

On Discourse Markers Introducing Modifications

Mina Kasai, Yukiko Arita, and Shoichi Yamada

In this research, we deal with the discourse markers (hereafter, DMs) which indicate the following utterance is to be taken as a modification of the previous utterances. For example, *well*, *in fact*, and *actually* all signal that a different claim is forthcoming. Smith and Jucker (2000) point out that these markers differ each other slightly in the manner of modifying. As we see in (1), *well* and *in fact* signal a downgrading and upgrading of the claim respectively, while *actually* appears to serve as a general-purpose signal for a counterclaim.

- (1) A: It's raining today.
 a. B: *Well*, it is {drizzling/*pouring/*snowing}.
 b. B: *In fact*, it is {*drizzling/pouring/*snowing}.
 c. B: *Actually*, it is {drizzling/pouring/snowing}. (Smith and Jucker 2000)

It has been said that *in fact* and *actually* strengthen the utterance, while *well* weakens. We still do not know, however, what 'strengthening' or 'weakening' actually means.

What is useful for clarifying these two concepts here is the Horn scale, which is based on logical entailment (cf. Levinson (2000)). We call it semantic scale because the measurement on the scale is fixed by means of lexical information (cf. Schwenter & Traugott (2000)). This scale is useful for explaining the difference in acceptability seen in the following example.

- (2) A: Ann looks nice tonight.
 a. B: {??Well / In fact / Actually}, she looks wonderful.
 b. B: {Well / *In fact / *Actually}, she looks all right.

Following Levinson's (2000: 87) Horn scale <excellent, good, all right>, we assume a semantic scale <wonderful, nice, all right> here. With this scale, we say *in fact* and *actually* introduce a modification of the expression 'nice' to the stronger one 'wonderful', while *well* introduces the weaker one 'all right'. However, we cannot explain the following example with the semantic scale.

- (3) a. ?This soup is warm, in fact it is hot.
 b. This soup is hot, in fact it is warm.

Here, warm and hot form the semantic scale as to the temperature; <boiling, hot, warm>. This scale, however, does not account for the fact that the weaker statement 'warm' is introduced by *in fact*. As for this example, notice that the speaker's evaluation is the decisive factor in choosing DMs. Here, the speaker judges 'warm' soup is more desirable than 'hot' soup. 'Hot' soup is too hot to drink and not in a desirable state. Therefore, according to the speaker's evaluation to the temperature of

the soup, we have to postulate another scale, namely, pragmatic scale, <warm (good), hot (bad)>. This pragmatic scale is based on pragmatic entailment regulated by default assumption and on the speaker's evaluation. It does not necessarily correspond to the semantic scale. The use of *in fact* in (3) is based not on the semantic scale but on the pragmatic scale.

There is a further problem. (4) is explained by neither of the previous two scales.

(4) [A and B drove to Santa Fe together the other day.]

A: I drove 90 miles an hour all the way to Santa Fe.

B: { *Well / ? In fact / Actually } 85 miles an hour.

A: Anyway it was a great drive.

Although '90 miles an hour' seems to evoke a scale of a velocity <90, 85>, the speaker does not entirely rely on this scale. Here, B's utterance is rhetorically strengthened; that is, B rejects A's utterance and gives more accurate information against A's. The relevant scale in this particular example is the rhetorical scale, <85 (more accurate), 90 (rough estimation)>. As to this scale, accuracy of information amounts to the strength on the scale. *In fact* and *actually* are accepted by virtue of this scale. The reason why *in fact* is not completely accepted here is because the speaker also evokes a scale of a velocity <90, 85>, where the two numbers are in reverse order and makes the speaker confused. If B corrects the speed to '95 miles an hour', which is the stronger component in both the semantic and the rhetorical scales, *in fact* is fully accepted.

(5) A: I drove 90 miles an hour all the way to Santa Fe.

B: { *Well / In fact / Actually } 95 miles an hour.

Turning now to *well*, the rejection of the former utterance makes the use of *well* odd here because *well* has a function of face-threat mitigator and suggests that the speaker has at least partly accepted what the other said. This is not applied when *well* introduces a self-correction because acceptance of the other's utterance is irrelevant.

(6) I drove 90 miles an hour {well / ?in fact / actually} 85 –to Santa Fe.

(7) I drove 90 miles an hour {?well / in fact / actually} 95 –to Santa Fe.

The reason *in fact* in (6) and *well* in (7) are slightly bad is, again, because there is a conflict between the semantic scale and the rhetorical one.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Smith, S. W., and A. H. Jucker (2000) "Actually and other markers of an apparent discrepancy between propositional attitudes of conversational partners," *Pragmatic markers and propositional attitude*, ed. By Gisle Andersen and Thorstein Fretheim, 207-237. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Schwenter, S. A., and E. C. Traugott (2000) "Invoking Scalarity." *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 1, 7-25.