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# The Pragmatic Use of Discourse Markers in the Unplanned Speech of University English Language Learners

Rachel Adams Goertel  
*Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

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ONLY COVER PAGES AND ABSTRACT ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME

THE PRAGMATIC USE OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN THE UNPLANNED SPEECH OF  
UNIVERSITY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Rachel Adams Goertel  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
December 2011



Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Rachel Adams Goertel

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Dan J. Tannacito, Ph.D.  
Professor of English, Advisor

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Sharon K. Deckert, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of English

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Michael M. Williamson, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

ACCEPTED

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Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.  
Dean  
School of Graduate Studies and Research

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Title: The Pragmatic Use of Discourse Markers in the Unplanned Speech of University English  
Language Learners

Author: Rachel Adams Goertel

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Dan J. Tannacito

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Sharon K. Deckert  
Dr. Michael M. Williamson

Use of discourse markers (DM) in the ordinary conversation of English language learners (ELL) remains a relatively unexplored area. This qualitative research study examines, in unplanned speech, the occurrence and use of DMs which are defined as a set of linguistic items functioning in the cognitive, social, expressive, and textual domains establishing coherence within discourse (Bright, 1992). Grounded in relevancy theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) the main goal of this research is to explore the pragmatic use of DMs in the unplanned speech of ELLs with their peers and to investigate a possible connection between second language competency level and the use of the pragmatic elements of DMs in these conversations. Discourse analysis of approximately four hours of talk reveals patterns in the use of discourse markers. The findings in this study contribute to the field of linguistics as the importance of DMs lies in the fact that they add "pragmatic tone" (Beebe & Waring, 2002) to the utterance indicating the speaker's intention and attitude towards the hearer, a vital tool for university ELLs seeking communicative competence.