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## Discourse Elements in the Missing Manual

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the research of discourse elements that contribute significantly to discourse coherence of the Missing Manual (a new genre variety of exploitation instruction). The results of the analysis show that the taxonomy of discourse elements in the Missing Manual is based on the functions that discourse elements perform. The authors suggest classifying the discourse elements in the Missing Manual into two groups: discourse markers and pragmatic markers. The specific attention is paid to the types of pragmatic markers, which are not characteristic of instructing texts, but common for the Missing Manual. The analysis of oral discourse pragmatic markers and context dependent discourse markers is presented.

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### 1. Introduction

Cohesion is an integral part of existing and functioning of a text. If a speaker of English hears or reads a passage of the language which is more than one sentences in length, he can normally decide without difficulty whether it forms a unified whole or is just a collection of unrelated sentences (Halliday, 1976, p.1). The speaker must use the whole range of cohesive relations to gain his/her aim. Discourse markers are one of the types of cohesive relations in a text. The analysis of discourse markers is part of the more general analysis of discourse coherence – how speakers and hearers integrate forms, meaning, and actions to make overall sense of what is said (Shiffrin, 1987, p.49).

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Brinton concludes that if discourse markers “are omitted, the discourse is grammatically acceptable, but would be judged “unnatural”, “awkward”, “disjointed”, “impolite”, “unfriendly”, or “dogmatic” within the communicative context” (Brinton, 1996, p.35).

The world of discourse is constantly changing which can result in the appearance of new genres, subgenres or genre varieties. Technological advance in IT and software fields is running so quickly that upstart gadgets and software packages become off-market in a few months. Modern users don’t need standardized operating instructions, written by technical language. What they need is a vivid description of how the gadget works.

The above mentioned factors caused a new genre variety of operating instruction, “The Missing Manual”. Missing Manual books are superbly written guides to computer products that don’t come with the printed manual (which is just about all of them) (Pogue, 2009, p.x). As the Missing Manual is a newly born genre variety of operating instruction, there is a need to research discourse elements to understand their role in the Missing Manual coherence and the way the discourse elements make the Missing Manual an “alive instruction”.

The aim of this study is to classify and analyze discourse and pragmatic markers by the example of the Missing Manual.

## 2. Approaches to the study of discourse markers and their classification

There are a lot of contradictory definitions of discourse makers. According to Lenk, discourse markers are “short lexical items used with a pragmatic meaning on a metalingual level of discourse in order to signal for the hearer how the speaker intends the present contribution to be related to preceding and/or following parts of the discourse (Lenk, 1998, p.52). As for Redeker, discourse markers are “linguistic expressions that are used to signal the relation of an utterance to the intermediate context” (Redeker, 1990, p.372). The Russian linguists Massalina and Novodranova define discourse markers as “elements providing the connection of discourse segments, reflecting the process of interaction between the author and the recipient, the author’s view on the facts in the text and constituting discourse as a unified whole (Massalina, Novodranova, 2009, p.218).

Discourse markers are also labeled as cue words/phrases, discourse connectives, pragmatics markers, parenthetic phrases, pragmatics particles, etc. Our observations have shown that “discourse markers” and “pragmatic markers” are frequently used terms in text linguistics. The term “discourse” or “pragmatic markers” can be used interchangeably. Fraser (1990, 1993) uses the term “discourse markers” in his earlier works, while in his later works (1996, 1999) the terms “discourse and pragmatics markers” are used. The question of terminology is an essential issue, because it reflects manifold views on functions and status of discourse markers and their taxonomy.

The research of discourse markers in the works by Blakemore draws upon the relevance theory, developed by Sperber and Wilson. The study of discourse markers from the viewpoint of the relevance theory explains how discourse markers contribute to discourse interpretation. Blakemore points out that relevance theoretic account is “to account for the role of discourse markers in constructions which cannot be straightforwardly accommodated in a framework which assumes that discourse markers encode sequential coherence relations” (Blakemore, 1996, p.328). In the rhetorical structure theory discourse markers signal different types of relations (coherence, discourse, or rhetorical relations). Scholars supporting the systemic functional theory (Shiffrin, Redeker, Fraser, Halliday, etc.) speak about the polyfunctional nature of the discourse marker, making a distinction between the notion of discourse markers and pragmatic markers. The polyfunctional status of discourse markers causes an introduction of a more general term “discourse elements” (Shiffrin, 1987). These are classified into discourse and pragmatics markers.

The same lexical item can function either as discourse or pragmatic marker. Lenk states that discourse markers function on a metacommunicative level, indicating the structural organization of discourse (Lenk, 1997, p.27). If the marker is carrying pragmatic meaning and functions on the metalinguistic level it is called a pragmatic marker.

Aijmer (2002) and Brinton (1996) associate the functions of discourse markers with language modes suggested by Halliday (1979, 1990). The cohesive function of discourse markers belongs to the textual mode which “comprises the resources that language has for creating text” (Halliday, 1976, p.27). The pragmatic function of discourse markers is connected with the interpersonal mode which is “the expression of the speaker’s attitudes and judgments, his encoding of the role relationships in the situation, and his motive in saying anything at all” (Halliday, 1976, p.27). Meanwhile Aijmer does not use the term “pragmatic markers” considering the functions of discourse markers.

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