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DISCOURSE MARKERS IN O. HENRY'S "TWO THANKSGIVING DAY GENTLEMEN"

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Annotation: *This thesis analyzes the use of discourse markers in O. Henry's short story "Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen," focused specifically on their textual, pragmatic, and stylistic functions. Through close textual analysis, the study shows how discourse markers structure narrative, organize character interaction, and contribute to irony and cohesion. The research highlights discourse markers as significant tools for guiding reader interpretation and bringing literary dialogue to a more realistic level.*

Keywords: *discourse markers, pragmatics, cohesion, literary discourse.*

INTRODUCTION

Discourse markers are linguistic units that delineate the structure and indicate relations between utterances rather than adding directly to propositional meaning. They guide interpretation in both spoken and written discourse, show logical relations, and control interaction. Discourse markers in literary texts are very important, mimicking natural speech, ensuring coherence, and narrative rhythm. O. Henry's short story "Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen" lends itself well to discourse marker analysis due to its dialogic quality and ironic narrative style. The story centers on the annual Thanksgiving tradition between Stuffy Pete and an Old Gentleman, whose charitable intentions lead to unexpected consequences. Common use of conversational discourse markers adds to the story's realism and primes the reader for its ironic turn.

Markers of discourse are syntactically optional elements that identify the relations between segments of discourse. Some of the thematic markers serve as referential features and represent the relationship between different sections that we can refer to in the context of a topic. Schiffrin describes these as operating at several levels of discourse such as ideational, interactional, and textual levels¹. Fraser also underscores their pragmatically-oriented role, stating that discourse markers encode speakers' communicative intentions rather than semantic content². In literary discourse, discourse markers perform double duty: they uphold coherence while revealing character psychology and social relations. Authors wield them judiciously to manage pacing; highlight contrast; and establish conversational veracity. Contrastive markers such as "but" serve a key role in emphasizing irony. In

¹ Schiffrin, D. *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987. – P.32

² Fraser, B. (1999). What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. – P.931



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different case, it is the narrator who provides “but” to alter expectations, as when charitable intent leads to an unintended end result. The marker “but” indicates a crisis stage, and invites the reader to anticipate discrepancy between spectacle and fact. Causal discourse marks like “so” are used to show the consequences. Following Stuffy Pete, for example, finishes the enormous meal, we watch as his narrative progress with “so” moves directly to his physical collapse. Temporally, marks of “then,” “after,” and “at last” organize sequence. The use of “then” often has new stages introduced in the Thanksgiving ritual, providing a sense of rhythm that is linear and predictable but contrastive with the unexpected ending.

Pragmatic meaning in dialogue depends heavily on the presence of discourse markers. Markers like “well” and “you see” soften assertions and show politeness. The Old Gentleman’s speech often includes markers like this, which is symbolic of the desire to keep social distance while not looking mean. Likewise, Stuffy Pete makes infrequent use of discourse markers. This is his passive participation in the interaction. His silence or small statements contrast with the detailed dialogue of the Old Gentleman, strengthening the power asymmetry between the two characters³. Things like “after all” and “indeed” serve evaluative functions, leading readers to moral interpretation. They quietly frame charity as a ceremony, opposed to empathic feeling, in tune with the ironic tone of O. Henry⁴.

The story can be coherent using discourse markers that connect clauses, sentences, and narrative episodes. Such markers serve as integral devices that keep things together; Halliday and Hasan said they form the cohesion and textual unity⁵. In “Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen,” “therefore,” “meanwhile,” and “then” are marking elements for seamless transition between narrative stages. In addition, discourse markers serve to highlight key moments in the narrative.

Conclusion. The analysis demonstrates that discourse markers are integral to the structure and meaning of O. Henry’s “Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen.” They function as cohesive links, pragmatic signals, and stylistic tools that shape dialogue, narrative flow, and irony. Through the strategic use of simple discourse markers, O. Henry achieves naturalistic dialogue and reinforces the thematic tension between charity and consequence.

This study confirms the value of discourse marker analysis in literary studies and suggests that further comparative research could explore their stylistic role across different authors and genres.

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⁴ O. Henry. Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen. In The Four Million. New York: McClure, Phillips & Co. 1906. – P.

⁵ Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. Cohesion in English. London: Longman. 1976. – P.25



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3 Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. Some Universals in Language Usage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987. – P. 56

4 O. Henry. Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen. In The Four Million. New York: McClure, Phillips & Co. 1906. – P.

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