The Discourse Functions of *and* in the Australian Students' Presentations

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Abstract

*And is generally known as a connector which relates parallel information or ideas. In the discourse contexts, **and** is used differently. This article presents the discourse functions of **and** as a discourse marker in the presentations made by Australian students in academic settings. It was identified that **and** has four different discourse functions: i) linking events within a discourse topic; ii) introducing a new topic; iii) signalling a summary; and iv) signalling a speaker's retaking a turn.*

Key words: Discourse Function, Australian Students Presentation

A. PENDAHULUAN

Discourse markers have been studied under various names: sentence connectives (Halliday and Hassan, 1976); semantic connectives (Kyratzis and Ervin-Tripp, 1999); pragmatic connectives (Stubbs, 1983); discourse particles (Schorup, 1985); pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1990; Schiffrin, 1987); and discourse markers (Zwicky, 1985). The term discourse markers are more generally and popularly used. Levinson (1983) argued that there are many words and phrases in English, and no doubt most languages, that indicate the relationship between an utterance and the prior discourse such as **but**, **therefore**, **so**, **well**, **besides**, and so on. Fraser (1999) pointed out that an early reference to discourse markers was made by Labov and Fanshel when they discussed the use of **well** preceding a question. They wrote:

> As a discourse marker, **well** refers to backwards to some topic that is already shared knowledge among participants. When well is the first element in a discourse or a topic, this reference is necessarily to an unstated topic of joint concern (Labov and Fanshel, 1977:156)

The focus of the studies on discourse markers differed from time to time. Risselada and Spooren (1988) argued that in the seventies, research on particles tended to be predominantly semantic in nature and was concerned with the analysis of single utterances. Research on discourse markers in the eighties, on the other hand became predominantly oriented on discourse analysis and used corpus-based data.

Discourse markers have been defined in numerous ways. There is "no agreement on how discourse markers are to be defined and how they function" (Fraser, 1999:931). Schiffrin (1987:37) defines discourse markers as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk". Risselada and Spooren (1998) define that discourse markers are those natural language expressions whose

primary function is to facilitate the process of interpreting the coherence relations between a particular unit of discourse and other surrounding units or aspects of the communicative situations. Similar to Riselada and Spooren's definition, Fraser (1999) defines a discourse marker as a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositions. They signal a relationship between the interpretation of the segment they introduce and the prior segment. They have a core procedural meaning, not conceptual meanings. Their more specific interpretation is negotiated by the contexts.

Few studies have been conducted to know the discourse functions of different discourse markers. **You know**, for example, has been studied by a number of researchers. **You know** has been variously labeled as a verbal filler (Brown, 1977) or a hedge (Lakoff, 1975). Fishman (1978) identified that the major function of **you know** is simply to command the other person's attention. It was also found that women used **you know** more than men did. Lakoff (1975) also considered that **you know** to be a characteristic of women's language. Lakoff maintained that women use **you know** to show their lack of self-confidence. Schiffrin (1987) identified two major roles of you know in talk. First it marks whether the hearer shares the speaker's information. A speaker does not always know whether the hearer knows about the topic being explained. The second function of **you know** is to mark the general consensual truth which speakers assume their hearers share.

The discourse function of but has also been studied. Schiffrin (1987)

argued that the main discourse function of but is to mark an upcoming unit as a contrasting action. The following example shows this function. In this example, Jan, Ira, and Debby have been discussing summers at the seashore.

Ira:	Yeh it was very nice when we were kids. You had two weeks there when you were pregnant.
Jan:	Yeah.
Ira:	There, right?
Jan:	I used to go every summer. My mother would send me down with relatives. **But** I used to cry I wanted to go home. I didn't like it.
Debby:	When you got home. You liked the summer there. No?
Jan:	I'm not one for staying too long down there.

Jan reports that she did not enjoy her time at the seashore. This is contrary to cultural expectation about children enjoying the seashore and it is also contrary to our general belief about the seashore being a nice place. Here, Jan expresses her reaction using **but**.

A number of studies on the discourse functions of **and** have also been undertaken. Schiffrin (1987) in her studies on unstructured interviews identified two major discourse functions of and: i) it coordinates ideas units; ii) it continues a speaker's action. With regard to the first function, and links events within a discourse locally and globally. The following examples show each of these functions.

Example 1: **and** links events locally

In this example, Schiffrin asked Zelda which restaurants she and Henry like. Zelda answered the question.

    a.   Well, uh, we have a cousin club.

    b.   **And** we meet once a month

    c.   **And** what we do with our once a month is we go out for dinner, on a Saturday night.

    d.   So, we,ve gone t'the Tavern.

    e.   **And** we've gone every month we go to another place.

    f.   Eh:…. **and** we go eh: we went t'the Riverfront twice.

(Schiffrin, 1987:139)

Zelda's talk contains two discourse topics: a copusin club and a list of restaurants they have visited. Two activities (b-c) under topic one are conjoined by **and**. The activities under topic two (e-f) are also linked by **and**. The events under each topics are locally connected by **and**.

Example 2: **and** links discourse topic globally

In this example, Irene is explaining her recent interest in sports.

    a.   Really football and baseball.

    b.   Because two of 'em play on a little league teams.

    c.   So I hade to learn to …. Understand the game.

    d.   Or I was sitting on the bench like three days a week not knowing what was goin' on

    e.   **And** with football, they are very big on football.

    f.   So, I've been trying t'watch it on Sunday

    g.   I'm trying to understand it a little bit more.

Irene has two discourse topics: football and baseball. First she gives reasons for her interest in baseball (b-d). Then she gives reasons foe her interert in football (e-g). In (e) she introduces the second global topic by using **and**. Here, **and** is used to introduce a new topic within a discourse.

The second major role of and, according to Schiffrin (1987), is to mark a speaker's continuation in interaction. A speaker might continue his or her own explanation or continue other's explanation. The following is an example of a speaker's continuation of her own explanation. In this example, Ira and Jan are answering Schiffrin's question about why they chose their neighborhood.

Debby: What made you decide t'come out here? Do y' remember?

Ira: a.   What made us decide to come out here.

    b.   Well uh we were looking in different neighborhoods.

    c.   **And** then uh this was a Jewish community.

    d.   **And** we decided to come out here.

    e.   Uh several of the communities weren't Jewish.

    f.   **And** we didn't wanna live here.

    g.   Then we decided on Glenmore.

Debby: I didn't realize this had been a Jewish community.

Ira: h.   Well it's been like this ever since we've been here

I   **And** the price was right hhhh

Jan: That was the best part.

(Schiffrin, 1987: 151)

Ira provides several reasons for moving to Glenmore. He prefaces both his reasons in (c-f) with **and**, and his decision in (d) is also prefaced by **and**. Then in (i) Ira provides another reason. This new reason is also prefaced by **and**. So, Ira uses and to continue his explanation for the reason to move to Glenmore.

Another study conducted by Heritage and Sorjonen (1994) in the interaction between a health visitor (HV) and a mother (M) and they found that the health visitor frequently prefaced her questions with and as shown below.

HV   a.   **: And** has he got plenty of work on?
M   b.   : He works for a university college
HV   c.   **: And** this is your first baby?
M   d.   : Yep.
HV   e.   **: And** you had a normal pregnancy?
M   f.   : Yeah.
HV   g.   **: And** a normal delivery?
M   h.   **: Yep**
HV   i.   **: And** she didn't go into special care?
M   j.   : No.
HV   K   **: And** she's bottle feeding?
M   l.   : Yeah

(Heritage and Sorjonen, 1994:4)

All the six questions asked by the health visitor are prefaced by **and.**

The Aim of the Study

The study aimed at identifying the discourse functions of a discourse marker, **and**, in Australian students' presentation. The presentations were part of the students' course assignments.

The Data

The data were collected by recording the students' presentations. The topics of the presentations are: 1). The Changing Roles of Men and Women, Parents, and Educators; 2). Pupils with a Communication Disorder; 3). Working Families; 4). Culturally Responsive Teaching; 5). Bullying in Schools; and 6). Communication Disorder. The data were analyzed by adapting the Schriffrin's analysis model.

Findings

Having analyzed the discourse functions of **and** in the Australian students' presentations, it was found that **and,** with different discourse functions, was used in 45 corpuses of data. There were four discourse functions of **and** as shown below.

The Discourse Functions of **and**

No.	Discourse Functions	Frequency
1	Linking events within a discourse topic	20 (44%)
2	Introducing a new topic	15 (33%)
3	Signalling a summary	7 (15%)
4	Signalling a speaker's retaking a turn	3 (8%)

The most frequent use of **and** as a discourse marker is to link events within a discourse topic. Besides, **and** is also used as a signal for a speaker to retake a turn to continue his or her presentation. Here, the function of **and** was identified because during the presentation there was an interruption from the participants and to continue his or her presentation, the speaker used **and**. The example of each discourse function is presented below.

Example 1: **and** to link events within a discourse topic

The speaker is a 25 year old female.

…

(4) I am doing the introduction
(5) **And** I have done a survey er which I'll talk in a minute.
(6) **And** some research from the Bureau of Statistics.
(7) I've got the copies for you.
(8) Kate is going to do the Changing Roles of Men in society.
(9) **And** Sue is going to do the Changing Roles of women in society.
(10) **And** Kathy is going to look at the Changing Roles of Men as educators
(11) **And** Linda is going to look at Women as Educators.
(12) We have broken it up like that because it's more practical

…

The speaker here divides the general topics into a number of sub-topics. The speaker uses **and** to conjoin three of these sub-topics (9,10, and 11). **And** in (5,6) links two activities the speaker has completed when preparing her own sub-topic (4).

So, in (5,6,9. and 11) **and** is used to link ideas locally. The structure of this example is as follows:

Sub-topic 1(4)
and background for sub-topic 1 (5)
and background for sub-topic 1 (6)
Sub-topic 2 (8)
and sub-topic 3 (9)
and sub-topic 4 (10)
and sub-topic 5 (11)

Example 2: **and** links a discourse topic

The speaker is a 25 year old female.

…

(78) I have a section, you have copies of the statistics which shows you the changing roles of parents.
(79) As you can see from the Table in 1993 they had to change shifts or days in the last twelve months to accommodate school holidays the children receive.
(80) They are more likely to take time off from school.
(81) **And** I was lucky enough to get an interview with a single Dad.
(82) I'll just tell you about him.
(83) It's interesting to compare it with the single Mom.

…

In earlier utterances the speaker talks about parents' involvement in schools. Then in (81) the speaker introduces a new topic, interviewing a single Dad.

This new topic is prefaced by a discourse marker **and**.

Example 3: **and** as a summary marker

The following is an example of and as summary marker. The speaker is a 20 year old female.

…

> (21) Another cause is the problem I had with one of my students.
> (22) He had a problem with his front teeth.
> (23) One of the teeth was crooked and he had to go along to the dentist and have a plate fitted into the roof of the mouth to push the teeth out.
> (24) **And** the problem is with this plate in the roof of the mouth.

…

The speaker is explaining one of the articulation problems a student has. In (22-23), the speaker gives background information to the problem where a plate is fitted to the roof of the mouth to push the teeth out. In (24) where **and** is used, the speaker introduces the specific cause of the problem which is the summary of (22-23).

Example 4: **And** signaling a speaker's retaking of turn

The following example shows the use of **and** as a signal to retake the turn to speak. The presenter is a 20 year old female.

…

Presenter: (1) Voice disorders can be divided into two categories, organic disorders and functional voice disorders. (2) Organic voice disorders happen when there are conditions like cancer, vocal cord paralysis. (3) The voice is used improperly. (5) You are very angry and yelling all the time.

Participant: (6) It's important to make sure before you start talking you make certain everybody's quite. (7) So you don't have to be shouting at everybody. (8) It's a poor management if the teacher has to be shouting out. (9) Your voice is really important to you as a teacher in the classroom. (10) It's a very important tool and if you damage it then you are going to cause yourself a lot of difficulties.

Presenter: (11) **And** a lot of teachers do have serious

voice problems. (12) Singing teachers often have problems with their vocal cords. (13) Because they sing most of the time.

…

When the presenter was talking, there was an interruption from one of the participants. Then, after the participant ended her interruption, the presenter retook the turn to continue her explanation which was prefaced by **and**. Here, the presenter signals that she is retaking her turn using **and** after being interrupted a member of participants.

The findings have shown that **and** was used for different discourse functions. In the class discussion context, **and** was used for four different discourse functions: linking events within a discourse topic, introducing a new topic, signaling a summary, and signaling a speaker's retaking a turn after being interrupted by another speaker. These discourse functions are different from what have been identified by previous researchers where **and** was used to link event globally and locally, and continue a speaker's action. The discourse functions of **and** are context dependent. These functions need to be identified so that the behavior of **and** can be fully understood.

Conclusions

The findings have shown that **and** was used for different discourse functions which differed from its main prescriptive function that is to connect parallel information or ideas. In the Australian students' presentations, it was identified that and has four

different discourse functions: : i) linking events within a discourse topic; ii) introducing a new topic; iii) signalling a summary; and iv) signalling a speaker's retaking a turn. The discourse functions **and** in other discourse contexts might also be different. Further investigation needs to be done in order to know the different discourse functions of **and** and other discourse markers such as **but**, **so**, **because**, **you know**, and many others.

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