

## DISCOURSE MARKERS AS ETHNOLINGUISTIC FACTOR

Shamsinur Aslanova Veysal

PhD in Philology, Associate Professor

Azerbaijan University of Languages

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2394-0137>

*The article examines discourse markers as a tool for structuring scientific written discourse. The research material is Azerbaijan-language and German-language articles on geology. Special attention is paid to the specifics of using certain functional groups of discourse markers in scientific articles: discourse markers that ensure text cohesion, convey the author's attitude to what is said, and reflect the process of interaction between the author and the reader. Ethnolinguistic features of the functioning of discourse markers in Azerbaijan-language and German-language scientific articles are revealed.*

**Keywords:** *the object of the study, the role of discourse markers, the independent element, linguocultural relation.*

## ДИСКУРСИВНІ МАРКЕРИ ЯК ЕТНОЛІНГВІСТИЧНИЙ ФАКТОР

Шамсінур Асланова Вейсал

кандидат філологічних наук, доцент

Азербайджанський університет мов

*У статті розглядаються дискурсивні маркери як засіб структурування наукового письмового дискурсу. Матеріалом дослідження є наукові статті з геології азербайджанською та німецькою мовами. Особливу увагу приділено специфіці використання окремих функціональних груп дискурсивних маркерів у наукових статтях: маркерів, що забезпечують зв'язність тексту, передають авторське ставлення до висловлюваного та відображають процес взаємодії між автором і читачем. Виявлено етнолінгвістичні особливості функціонування дискурсивних маркерів в азербайджаномовних і німецькомовних наукових статтях.*

**Ключові слова:** *об'єкт дослідження, роль дискурсивних маркерів, самотійний елемент, лінгвокультурний зв'язок.*

**Introduction.** Despite the large number of works investigating various types of discourse, many specific features of scientific discourse are still insufficiently studied. It is commonly assumed that the principles of constructing scientific texts are independent of the language and reflect the

main features of the scientific style: precision, objectivity, logical presentation, etc. However, recent studies in this area convincingly prove that scientific texts written in different languages have a national specificity and significantly differ in the ways discourse is organized.

The purpose of this article is to compare discourse markers in Azerbaijan-language and German-language scientific discourse. The object of the study is written scientific texts on geology, written in Azerbaijan and German. The subject of analysis is the manifestation of ethno-linguistic specificity in the use of discourse markers in the construction of Azerbaijan-language and German-language scientific written texts.

The work is based on the hypothesis about the influence of ethnolinguistic factors on the features of the functioning of discourse markers in scientific articles. From our point of view, the features of using discourse markers in scientific articles are subject not only to the influence of scientific trends or the linguistic personality of the scientist but also to ethnoculture, which also leaves an imprint on the communicative behaviour of the scientist. Discourse markers are linguistic units, and language, in turn, cannot exist outside of culture; it is an integral part of it. Belonging to a specific, historically conditioned culture, a person correlates their communicative behaviour with the traditions of communication of a certain linguocultural community. American linguist and ethnologist Edward Sapir, speaking about the connection between language and culture, emphasized that “culture is what a given society does and thinks. Language is how one thinks” (Sapir, 16).

**Aim.** This work is aimed at establishing the possibility of ethnocultural differences influencing the type of textual use of discourse markers. Therefore, to exclude the influence of genre, stylistic, and idiosyncratic factors on the nature of the actualization of these communicative units, texts of the same type of discourse (scientific), the same genre and style, written by different authors, were used as research material. Thus, the variable factor influencing the nature of the use of discourse markers in the studied material is the ethno-linguistic affiliation of the author. Then, the average values in the use of markers in texts written by Azerbaijan-speaking and German-speaking authors were identified.

The study of discourse markers has formed as an independent direction of modern discourse analysis. In the “Linguistic Encyclopaedic Dictionary,” the term “discourse” is defined as “connected text in conjunction with extralinguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and other factors (Fraser, 136). Every text (oral and written), being born in a certain dis-

course, consists of words, which means that all words can be said to be discursive, i.e., they exhibit a greater or lesser dependence of their functioning on the general conditions of the discourse. In a narrower sense, groups of words that are a linguistic tool for structuring discourse are called discursive.

Discourse markers are studied by both domestic and foreign linguistic schools. However, the term “discourse markers” is not universally accepted. On the contrary, linguistic studies note a significant variation in defining these textual units, using the terms “discourse markers,” “discourse particles,” “discourse connectives,” “discourse operators,” “pragmatic markers,” “pragmatic particles,” etc. The use of various designations for this class of units is explained by the different theoretical approaches within which they are considered.

Within the framework of discourse theory, so popular in the West, the term “discourse markers” is used, denoting “sequentially dependent particles which bracket units of talk” (“I operationally define markers as sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk”).

In German-language studies of discourse markers, we find definitions that emphasize the role of these words not only in the structural and semantic organization of discourse but also their orientation towards the speaker and listener: “Dabei strukturieren sie [Diskursmarker] die einzelnen Redebeiträge, kommentieren jedoch auch den Diskurs selbst, in dem sie sich zu gleich auf die Sprecher und Hörer beziehen” (Schiffrin, 25).

In native linguistics, in studies devoted to the problems of the functioning of discursive vocabulary, the term “discourse words” is predominantly used, which refers to “units that, on the one hand, ensure the cohesion of the text and, on the other hand, most directly reflect the process of interaction between the speaker and the listener, the position of the speaker: how the speaker interprets the facts they are reporting to the listener, how they evaluate them from the point of view of the degree of importance, plausibility, probability, etc.”

In our study, we will use the term “discourse markers” to denote discursive vocabulary. In our opinion, the term “marker” indicates that discursive vocabulary is used as orienting signals that mark the structure of speech, performing certain functions.

However, it should be noted that in the foreign linguistic tradition, the term “discourse markers” is used by some authors in a sufficiently broad sense as a hyperonym (D. Schiffrin, D. Blackmore, et al.), while other researchers use the same term to denote a particular variety of discursive units,

i.e., they use the term “discourse markers” as a hyponym in relation to a different hyperonym that generalizes the entire category (Schiffrin, 50).

Such usage can be found in the works of B. Fraser, who uses the hyperonym “pragmatic markers.” He considers discourse markers as one of four varieties of pragmatic markers: 1) basic pragmatic markers; 2) commentary pragmatic markers; 3) parallel pragmatic markers; 4) discourse markers (Fraser, 931).

L. Brinton uses the same hyperonym (Brinton, 412), while other researchers prefer other hyperonyms. For example, C. Fischer and K. Aijmer (Aijmer, 299) use the hyperonym discourse particles in their works.

In this work, following D. Schiffrin, we will use the term “discourse markers” in a broad sense, generalizing the entire category of discursive units with it.

Based on the above definitions of discourse markers, the main functions performed by these units can be identified.

**Research Methodology.** Most researchers consider the main function of discourse markers to be the expression of the connection between segments of discourse. Cohesion is the most important textual category that enables the development of the topic and ensures the integrity of the text. Cohesion is conventionally divided into structural, which is the set of lexical and grammatical means for expressing connections between text units (cohesion), and semantic, which ensures the semantic organization of the text as a single whole (coherence). Discourse markers, demonstrating the properties of both cohesion and coherence, ensure the grammatical and semantic integrity of the discourse.

No less important are the pragmatic functions of discourse markers—reflecting the process of interaction between the speaker and the listener and conveying the speaker’s attitude to what is said. These functions allow directing and facilitating the interpretation of the text by the addressee: “The speaker, with the help of discourse words, not only establishes a relationship with the previous context but also determines the nature of the relationship compared to other elements of the context” (16 Schiffrin, 161).

The cited functional-pragmatic features of discourse markers allow distinguishing three groups of discourse markers. We believe that this classification is applicable to units of different discourses, including scientific written discourse.

1. Markers ensuring text cohesion. They not only indicate the role and place of a separate element in the structure of the discourse but also es-

establish a connection between the preceding and subsequent discourse. This group includes markers indicating:

- the order of information (firstly, secondly, finally, erstens, zweitens, schließlich);
- the order of material arrangement on the page or in the text (as mentioned above, as already noted, wie es oben gesagt war, darum geht es weiter);
- the introduction of new or additional information (in addition, note that, außerdem, das bedeutet, dass..., bemerkenswert...);
- repetition of information or concretization, clarification, paraphrasing of the thought expressed (in other words, so to speak, thus, that is, namely, anders gesagt, also, demgemäß);
- highlighting and importance of information (moreover, especially, it should be noted, it is appropriate to emphasize, it is perfectly clear, naturally, obviously, undoubtedly, außerdem, mindestens, wenigstens, klar, dass..., offensichtlich, zweifellos);
- contrast or deviation from the main line of exposition (however, unlike, on the one hand, on the other hand, nevertheless, meanwhile, at the same time, aber, einerseits, andererseits, im Gegensatz);
- introduction of examples (such as, for example, to illustrate, zum Beispiel, solche, wie...);
- conclusion or inference (consequently, as a result, so, thus, also, zusammenfassend, schließlich) (Haslinger, 13).

2. Markers conveying the speaker's attitude to what is said. These markers indicate the author's opinion and the author's evaluation of the information (possibly, obviously, apparently, factually, essentially, unfortunately, vielleicht, tatsächlich, in der Regel, normalerweise, wahrscheinlich).

3. Markers reflecting the process of interaction between the speaker and the listener. Scientific discourse, like many others, is characterized by its orientation towards the addressee, its dialogism. The dialogism of the scientific text is manifested in the use of special linguistic means. Using them, the author directs the reader's attention and helps them in highlighting the key moments of the text content. This group includes discourse markers that appeal to the reader's background knowledge, referring to previously stated material (according to, as writes, it is known that..., it is understandable that..., it is no secret that..., it is common knowledge, as is known, allbekannt, demgemäß, entsprechend, auf Grund).

This classification allows revealing the structural and logical connections in scientific discourse and explaining the author's choice of a partic-

ular discourse marker, so it was taken as the basis for solving the problem of comparative analysis of Azerbaijan-language and German-language articles of linguistics scientific discourse and identifying their ethnolinguistic and discursive specificity. The number of discourse markers in the analyzed Azerbaijan-language scientific articles showed 55 word usages, and in German-language ones —45.

The conducted study and quantitative analysis of the data obtained show that in both German-language and Azerbaijan-language scientific articles, the most numerous and most frequently used is the first group of discourse markers, ensuring text cohesion. On average, this group accounts for 80% of all Azerbaijan-language discourse markers and 67% of German-language ones. This can be explained by the fact that these discourse markers participate in the formation of the main features of the scientific style: cohesion, logic, and sequence of presentation, i.e., they mark the order of the author's thoughts.

The analysis shows that the first position in terms of frequency of use in this group is occupied by markers referring the reader to visual examples: graphs, diagrams, tables, etc. (22.2% word usages in Azerbaijan and 26.8% in German). The visual presentation of scientific content is an integral part of all analyzed articles, which allows showing the object figuratively and in detail, making the understanding of various processes accessible, helping to analyze observations, and visually displaying the results of studies. The main function of the discourse markers used is to maximally simplify the reader's orientation in the text of the article. At the same time, discourse markers implicitly indicating visuality are most often found.

The second position in terms of frequency of use among the remaining discourse markers of this group is occupied by markers indicating the author's conclusion or inference (16.1% word usages in Azerbaijan, 13.3% units in German): *Beləki* (thus), *belə çıxır ki* (based on this), *ona görə ki* (therefore), *belə nəticəyə gəlmək olar ki* (hence the conclusion follows), *nəticə çıxarmağa imkan verir ki* (this allows concluding), *nəticə* (consequently), *was bededeutet* (which means), *darüber hinaus* (moreover), and others. Obviously, this is due to the fact that the task of the authors of scientific articles is to formulate the results of their work and determine their significance.

Discourse markers indicating the importance of information, as well as the introduction of new and additional information, occupy the third and fourth positions in terms of frequency of use in the texts of the analyzed

articles. (Xüsusilə (notably), göstərilir ki(indicative), qeyd etmək vacibdir ki (it is important to note), vurğulanmalıdır ki (it should be emphasized), ona görədir ki (including), əlavə olunmalıdır ki (in addition), bundan başqa (moreover), besonders charakteristisch (particularly characteristic), auffallend (strikingly), offenbar (apparently), insbesondere (in particular)). These markers solve the task of influencing the reader, contributing to their memorization of the most important moments, in the author's opinion. Since the main task of scientific articles is to report new knowledge, such frequent use of discourse markers of these groups is natural.

The second most frequently used group was the markers indicating author's evaluation in Azerbaijan-language and German-language articles, 12% and 18% respectively. Although in scientific speech all attention is focused on content and logical sequence of the message, the author's «I» is in the background; however, many linguists note a tendency to increase the subjective component in modern scientific speech, which is considered both as a way of self-expression of the author and as a way of maintaining their professional status. In all analyzed articles, discourse markers reflecting different types of modal meanings, including evaluation, were found. Word usages indicating logical probability are noted (ola bilsin ki (possibly), ehtimal ki (probably), güman etmək olar ki(one can assume), wahrscheinlich, vielleicht, vermutlich, es dürfte sich handeln..., offenbar), various kinds of evaluations (həqiqətdir ki (fairly), doğrudur ki (indeed), qaydaya uyğundur ki (as a rule), es ist deutlich (it is clear)), attitude to the content (qəbul olunur ki (notably), erstaunlicherweise (surprisingly)), author's opinion (bizim baxışımıza görə (in our opinion), bizim fikrimizcə (according to our opinion)). At the same time, it should be noted that German-speaking scientists demonstrate greater restraint in the manifestation of individual author's modality compared to Azerbaijan-speaking ones. In the speech of domestic authors, the personal element is manifested more strongly; in particular, markers explicitly expressing the scientist's opinion are found only in Azerbaijan-language articles.

The least frequently found discourse markers, belonging to the third group, reflect the process of interaction between the author and the reader. The most commonly used markers in this group are those containing a reference to other sources (6 discourse markers each in the types of texts considered). Most often, such a reference is quite specific; it contains the surname of some researcher or the title of the source (as the authors of the collective work emphasized...; thus, in the monograph...; for example, in

the works of(in den Werken von); it is proven in the work (es ist im Werk bewiesen). In addition, discourse markers indicating a generalized source of information are found (məlumdur ki (it is known), müasir ideyalara görə (according to modern ideas), es ist aber bekannt (but it is known)). Along with references to the works of other authors, references to their own studies were found in Azerbaijan-language articles (as shown earlier; it is shown in the work...).

The first difference is that the number of discourse markers in the analyzed Azerbaijan-language articles significantly exceeds the number of discourse markers in German-language articles. Such a significant discrepancy can be explained by two reasons. The first of them is related to the fact that all German-language articles on geology are clearly structured by sections, each of which has a corresponding heading: introduction, chapters, sub-chapters, conclusion. This helps to maximally highlight the compositional structure of the article and identify the most important semantic dominants without using discourse markers. In some modern Azerbaijan-language articles, authors also highlight separate text rubrics with headings: introduction and conclusion, but this is rather an exception than a rule (one article out of all analyzed), and most authors are forced to emphasize the transition from one research episode to the next using discourse markers. For example, if a German-language author highlights the conclusion with the heading Schlussfolgerungen (conclusions), the Azerbaijan-language author resorts to discourse markers indicating conclusions (belə nəticəyə gəlmək olar ki (hence the conclusion must follow), beləliklə (thus), belə nəticəyə gəlməyə imkan verir ki (this allows concluding), bu səbəbdən (consequently), ümumi olaraq (in general), and others). In all analyzed German-language articles, there is a section titled «Ergebnisse» (results), in which the authors list the results of the conducted research. In the articles of Azerbaijan-language authors, the research results are not clearly highlighted but are present throughout the entire text of the article. Therefore, in order to focus the reader's attention on the results of the work and emphasize their significance, discourse markers such as her şeydən öncə (first of all), bunu qeyd etmək lazımdır ki (it is important to emphasize), xüsusilə vurğulanmalıdır ki (it is especially indicative), xüsusilə (notably), and others are used.

The second reason for such a large difference in the quantitative use of discourse markers in Azerbaijan-language and German-language texts suggests that Azerbaijan-language geological articles are more reader-oriented. The Azerbaijan-language author tries to a greater extent to explain

to the reader exactly which mental operations the scientist performs: introduces the problem (as is known, in particular, moves on to the next question (thus), based on this, however, returns to the starting point, as shown above, as already noted, gives an example (for example), in the figure..., an example is given..., analyzes the results of the experiment (as a rule), first of all, apparently, draws conclusions (consequently), hence the conclusion follows, this allows concluding.

The second difference is the degree of variety of the discourse markers used, i.e., the ratio of the number of discourse markers used to the frequency of their use: despite the fact that Azerbaijan-language authors use discourse markers more often than German-language ones, they are less varied. On average, the same marker is used 4.5 times in Russian-language articles and 2.5 times in German-language articles. Azerbaijan-language articles are dominated by discourse markers such as *nəticədə*(consequently), *belə nəticəyə gəlmək olar ki* (one can assume), *qaydaya uyğun*(as a rule), *mümkündür ki* (possibly), *məsəl üçün* (for example), while German-language ones are dominated by *darüber hinaus* (moreover), *allerdings* (however), *zum Beispiel* (for example).

Despite the fact that the same discourse markers are found more often in Azerbaijan-language scientific speech, thanks to their wider use, it gives the impression of being more lively and dynamic. Moreover, such a text clearly shows the author's desire to express their position and convey it to the reader. German-language scientific speech in the analyzed articles, on the contrary, creates the impression of being drier, aimed at a more detached, stating type of information presentation.

**Conclusion.** The conducted study confirmed the existence of organizational features of German-language and Azerbaijan-language scientific geological discourse. These features can be explained by the influence of discursive and ethnolinguistic models of scientific text organization: the first type of influence predetermines commonality in the organization of scientific geological discourse through discourse markers, the second — differences in organization. Further comparative study of the norms of organization of written scientific geological speech in German and Azerbaijan on a more extensive material is necessary to clarify the influence of national specificity on the ways of organizing scientific discourse.

## Literature

- Aijmer K. English discourse particles: Evidence from a corpus. Amsterdam : John Benjamins, 2002. 299 p.
- Aloseviciene E. Die Rolle der Heckenausdrucke bei der Diskursstrukturierung im Deutschen und Litauischen. *Acta Linguistica Lithuanica*. 2006. Vol. 54. P. 45–60.
- Arutyunova N. D. Diskurs. *Lingvisticheskiy entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*. M., 1990. C. 136–137.
- Brinton L. Pragmatic markers in English: Grammaticalization and discourse functions. Berlin ; New York : Mouton de Gruyter, 1996. 412 p.
- Damm B., Terhorst B. Zum Einfluss bodenphysikalischer und bodenmechanischer Parameter in quartärer Deckschichten auf Massenbewegungen im Wienerwald. *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*. Wien, 2008. Bd. 62: Veränderter Lebensraum — gestern, heute und morgen. S. 23–27.
- Drescher-Schneider R., Kellerer-Pirklbauer A. Gletscherschwund einst und heute — neue Ergebnisse zur holozäne Vegetations- und Gletschergeschichte der Pasterze (Hohe Tauern, Österreich). *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*. Wien, 2008. Bd. 62: Veränderter Lebensraum — gestern, heute und morgen. S. 31–36.
- Felderer A. Identifikation und Abschätzung von Murprozessen als Folge von Gletscherrückgang und Permafrostdegradation im Naturpark Rieserferner-Ahrn (Südtirol). *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*. Wien, 2008. Bd. 62: Veränderter Lebensraum — gestern, heute und morgen. S. 45–49.
- Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. Vol. 31. P. 931–952.
- Haslinger E. Der «Rote Aufschluss» von Langenlois: Pedogenese und Mineralogie von Paläoboden-Sequenzen über Amphibolit. *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*. Wien, 2008. Bd. 62: Veränderter Lebensraum — gestern, heute und morgen. S. 61–65.
- Schiffrin D. Discourse Markers: Language, Meaning, and Context. *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* / D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton (eds). Blackwell Publishers, 2001. P. 54–75.
- Сепір Е. Вибрані праці з мовознавства та культурології. URL: [http://www.gu-mer.info/bibliotek\\_Buks/Linguist/sepip/index.php](http://www.gu-mer.info/bibliotek_Buks/Linguist/sepip/index.php) (дата звернення: 04.10.2025).

## References

- Aijmer, K. (2002). *English discourse particles: Evidence from a corpus*. John Benjamins.
- Aloseviciene, E. (2006). Die Rolle der Heckenausdrucke bei der Diskursstrukturierung im Deutschen und Litauischen [The role of hedging expressions in discourse structuring in German and Lithuanian]. *Acta Linguistica Lithuanica*, 54, 45–60.
- Arutyunova, N. D. (1990). Diskurs [Discourse]. In *Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary* (pp. 136–137). Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya [in Russian].
- Brinton, L. (1996). *Pragmatic markers in English: Grammaticalization and discourse functions*. Mouton de Gruyter.

- Damm, B., & Terhorst, B. (2008). Zum Einfluss bodenphysikalischer und bodenmechanischer Parameter in quartärer Deckschichten auf Massenbewegungen im Wienerwald. *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*, 62, 23–27.
- Drescher-Schneider, R., & Kellerer-Pirklbauer, A. (2008). Gletscherschwund einst und heute — neue Ergebnisse zur holozäne Vegetations- und Gletschergeschichte der Pasterze (Hohe Tauern, Österreich). *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*, 62, 31–36.
- Felderer, A. (2008). Identifikation und Abschätzung von Murprozessen als Folge von Gletscherrückgang und Permafrostdegradation im Naturpark Rieserferner-Ahrn (Südtirol). *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*, 62, 45–49.
- Fraser, B. (1999). What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 931–952.
- Haslinger, E. (2008). Der «Rote Aufschluss» von Langenlois: Pedogenese und Mineralogie von Paläoboden-Sequenzen über Amphibolit. *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*, 62, 61–65.
- Sapir, E. (n.d.). *Izbrannye trudy po yazykoznaniiyu i kulturologii* [Selected works on linguistics and cultural studies]. [http://www.gumer.info/bibliotek\\_Buks/Linguist/sepir/index.php](http://www.gumer.info/bibliotek_Buks/Linguist/sepir/index.php) [in Ukrainian]
- Schiffrin, D. (2001). Discourse markers: Language, meaning, and context. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 54–75). Blackwell Publishers.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 10.10.2025 року