?inuu °am nihki °an mawdu:c halla? sha:ghil ilra?i il°a:m we ilsha°ib kulluh

‘Especially that we are talking now about a topic that concern all the people, old and young’

طبعن طبعن (12)

*tab°an tab°an*

‘of course of course’

### 5.6 *sahh*

There are three occurrences of the DM *sahh* and its cognate *sahi:h*. The function employed by this DM is classified under the interpersonal category and it involves signaling agreement with the content of the previous utterance. Below is an illustrative example:

16. (13) أو بنسوي أشياء يمكن مش بيرفكت أوكي.

?w binsawwi ?ashya:? yemken mish berfekt

‘Or we all do things that are not perfect okey’

صحيح (1)

*sahi:h*

‘Right’

### 5.7 *jadd*

Eight instances of the DM *jadd* and its cognate *anjadd* are used in the analyzed conversations. The native speakers of JSA utilized seven instances of this DM as back-channeling devices, intensifiers and as indicators of confirmation. The latter function is demonstrated by the following utterances:

17. (1) حرف الجيم عنجد

harf ilji:m *anjadd*

‘The j letter *seriously*’

(10) جيم عنجد ( ) جه جه جيم

Ji:m *anjadd* jah jah ji:m

‘Yeah *seriously*, the j letter’

In the first utterance, the speaker is seeking the confirmation of the other interlocutor in a sarcastic tone by employing the DM *anjadd*. The other interlocutor sarcastically signals his confirmation by utilizing the same DM. The use of *jadd* for intensifying the meaning of an utterance is illustrated by example 18:

18. (11) عنجد إيش في

*anjadd* e:sh fi:

‘*Seriously* what is going on?’

### 5.8 *rifet* / *bf arif*

One instance of the DM *rifet* is used in the analyzed data. This DM performs the cognitive role of checking the hearer’s understanding of the meaning conveyed by the utterance. Example 19 below presents this instance:

19. (13) هاي الاشياء بنحاول إنو إحنا ما نشاركها مع إناس عرفت

hay il?ashya:? binha:wil ?innu ?ihna ma nsha:rikha ma<sup>c</sup> ?innas<sup>c</sup> rifit

‘These things we try not to share with other people, *you know*’

The DM *bt<sup>c</sup>raf* is employed twice to serve the interpersonal function of marking shared knowledge between interlocutors. Below is an illustrative example:

20. (8) نعرّف العالم إنو والله في عنا إنو بتعرف في كثير عنا إيه إيه محلات

n<sup>c</sup>arrif il<sup>c</sup>a:lam ?innu wallah *bt<sup>c</sup>raf* fi: kti:r<sup>c</sup> inna ?eh ?eh mahalla:t

‘We need to let the world know that, *you know*, we have a lot of shops’

### 5.9 *fhimet<sup>c</sup>alyy ki:f*

There is one occurrence of the cognitive DM *fhimet<sup>c</sup>alyy ki:f*. This DM is used for checking that the hearer understands the intended message of an utterance. This function is illustrated by the following example:

21. (8) فهمت عليّ كيف يعني إحنا بنجعد مع الشخص و بنحكي معاه

*fhimet<sup>c</sup>alyy ki:f* ya<sup>c</sup>ni ?ihna bnig<sup>c</sup>ud ma<sup>c</sup> ilshakhs ?u bnihki ma<sup>c</sup>a:h

‘Do you understand what I am saying, we meet with the person and talk to him’

### 5.10 *mazbu:t*

This DM is employed twice as a cognitive marker that signals conformation. Example 22 below represents one of these instances:

22. (4) بس إنت دعموس إذا ما بتعرف الكلمة ما بتتاسب

*bass* ?inta da<sup>c</sup>mu:s ?iza ma *bt<sup>c</sup>raf* ilklmeh ma *bt<sup>n</sup>hasab*

‘But if you do not know the word, Daamous, it is not accepted’

مزبوط (10)

*mazbu:t*

‘Right’

### 5.11 *fi<sup>c</sup>lan*

There are ten instances of the DM *fi<sup>c</sup>lan* and its cognate *fi<sup>c</sup>liyyan* in the targeted conversations. This DM fulfills one function on the interpositional level of discourse, namely signaling attitudes towards the propositional content of the discourse unit that hosts it. Below is a demonstrative example:

23. (13) أبل التلفزيون أيام القرى كانوا فعلىن يسمو شخص بالمدينه إنو هاده إنفلونسر

?abil iltifizyu:n ?yya:m ilqura ka:nu: *fi<sup>c</sup>lan* ysammu shakhs bilmadi:neh ?innu ha:dah ?influnser

‘In the past, before TV, they *actually* used to refer to someone as an influencer’

### 5.12 *naw<sup>c</sup>an ma*

This DM is used twice by the subjects and it found to serve the interpersonal function of hedging. Hedging involves down toning the force of an utterance to make it less face threatening. Example 24 illustrates the use of this DM:

24. طب أريج إنت لما يكون في عندك ميه و تمنميت ألف عالإنستجرام نوعن ما هيه مسؤوليه (9)

ṭabb ?ari:j ?inti lamma yku:n fi: <sup>c</sup>indik miyyah ?u tamanmi:t ?alf <sup>c</sup>alinstigra:m  
nawcan ma heyyeh mas?u:leyyeh

‘So Arij, having many followers on Instagram is *kind of* a responsibility’

### 5.13 *ba<sup>c</sup>de:n*

There are six instances of the DM *ba<sup>c</sup>de:n* and its cognate *ba<sup>c</sup>d* in the targeted conversations. Three instances perform textual functions (contrasting and sequencing) and the other three perform interpersonal functions (signaling dissatisfaction). Below are, respectively, two illustrative examples:

25. بعرفهم كذا إنو بحكو عشخص بعدين بلاأيهم بتابعوه طب ليش بتابعه (13)

ba<sup>c</sup>rifhum kaza ?innu bihku <sup>c</sup>ashkhs *ba<sup>c</sup>de:n* bala:?*i*:hum bita:b<sup>c</sup>u:h ṭabb le:sh  
bitta:b<sup>c</sup>uh

‘That they keep criticizing someone *then* I find out that they are watching his program but why?’

26. يلاً يلاً يلاً حرف سهل شين (10)

yalla yalla yalla harf sihil shi:n

‘Come on, Come on, Come on an easy letter the sh’

(11) بيبي بعدين معك

Yi::: *ba<sup>c</sup>di:n ma<sup>c</sup>ak*

‘Come on!’

### 5.14 *?aw*

The DM *?aw* is utilized 72 times by the subjects for serving functions on the textual and cognitive levels of discourse. The textual function performed by this DM involves signaling the referential relationship of disjunction. As for the cognitive functions of *?aw*, they include signaling reformulation and self-correction of utterances. Examples 27, 28 and 29 illustrate these three functions, respectively:

27. بتحاولي تلعبى بأشياء بشعرك أو ممكن تدفعي الشخص اللي [جنبك] (6)

Bitha:wli til<sup>c</sup>abi bi?ashya:? bisha<sup>c</sup>rik *?aw* momken tidfa<sup>c</sup>i ilshkhs\_?lli janbik

‘You try to play with things may be with your hair *or* you might push the person next to you’

28. (8) في ناس مثلن بحاولو إيه إيه إيه/أو ما عندهم إستطاعه إبتهم يروجو إيه عن طريق التلفزيون

fi na:s mathalan biha:wlu ?eh ?eh ?eh ?aw ma ʿindhū ?istita:ʿah ?nhūm yrawwju ?eh ʿan tari:q ittilfisyu:n

‘There are people who try to *or* do not know how to promote things on TV.’

29. (6) بكون بتحلى بتلت أمور /أو بأمرين جدن مهمين

biku:n bithalla bitalat ?umu:r ?aw bi?mre:n jiddan muhmmi:n

‘He three qualities *or* two very important qualities’

### 5.15 willa

In addition to ?aw another cognate to the English DM *or* is *willa*. The 17 occurrences of this DM is found to serve two roles. The first is the referential role of signaling disjunction (as in example 30) and the second is the structural role of yielding turns (as in example 31). As can be observed, the second syllable in *willa* is prolonged in order to give time for the other interlocutor to prepare a response and eventually take the turn.

30. كيف بتدخلي على هاي الحفلة بتلاي إناس اللي بدك تشوفهم بدك تعرفهم بس هيك عالهدا ولا الكل (6) حيعرف إنه ولاء دخلت

Ki:f btudkhuli ʿala ha:y ilhafleh bitla:?i ?innas illi biddik tshufi:hum biddik tiʿrafi:hum bass he:k ʿalhada wella ?ilkull hayʿraf ?innuh wala:? dakhlat

‘When you go to a party, do you enter quietly *or* everyone will know that you arrived’

31. (6) بتعصبي ولا:::

bitʿassbi walla:::

‘Do you get angry *or*:::’

### 5.16 tayyib/ tabb

The DM *tayyib* (25 instance) and its cognate *tabb* (15 instances) are examples of the DMs that are multifunctional in nature. One of the primary functions that are served by this DM is signaling transitions between topics. Under this function *tayyib* / *tabb* can mark initiating a topic, shifting from one topic to another and closing a topic. In addition to marking transitions between topics this DM is also used to organize turn taking processes. Examples 32 and 33 below demonstrate these two structural functions.

32. (6) بالليل طيب لما تمشي بالعادة ولاء بتكوني سريعة كثير خطوات واسعة

bi?ille:l tabb lamma timshi wala:? bitku:ni sari:ʿah kti:r khutwa:t wa:sʿah

‘At night, *ok* do you walk fast with wide steps?’

33. (1) طب شو الاسس والمعايير الي بتم عليها هيڪ اختبارات

*tabb shu il?usus we ilma<sup>˘</sup>a:yi:r ?lli bittim <sup>˘</sup>ale:ha he:k ?ikhtiba:ra:t*

‘Ok what are the criteria that such tests are based on?’

In example 32, speaker (6) asked another interlocutor a question. The answer to this question was ‘at night’. Then he used *tayyeb* to signal shifting to another question. Example 33 illustrates the use of *tabb* for claiming a turn. That is, speaker (1) employed this DM to claim the turn to ask a question after a short pause was used by the previous turn-holder. In addition to serving structural functions on the textual level of discourse, *tayyib* / *tabb* is also observed to perform functions on the interpersonal level. These functions include signaling objection, marking agreement/disagreement, indicating active listenership and introducing requests. The examples below illustrate the use of this DM to signal disagreement, introduce requests and mark agreement, respectively:

34. (13) يعرفهم كزا / انو بحكو عشخص بعدين بلايهم بتابعوه طب ليش بتابعه

ba<sup>˘</sup>rifhum kaza ?innu bi<sup>h</sup>ku <sup>˘</sup>ashkhs ba<sup>˘</sup>de:n bala:?<sup>i</sup>:hum bita:b<sup>˘</sup>u:h *tabb* le:sh  
bita:b<sup>˘</sup>uh

‘That they keep criticizing someone then I find out that they are watching his program  
*but* why?’

35. (2) طب إستنى

*tabb ?istanna*

‘But wait’

(10) طب طب تفضلي

*tabb tabb tfaddali*

‘Ok ok go ahead’

### 5.17 ?u

The DM *?u* plays similar roles to the English DM *and*. This DM is used 86 times by the participants which makes it one of the most frequently employed DMs in the analyzed data. It serves various functions on the global and local levels of discourse. The examples below illustrate, respectively, the use of *?u* to signal the semantic relation of coordination, indicate elaboration, hold a turn as well as denote the thinking process, mark causation and claim a turn.

36. (1) أنا شايف لطيف بهز براسه و بحكي في أفكار خرافيه

?na sha:yef lati:f bihizz bira:su ?u bi<sup>h</sup>ki ?akkba:r khura:fiyyeh

‘I can see that Latif is nodding his head *and* talking about legendary thoughts’

37. معتز دايمن متحمس و ماسك النص و يا شباب اليوم بدنا نعمل كذا و خذ هاي اللان إللك و هاذ اللان الو

(4)



mu<sup>c</sup>tazz dayman mith<sup>h</sup>ammis ?u ma:sik ilnass\_?u ya shaba:b ilyu:m bidna ni<sup>c</sup>mal  
kadha ?u khudh ha:y illaIn ?lak ?u ha:TH illaIn ?iluh

‘Muatazz is always excited *and* holding the script *and* guys today we want to do  
this *and* take this line is for you *and* this line is for him’

38. [و:خطوات صغيرة (5)]

[?u::: khuṭawa:t saghi:rah

[a:::nd small steps

39. بعد ما عمله و أخذ دوره برجع بعمل نفس الاختبار و بشوف حالي صرت اتحلى بمهارات أعلى و لا لا (6)

ba<sup>d</sup> ma ?a<sup>c</sup>maluh ?u a:khud ildwrah barja<sup>c</sup> ba<sup>c</sup>mal nafs il?<sup>i</sup>khtiba:r ?u bashu:f  
ḥa:ly sirit ?<sup>h</sup>alla bimha:ra:t ?cla willa la?

‘After taking the test and the course, I will take the same test again *and* see whether  
I acquired better skills or not’

40. (8) و إنت متغيره هيك عن الموسم الماضي فيكي إشي

?u ?inti mitghayyreh he:k <sup>c</sup>an ilmwsim ilma:ddi: fi:ki ?ishi

‘*And* you are not the same as the previous season, there is something about you’

### 5.18 halla?

The DM *halla?*, which is similar to the English DM *now*, occurred 42 times in the analyzed conversations. This DM mainly functions on the structural level of discourse to open topics, mark transitions between topics and to signal claiming a turn. Below are two illustrative examples of the use of this mark to start a topic and to claim a turn:

41. (1) هلا في كثير ناس بتكون حابه تحلل شخصيات أصدقاءها

*halla?* fi: kthi:r na:s bitku:n ḥa:bbeh <sup>h</sup>allel shakh<sup>s</sup>yya:t ?<sup>s</sup>diqa:ha

‘*Now* there are many people who want to analyze the personalities of their friends’

42. (2) هلا انا طلع المجموع أربعة و أربعين

*halla?* ?na <sup>t</sup>ile<sup>c</sup> ilmajmu:<sup>c</sup> ma<sup>c</sup>i ?arba<sup>c</sup>ah ?u ?rb<sup>c</sup>i:n

‘*Now* I found that the sum is 44’

### 5.19 yalla

The 25 occurrences of the DM *yalla* perform the structural function of starting a topic and the interpersonal function of signaling agreement. Below are some illustrative examples:

43. (10) يلا أول حرف نبليش فيو اليوم بما أنو الاحرف العربية بتبليش بحرف الألف

*yalla* ?wwal <sup>h</sup>arf ?inballish fi: ?lu:m bima: ?innu il?ahruf il<sup>c</sup>arabeyyeh bitballish  
bi<sup>h</sup>arf il?alef

‘*Let’s start*, our first letter today based on the idea that the first letter in Arabic Alphabet is A’

44. (6) ندخل بالامتحان

nidkhul bil?imtiha:n

‘Let’s start the test’

يَلا آه

*yella ?a:h*

‘Come on, yeah’

### 5.20 *ya<sup>c</sup>ni*

The equivalent for *ya<sup>c</sup>ni* in English is the DM *I mean*. Similar to the DM *I mean*, the 70 instances of the DM *ya<sup>c</sup>ni* serves various functions on the three levels of discourse (cf. Ali and Mahadin 2015). The examples below illustrate, respectively, the use of this DM to summarize pervious points, mark reformulation, yield turns and simultaneously denote the thinking process, signal elaboration and indicate dissatisfaction.

45. (1) يعني هدولا هدولا هُمه إحنا عايشين مع بعض ؤ عايشين بيناتكم  
*ya<sup>c</sup>ni hadu:lah hadu:la hummeh ?ihna ca:yshi:n mac bacad ?u ca:yshi:n bina:tkum*  
 ‘I mean those are who we are living together and living among you’
46. (1) حتى شخصيات شخص= أي يعني شخصياتهم نفسهم  
*hatta shakhṣiyya:t shakhṣ= ?ay ya<sup>c</sup>ni shakhṣiyya:thum nafshum*  
 ‘Even their personalities peson= *I mean* their own personlites’
47. (9) هوه عمالوه بأمن بهاده الإشي بس من برّه مضطر يحكي إنو أنا ما بحبو يعني ابيه  
*huwweh ‘amma:luh bi?a:min biha:da il?ishi bas min barrah mittar yehki ?inno ma bihibbuh ya<sup>c</sup>ni ?e:h*  
 ‘He believes in that thing but he has to say that he does not like it, *I mean*’
48. (10) معتز عنده ملكة الكتابه السريعه يعني بكتب أسرع من ما بفكر  
*mu<sup>c</sup>tazz ‘induh malaket ilkita:beh ilsari:‘ah ya<sup>c</sup>ni: biktub ?sra<sup>c</sup> ma bifakkir.*  
 ‘Mutazz is a fast writer *I mean* he can write faster than he thinks’
49. (11) إيش في إسم بنت بحرف الطاعني  
*?e:sh fi: ?isim binet biḥrf ilṭa ya<sup>c</sup>ni*  
 ‘what is the name of the girl that start with a ṭ *I mean*’

### 5.21. *he:k*

There are 19 instances of the DM *he:k* in the analyzed conversations. This DM has similar functions to the DMs *sort of* and *kind of* which play the role of hedges that express language users' tentativeness towards the propositional content of discourse segments (Fung 2003: 97). The following is a representative examples

50. (1) كيف الحال  
 (6): الحمد لله تمام  
 (1): إبيه هو سبحان الله دابمن اللي بشتغلوا بعلم إنفس بكون هيك شخصيتهم فاردة  
 (1): ki:f ḥa:lak  
 (6): alḥamdu lillah tama:m  
 (1) ?e: hu subḥa:n ?allah da:yman ?illi bishtighlu bi‘ilm ?annafs biku:n *he:k*  
*shakhṣiyythum fa:rdeh.*  
 ‘(1): How are you?  
 (2) I am fine thanks God

(3) Psychologists always *kind of* have positive personality’

### 5.22 *mathalan/masalan*

There are 16 instances of this DM, 13 of them are pronounced *mathalan* and the other three are pronounced *masalan*. This DM is comparable to the elaborative DMs *for example* and *for instance* which are employed on the referential level of discourse to provide the listeners with examples that support the propositional content of their messages (cf. Ali and Mahadin 2016).

Example 51 below is an illustrative example:

50. فاصرت أنواع أنا شوي بالحلقات مش كل إشي بس برجرز أو ريز أو مثلن سندويشات أو مثلن أجنبي أو إنترناشونال أو (8) إيطالي أو بيتزاز

faʒirit ʔannaw<sup>c</sup> ʔana shwiyy bilhalaqa:t mish kul ʔishi bas bergerz ʔaw ribz ʔaw  
mathalan sandwisha:t ʔaw mathalan ʔajnabi ʔaw ʔinterna:shunal ʔaw ʔiṭa:li ʔaw  
bi:tza:z

‘so I started to provide a variety of episodes not everything is only burgers or ribs or for instance sandwiches or for instance foreign or international or pizza’

### 5.23 *tama:m*

The seven occurrences of this DM perform two functions on the interpersonal level of DM. These functions include being used as backchannel devices and as confirmation markers. Examples 51 and 52 below are represent these two functions, respectively.

51. (6) هلا الاشئ اللي بتعلق مع التعايش مع الضغوط

tama:m (1)

hallaʔ ilʔishi: bit<sup>c</sup>allaq ma<sup>c</sup> itta<sup>c</sup>a:yush ma<sup>c</sup> idhdhughu:t (6)

tama:m (1)

‘Now this has to do with coping with stresses (6)

Okay (1)

52. (6) إبييه طبعن عشان ما نحسش في هيك حطعه اللي بتحكو في كثير مهم تمام.

(1) : ميه الميه

?i:i:h ṭab<sup>c</sup>an<sup>c</sup> a:sha:n ma: nḥissish fi: he:k gaṭ<sup>c</sup>ah ʔilli bithku fi: kti:r muhimm *tama:m* (6)

miyyeh ʔilmiyyeh (1)

‘Uh of course so that we don’t feel that there is an interruption what you are talking about is very important *okay* (6)

100 percent (1)’

### 5.24. *bizzabt*

The two instances of the DM *bizzabt* serve the interpersonal function of indicating confirmation. This is shown in example 53 below.

53. (5) : أما إيه يا جماعة دايمن متأخرة دايمن ما بتعرف شو تعمل بشعرها

(2): أنا [ضحك]

(5): بيزبط يعني ( ) معجوة بشعرها

?amma ʔa:yah ya jama<sup>c</sup>ah da:yman mitʔakhhreh da:yman ma: bit<sup>c</sup>raf shu: ti<sup>c</sup>mal bisha<sup>c</sup>rha (5)

?ana: [dhihik] (2)

*bizzabt* yacni: ( ) ma<sup>c</sup>ju:ʔah bisha<sup>c</sup>rha (2)

‘As for the Aya, she is always late and always doesn’t know what to do with her hair. (5)

me [laughter] (2)

*Exactly* I mean she is always busy with her hair' (5)

## 6. Conclusion

The present study analyzes the use 25 DMs in conversations between 14 native speakers of JSA. The analyzed conversations are selected from a live talk show called Caravan. The significance of this study stems from the fact that it performs one of the first corpus-driven analyses of the instances and functions of DMs in informal conversations between speakers of JSA. Such type of analysis can shed light on the DMs that have not been explored before and it can also account for the multifunctional nature of these pragmatic devices. The results revealed that the analyzed DMs are generally multifunctional in nature and that they perform various textual, interpersonal and cognitive roles in the local and global levels of discourse. One of the limitations of the study is that the analysis of DM functions cannot be done entirely in an objective way because it is generally subjected to a level of personal interpretation.

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