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Textual Function of Discourse Markers: A Study of Gender Differences in Call Her Daddy "*Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me*" On YouTube

STEFANUS DIKY SETYAWAN
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia
E-mail: idbazal500@gmail.com

BRAMANTYA PRADIPTA
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia
E-mail: bramantya@untag-sby.ac.id

Abstract. This study investigates the textual functions of discourse markers (DMs) and explores gender-based differences in their usage in a real-life podcast conversation. The data source is the discourse markers from the utterances in the YouTube podcast *Call Her Daddy*, titled *"Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me,"* featuring Alex Cooper as the host and Ed Sheeran as the guest. This research employs Brinton's (1996) framework to categorize the textual functions of DMs and applies Deborah Tannen's (1990) Difference Theory to examine gendered communication styles. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the study identifies 788 total discourse markers: 591 produced by the male speaker and 197 by the female speaker. The most dominant category of textual function was *fillers*, followed by *information indicators* and *sequence/relevance markers*. The findings reveal that Ed Sheeran, although male, frequently used fillers and repair markers typically associated with rapport-style communication. Meanwhile, Alex Cooper, despite using fewer DMs overall, relied heavily on topic switchers and turn-taking markers, aligning with her role as host. These patterns support Tannen's theory that male speakers tend to emphasize information and logical structure (report talk), while female speakers focus on maintaining conversational flow and interpersonal rapport (rapport talk). The study highlights how discourse markers function not only as linguistic tools but also as reflections of gender identity, conversational role, and interactional purpose in digital media discourse.

Keywords: *discourse markers, gender differences, podcast, pragmatics*, *textual functions*

INTRODUCTION

Communication, particularly verbal communication, serves as the foundation for human interaction, facilitating the exchange of thoughts, emotions, and ideas. It acts as a vital tool for social relationships and the conveyance of meaning. According to Azimova (2024), language enables interaction between individuals, allowing for the transmission of information, expression of needs, and negotiation of social roles. Through these functions, language not only facilitates the basic exchange of information but also plays a central role in shaping social life, reinforcing interpersonal bonds, and fostering

mutual cooperation in various contexts, such as family, workplace, and society at large. Fiske (2005) categorizes communication into two primary forms: verbal and non-verbal, each contributing uniquely to the process of interaction. Verbal communication involves spoken or written language, encompassing a wide array of expressions ranging from casual conversations to formal documentation. This form of communication serves as a primary medium for expressing ideas clearly and directly. Non-verbal communication, on the other hand, includes gestures, facial expressions, body language, and other non-linguistic behaviors that often convey emotions, attitudes, or support verbal messages. Bernardis & Gentilucci (2006) emphasize the synergy between spoken words and gestures, noting that these two modes work in tandem to enhance comprehension and clarity. Hall et al. (2019) define non-verbal communication more specifically, describing it as behaviors conveyed through the face, body, or voice, excluding the linguistic content of speech. This interplay of verbal and non-verbal cues is essential for ensuring accurate interpretation of messages and minimizing misunderstandings.

As Salim (2023) highlights, verbal communication can further be divided into oral and written forms, each serving distinct purposes. Oral communication, such as conversations, debates, or presentations, is characterized by its immediacy and dynamic nature, allowing for real-time feedback and adjustments based on listener responses. This immediacy fosters engagement and ensures that misunderstandings can be promptly addressed. In contrast, written communication, including reports, articles, and emails, ensures the longevity and dissemination of information, enabling it to reach a broader audience over time and space. Together, these forms of verbal communication, when paired with non-verbal signals, create a robust system for constructing meaning, allowing listeners and readers to decode speakers’ and writers’ messages effectively and accurately. Moreover, the effectiveness of both oral and written communication is not solely dependent on linguistic structure but also on the pragmatic choices made by speakers and writers to convey intended meanings appropriately within a given context. This brings into focus the study of pragmatics, a branch of linguistics that examines how speakers adapt their language to specific contexts and audiences to convey meaning beyond the literal content of words.

Pragmatics, as noted by Jonathan (2019), explores the reasons behind specific language choices, highlighting how speakers tailor their messages to achieve particular objectives, such as persuading, clarifying, or entertaining. Levinson (1983) underscores the role of contextual factors, including the physical environment, cultural norms, and participants' relationships, in shaping pragmatic choices. Yule (2022) builds on this by emphasizing the influence of context and interlocutors in shaping message interpretation. This pragmatic perspective provides a comprehensive framework for understanding discourse markers (DMs), which are pivotal in organizing and managing spoken interactions. Tannen et al. (2015) describe DMs as versatile tools that operate across multiple domains—social, expressive, textual, and cognitive—guiding listeners in interpreting speaker intentions and maintaining coherence. Fraser (1988) explains their function in signaling relationships between utterances, while Schiffrin (1987) classifies them into conjunctions, interjections, adverbs, and lexicalized phrases. Brinton (1996) categorizes DMs into textual functions—such as opening frame markers, turn-takers, fillers, repair markers, and topic shifters—and interpersonal functions, which build rapport and express emotion. These functions, however, are not used identically by all speakers; gender plays a significant role in shaping the frequency and purpose of DM usage.

Gender significantly influences the use of DMs, as highlighted by Azeez et al. (2023). Men often use DMs to assert authority and maintain autonomy, while women use them to express empathy, foster relationships, and build social cohesion. Tannen (1990)

attributes these variations to gendered communication styles, where men prioritize dominance and independence, and women prioritize connection and intimacy. These distinctions manifest in the types and functions of DMs used by each gender. One effective way to observe these gendered patterns is through spontaneous conversations in podcast discourse. Podcasts offer a rich source of data for analyzing DMs and gendered language use. For instance, Apriliana and Silalahi (2023) investigated textual functions in the *Girl Talk with Joan Kim Get Real Ep. 16* podcast, revealing how DMs manage conversational flow. Putri and Nugroho (2023) analyzed the DM "like" in podcasts, identifying its gendered roles as filler, hedge, and emphasis marker. Dewi and Ayomi (2024) studied DMs in *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, showcasing their function in various media contexts. Building on these studies, the present research analyzes the YouTube podcast *Call Her Daddy: Ed Sheeran – You Either Love Me or Hate Me*, hosted by Alex Cooper. Employing Brinton's (1996) DM theory and Deborah Tannen's (1990) Difference Theory, this study explores how male and female speakers use textual functions of DMs differently, aiming to uncover gendered discourse strategies in dynamic, real-world interactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have explored discourse markers (DMs) across various media and communicative contexts, emphasizing both their functional roles and gender-based usage differences. For instance, Fei and Leilei (2023), in their analysis of TV talk shows, argue that DMs are not superfluous but essential in conveying speaker intention and structuring narratives. Using Brinton's framework, they highlight the textual and interpersonal contributions of DMs. Similarly, Dewi and Ayomi (2024), analyzing *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, apply Fraser's model to identify four types and six functions of DMs, with elaborative markers appearing most frequently. Other studies have broadened the scope of DM analysis into political discourse, podcasts, and fictional media. Fu, Afzaal, and El-Dakhs (2024) focus on the use of "you know" and "I mean" in English political interviews, finding notable cultural and stylistic differences between Chinese and British interlocutors. In the realm of podcasting, Apriliana and Silalahi (2024) analyze 85 instances of DMs in *Girl Talk with Joan Kim*, noting the predominance of repair markers. Similarly, Akbar, Mariani, and Elyani (2023) explore DMs in *The Ron Clark Story*, identifying "and" as the most frequently used marker. Studies by Habibi et al. (2020) and Hanif et al. (2024) extend the inquiry into turn-taking and gendered DM usage, while Banguis-Bantawig (2019) examines how additive and elaborative markers support cohesion and rhetorical effectiveness in Asian presidential speeches.

Taken together, these studies underscore the multi-dimensional roles of DMs in organizing discourse, managing interaction, and reflecting speaker identity across diverse communicative genres—ranging from talk shows and films to political discourse and literary fiction. Many works focus on the textual organization provided by elaborative and repair markers (e.g., Dewi & Ayomi, 2024; Apriliana & Silalahi, 2024), while others investigate how DMs convey social meanings in institutional or political settings (e.g., Fu et al., 2024; Banguis-Bantawig, 2019). Research addressing gender-related DM usage (e.g., Hanif et al., 2024) often emerges in studies of fictional narratives, revealing stylistic patterns and interpersonal strategies. Although Fraser's (1999) and Schiffrin's (1987) models dominate much of this scholarship, the present study adopts Brinton's (1996) classification to examine the textual functions of DMs in a natural, unscripted setting—specifically, the *Call Her Daddy* podcast episode titled *"Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me."* To enrich the analysis, Tannen's (1990) Difference Theory is applied to explore gendered patterns of DM usage within

the same conversational exchange. This combined framework—functional and gendered—provides a more comprehensive view of how DMs operate in spontaneous, real-life discourse, particularly in podcasting, an increasingly influential yet under-analyzed communicative genre.

Discourse analysis offers a broader theoretical lens through which to understand the linguistic and social significance of DMs. It investigates how language functions in real-world contexts to shape identities, reinforce ideologies, and manage social relationships (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 2014). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis, for instance, explore how seemingly ordinary speech choices maintain or resist power structures and cultural norms. Kartika Sari and Pradipta (2021) demonstrated how news discourse subtly reinforces dominant ideologies, aligning with Fairclough's argument that discourse both reflects and reproduces social structures. Within this analytical tradition, DMs serve as essential tools for organizing spoken language. Schiffrin (1987) and Brinton (1996) provide typologies showing how markers like "so," "okay," or "I mean" guide transitions, manage turn-taking, and clarify meaning. Brinton's classification includes: opening and closing frame markers, turn-takers, fillers, topic switchers, information indicators, sequence/relevance markers, and repair markers. For example, fillers like "um" maintain speech fluency during hesitation, while topic switchers signal shifts in discussion. As Luo and Zou (2023) note, such markers are especially vital in unscripted formats like interviews and podcasts, where spontaneous interaction demands continual negotiation of coherence and interpersonal alignment.

A key component of this study is its attention to gendered communication, illuminated through Deborah Tannen's (1990) Difference Theory. Tannen argues that male and female communication styles are shaped by distinct socialization processes rather than biological differences. Boys are often socialized in hierarchical, competitive peer groups, developing communication patterns geared toward asserting status and independence. Girls, by contrast, typically engage in more cooperative, intimate interactions, fostering language use centered on empathy and connection. These early social differences persist into adulthood, manifesting in two broad styles: report talk (typically male) and rapport talk (typically female). Tannen outlines six core contrasts between male and female speech—status vs. support, independence vs. intimacy, advice vs. understanding, information vs. feelings, orders vs. proposals, and conflict vs. compromise. These differences surface in DM usage: male speakers may use markers like "so," "therefore," or "and then" to assert logic and progression, whereas female speakers more frequently employ fillers, repair markers, or softening expressions like "maybe," "sorry," or "I guess" to maintain rapport and mitigate directness. These linguistic tendencies reflect not just stylistic preferences but also deeper social goals. As such, Tannen's framework is essential for interpreting gendered interaction in dialogic exchanges, such as podcast interviews where power, empathy, and performativity intersect.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to explore the textual function of discourse markers (DMs) in spoken language, specifically in the podcast *Call Her Daddy*, episode "Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me." The qualitative approach enables the researcher to examine naturally occurring language in its social context, focusing on the patterns, functions, and variations of discourse markers based on gender. This method is suitable because it allows for an in-depth analysis of conversational features that are often overlooked in quantitative studies, such as the nuanced use of DMs and their contextual meanings.

The data in this study are in the form of utterances containing discourse markers used by Alex Cooper (female host) and Ed Sheeran (male guest). The episode was selected for its conversational style and natural turn-taking, making it ideal for identifying spontaneous spoken discourse. The researcher transcribed the episode by using NoteGPT, following transcription conventions used in discourse analysis, to ensure accuracy and preserve all relevant markers, including pauses, repetitions, fillers, and other features that indicate the use of DMs. The transcription was then segmented into functional units to isolate and identify each discourse marker used throughout the interaction.

To analyze the data, this study employs Brinton's (1996) framework on the textual functions of discourse markers, which includes seven categories: opening frame markers, closing frame markers, turn-taking markers, fillers, topic switchers, information indicators, sequence markers, and repair markers. Each identified discourse marker is categorized according to these functions and examined in terms of its role in structuring the conversation. Furthermore, the frequency and distribution of each marker type are compared between the male and female speakers to uncover gender-based differences in DM usage. The analysis also considers the conversational context to interpret the speaker's intent, stance, and interactional purpose behind using particular markers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents findings and a discussion of textual functions of discourse markers, the dominant function, and gender marker usage that appear in the podcast Call Her Daddy *"Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me."*

Table 1 The Types of Textual Functions

No	Textual Functions	Discourse Markers	Occurrence		Total Occurrence
			Male	Female	
1	Opening Frame Markers	Okay	0	2	2
2	Closing Frame Markers	Then okay	0	1	14
		But yeah	4	0	
		And yeah	6	0	
		So yeah	2	0	
		Okay	0	1	
3	Turn Takers	So	3	4	43
		And	6	5	
		Okay	2	7	
		But	4	3	
		Right	2	0	
		Cuz	4	2	
		For sure	0	1	
4	Fillers	Like	99	52	347
		Um	44	21	
		Uh	35	0	
		Kind of	28	2	
		Well	9	2	
		You know	22	2	
		Actually	5	2	

No	Textual Functions	Discourse Markers	Occurrence		Total Occurrence
			Male	Female	
		Sort of	20	0	
		Basically	4	0	

After classifying the textual functions in the podcast Call Her Daddy *"Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me,"* the researcher found 788 markers that is used during the conversations. The most dominant is fillers with 347 times appeared. The others are information indicators found 230 times, sequence/relevance markers 96 times, turn takers 43 times, repair markers 38 times, topic switchers 18 times, closing frame markers 14 times, opening frame markers 2 times. The textual functions, the dominant function, and the gender marker usage are explained in the next section.

A. Opening Frame Markers

Based on the data, opening frame markers have appeared 2 times. Opening frame markers are DMs that initiate conversations, signal the start of a new topic, or mark transitions within discourse. Their primary function is to capture the listener's attention and provide an "entry point" into the conversation. Code OFM is given to naming each opening frame markers said by the host (Alex Cooper) and guest (Ed Sheeran).

1. OFM1F

Alex Cooper: "*Ed Sheeran welcome to Caller Daddy!*"
Ed Sheeran: "*Hey!*"
Alex Cooper: *"**Okay**, wait, I was going to ask you. A musician never is sitting in the seat at 9:00 a.m. like I've never had a musician.*"

In this utterance, "***Okay***" functions as an **opening frame marker**. Here, "***Okay***" signals a shift in the conversation, helping Alex smoothly regain control of the discussion. The phrase "wait, I was going to ask you…" shows that she is steering the conversation toward a planned question, signaling both to Ed Sheeran and the audience that a new, intended topic is about to begin. This marker is typical in casual, spontaneous conversations, allowing the speaker to manage the flow naturally while keeping the interaction engaging and coherent.

2. OFM2F

Alex Cooper: *"**Okay**, I want to get your, take on some very American things as a Brit…"* In this utterance, "***Okay***" functions as an **opening frame marker**. After the advertisement break in the podcast, Alex begins with "***Okay***" to clearly signal a shift back into the main conversation. By saying, "***Okay***, I want to get your take on some very American things as a Brit…," she introduces a new topic and directs both Ed Sheeran and the audience toward a fresh segment of the discussion. This use of "***Okay***" helps manage the flow of the conversation, creating a smooth and natural transition. As an opening frame marker, it plays a key role in structuring the talk, marking the boundary between the previous segment and the upcoming one, while keeping the interaction organized and engaging.

B. Closing Frame Markers

Based on the data, closing frame markers have appeared 14 times. Closing frame markers signal the conclusion of a topic, section, or conversation, effectively wrapping

up the discourse. These markers are vital for creating coherence, as they prepare the listener for a transition—either to a new subject or the end of the dialogue. Code CFM is given to naming each closing frame markers said by the host (Alex Cooper) and guest (Ed Sheeran).

1. **CFM2F**

Alex Cooper: *"Oh my god! I thought you said a bamic, I thought you said a ball sack, no, I thought you said a ball salmon,* ***then okay****."* In this utterance, "***then okay***" functions as a closing frame marker. After a series of humorous misinterpretations involving the word "balsamic," Alex uses "***then okay***" to bring the exchange to a close. It signals a resolution or acceptance of the clarification and marks the end of that specific thread of misunderstanding. In spontaneous spoken discourse, especially in casual and humorous contexts, such phrases help speakers smoothly conclude a segment before transitioning into the next topic.

2. **CFM4M**

Ed Sheeran: *"...as soon as I had kids there were certain films that I was planning on seeing I was like I'll just wait to watch them with my kids* ***but yeah*** *I've never, never seen the Wizard."* In this utterance, "***but yeah***" functions as a **closing frame marker**. After explaining how becoming a parent changed his approach to watching certain films, Ed says, "***but yeah***" to signal that he is wrapping up his point about never having seen *The Wizard of Oz*. The phrase casually indicates that he has finished sharing his story, marking the end of this particular topic. In this context, "***but yeah***" serves to smoothly close his explanation, showing that the mini-topic is concluded and that the conversation can naturally move on. It acts as a subtle boundary marker, often used in spontaneous spoken interactions to signal completion and maintain the flow of discourse.

C. Turn Takers

Based on the data, turn takers have appeared 43 times. Turn-taking markers manage the dynamics of conversation, signaling when it is appropriate for one speaker to relinquish their turn or for another to begin speaking. Phrases like "okay," "go ahead," and "your turn" ensures an orderly exchange of speaking turns, preventing overlap and interruptions. Code TT is given to naming each turn-taking markers said by the host (Alex Cooper) and guest (Ed Sheeran).

1. **TT3F**

Alex Cooper: *"And, what time did you go to bed?"*
Ed Sheeran: "*3:30*"
Alex Cooper: *"Oh wow,* ***so*** *you could get like, do you get a little like loopy, like are you going to get like weird funny or are you going to like fall asleep on?"*

In this utterance, "***so***" functions as a **turn-taking marker**. After Ed Sheeran responds with "3:30" to her previous question, Alex uses "***so***" to smoothly take back the conversational floor and extend the topic. By saying, "Oh wow, ***so*** you could get like, do you get a little like loopy…," she builds directly on Ed's answer, using "***so***" to signal a logical connection and to keep the conversation flowing naturally. In this context, "***so***" helps Alex maintain control of the dialogue, guide the interaction forward, and sustain the casual, spontaneous rhythm typical of podcast conversations.

2. **TT11F**

Alex Cooper: "*Oh my god I thought you said a bamic I thought you said a ball sack no I thought you said a ball salmon, then okay."*
Ed Sheeran: *"Right, yeah yeah."*
Alex Cooper: *"**Okay**, so you're into your balsamic vinaigrette?"*

In this utterance, "***Okay***" functions as a **turn-taking marker**. After a playful exchange and Ed Sheeran's brief response "Right, yeah yeah," Alex uses "***Okay***" to smoothly reclaim the conversational floor and continue steering the discussion. By saying, "***Okay***, so you're into your balsamic vinaigrette?" she acknowledges the prior humorous misunderstanding and transitions into a related, follow-up question. In this context, "***Okay***" acts as a pivot, maintaining the flow of conversation while signaling that she is ready to move the dialogue forward. It also reflects Alex's role as the host, helping her manage the pace and structure of the interaction while keeping the tone light and engaging.

D. Fillers

Based on the data, fillers have appeared 347 times. Fillers are DMs that serve as hesitation devices or placeholders, allowing speakers to think while maintaining the flow of conversation. Common fillers like "uh," "um," and "you know" indicate pauses where the speaker organizes their thoughts without breaking the rhythm of communication. Code F is given to naming each fillers said by the host (Alex Cooper) and guest (Ed Sheeran).

1. F23F

Alex Cooper: "***Um***, *okay the Super Bowl.*" In this utterance, "***um***" functions as a filler. Alex uses "***um***" at the beginning of her turn as a hesitation device while she organizes her thoughts before introducing the new topic of the Super Bowl. The use of "***um***" allows her to maintain control of the conversation without creating an abrupt or awkward pause. In this context, "***um***" helps bridge the transition between topics smoothly, reflecting a spontaneous and natural speech pattern that keeps the flow of dialogue steady and connected.

2. F27M

Ed Sheeran: *"...I don't think my **uh** set lends itself to that..."* In this utterance, "***uh***" functions as a filler. Ed uses "***uh***" mid-sentence as a hesitation device while he formulates his thoughts about whether his music fits the Super Bowl setting. The "***uh***" provides a brief pause that allows Ed to gather his ideas without interrupting the flow of his speech. In this context, "***uh***" helps maintain the rhythm of conversation, signaling that Ed is thinking while still actively holding the floor, which keeps the interaction natural and fluid.

E. Topic Switchers

Based on the data, topic switchers have appeared 18 times. Topic switchers signal a transition to a new subject or a shift in focus within a conversation. Common markers such as "by the way," "speaking of," and "moving on" provide listeners with cues to adjust their attention to the upcoming topic. Code TS is given to naming each topic switchers said by the host (Alex Cooper) and guest (Ed Sheeran).

1. TS2M

Alex Cooper: *"And also like you saying like and I come out and I'm singing like 18 like everyone just starts sobbing in the audience and is like getting in their feels and then…"*
Ed Sheeran: *"They just go and get a beer. This is so comfy here **by the way**."*

In this utterance, "***by the way***" functions as a topic switcher. Ed uses "***by the way***" to introduce a spontaneous new comment about how comfortable he feels, shifting away from the ongoing discussion about concert experiences. The marker signals an intentional but casual topic change, allowing Ed to insert a personal remark without disrupting the overall flow of conversation. In this context, "***by the way***" helps manage the transition smoothly, reflecting the informal, friendly tone of the interview and keeping the interaction lively and dynamic.

2. **TS8F**
Ed Sheeran: *"It's really really worth watching, it's kind of humorous heartwarming, it's not like the Hollywood ending where I'm not going to ruin it for you but it's like it's a really really perfect movie."*
Alex Cooper: *"Now I got to watch it no spoilers. Um, **so**, we're going for the Batman costume?"*

In this utterance, "***so***" functions as a topic switcher. Alex uses "***so***" to pivot the conversation from discussing a movie recommendation to a new topic about the Batman costume. The marker "***so***" helps create a logical link between the closing of one discussion and the introduction of another, maintaining a smooth and natural transition. In this context, "***so***" serves to move the interview forward efficiently, guiding the dialogue while preserving its casual and lively tone.

F. Information Indicators

Based on the data, information indicators have appeared 230 times. Information indicators emphasize specific details or highlight new or previously mentioned information, guiding the listener's focus. Phrases like "for example," "specifically," and "as mentioned" help distinguish key points from supporting details. Code II is given to naming each information indicators said by the host (Alex Cooper) and guest (Ed Sheeran).

1. **II2M**
Ed Sheeran: *"…but I have two very young girls at home, **so** like I'm up at 5:30 every morning."* In this utterance, "***so***" functions as an information indicator. Ed uses "***so***" to introduce and emphasize the reason behind his early-rising habits — the fact that he has two very young daughters at home. The marker "***so***" guides the listener's attention to this key piece of information, linking his personal schedule to a specific, relatable cause. In this context, "***so***" helps clarify and highlight an important detail that explains his behavior, maintaining the flow of conversation while deepening the audience's understanding of his daily life.

2. **II13M**
Ed Sheeran: *"I like, do you know what I like is is culture **and** feel like a rodeo is is culture…I've lived in LA like on and off **and** doing things that are so specifically American…"* In this utterance, "***and***" functions as an information indicator. Ed uses "***and***" to add and highlight new supporting details about his experiences living in different American cities, reinforcing his earlier point about appreciating cultural

experiences like rodeos. The marker "***and***" introduces additional, specific information that builds on his broader statement about valuing culture. In this context, "***and***" helps organize and emphasize key examples that support his perspective, guiding the listener to focus on how his personal experiences relate directly to his appreciation for American traditions.

G. Sequence/Relevance Markers

Based on the data, sequence markers have appeared 96 times. Sequence markers establish a logical or chronological order within the discourse, guiding the listener through a structured progression of ideas or events. Words like "first," "next," and "finally" clarify the steps or stages of a narrative or explanation. Code SM is given to naming each sequence markers said by the host (Alex Cooper) and guest (Ed Sheeran).

1. **SM2F**

Alex Cooper: *"**And then,** I went to school in Boston, and I remember being in Boston and be like "This is the greatest fucking place," these bars are epic, the people are epic, like everyone just goes so fucking hard."* In this utterance, "***and then***" functions as a sequence marker. Alex uses "***and then***" to indicate the chronological progression of her life events, moving from her origin in Pennsylvania to attending school in Boston. The marker "***and then***" helps structure the narrative clearly for the listener, signaling the next stage in her personal story. In this context, "***and then***" guides the flow of information by establishing a clear timeline, making the conversation easier to follow and maintaining coherence as she shares her background.

2. **SM3M**

Ed Sheeran: *"...um and then I got all the plumbing wiring, I don't really even know the pipes put in, uh and it's sort of like it's a room for memorabilia. I think Cherry was like **eventually** (SM) those there was so much shit in the house that actually just having it all in one play like even just like meeting this football player and having a shirt signed and having it on the wall like it's better having it there than in the bedroom you know."*

In this utterance, "***eventually***" functions as a sequence marker. Ed uses "***eventually***" to highlight a natural progression over time — describing how the accumulation of memorabilia led to the decision to create a dedicated space for it. The marker "***eventually***" signals a development that unfolded gradually, helping the listener understand the cause-and-effect sequence in the story. In this context, "***eventually***" organizes the narrative by showing a shift from clutter within the house to a more organized solution, enhancing the clarity and timeline of the experience.

H. Repair Markers

Based on the data, sequence markers have appeared 38 times. Repair markers are used to correct or clarify statements, addressing potential misunderstandings or errors in real-time. Phrases like "I mean," "actually," and "let me rephrase that" allow speakers to refine their message for better clarity. Code RM is given to naming each repair markers said by the host (Alex Cooper) and guest (Ed Sheeran).

1. **RM3F**

Alex Cooper: *"Oh my god, I thought you said a bamic, I thought you said a ball sack, **no**, I thought you said a ball salmon, then okay."* In this utterance, "***no***" functions as a repair marker. Alex Cooper uses "***no***" to correct herself mid-sentence during a

humorous moment of mishearing. Each quick correction—"a bamic," "a ball sack," and finally "a ball salmon"—is punctuated by a brief use of "***no***," which helps her revise her guesses in real time. The repeated "***no***" signals ongoing clarification and shows how repair markers can serve both comedic timing and conversational accuracy, allowing the speaker to self-correct without disrupting the spontaneous tone of the dialogue.

2. RM4M

Ed Sheeran: *"Maybe when I'm,* ***maybe*** *the Super Bowl,* ***maybe*** *that's when I debut it."* In this utterance, "***maybe***" is used three times as a repair marker. Ed Sheeran begins a sentence with "maybe when I'm…" but then stops and restarts twice, each time using "***maybe***" to reformulate or adjust his thought mid-utterance. These repeated uses of "***maybe***" signal hesitation and uncertainty while also serving to soften the assertion as he considers when he might debut a hypothetical outfit. Each instance functions as a self-initiated repair, showing his process of thinking aloud and modifying his message as he speaks. The repetition reflects the natural disfluency of spontaneous speech, especially when imagining a humorous or exaggerated scenario.

I. Most Dominant Textual Functions

Based on the analysis of the podcast *Call Her Daddy* episode "Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me," a notable disparity emerged in the use of discourse markers (DMs) between the two speakers. Ed Sheeran, the male guest, used 591 out of the total 788 DMs (approximately 75%), while the female host, Alex Cooper, used only 197 (about 25%). This difference can be partly explained by the structure of the podcast, where Ed had more speaking time. However, it also highlights gendered linguistic patterns. Male speakers often dominate public conversations and may use more DMs to maintain coherence and control during extended turns, especially in storytelling. Ed's heavy use of fillers—like "um," "uh," "you know," and "like"—demonstrates how he organized thoughts in real time, avoided abrupt pauses, and sustained narrative control, aligning with Tannen's (1990) concept of *report talk*, where men use language to assert information and authority.

Further evidence of this dominance is seen in the distribution of textual functions. According to Brinton's (1996) framework, fillers were the most frequent DM type, occurring 347 times (266 by Ed and 81 by Alex). Additionally, Ed frequently employed information indicators and sequential markers such as "so," "because," "and then," and "but" to explain, elaborate, and structure narratives. These markers reflect a logical and persuasive communication style often associated with male speakers who prioritize clarity and content delivery. In contrast, Alex Cooper, despite using fewer markers overall, more often used turn-taking and topic-switching markers like "okay," "so," and "by the way." These serve an interactional purpose—managing conversational flow, signaling shifts, and inviting responses—traits consistent with Tannen's *rapport talk*, where female speakers emphasize connection, cooperation, and relational harmony.

In conclusion, the male speaker's dominance in both quantity and type of discourse markers reveals differing gender-based communication strategies. Ed Sheeran's reliance on fillers, information indicators, and sequencing markers illustrates a style focused on narrative expansion, logical structuring, and speaker control. Meanwhile, Alex Cooper's use of turn-takers and topic switchers reflects her role as host and her interaction-focused approach. These findings support sociolinguistic theories that gender, role, and context shape language use, with men tending toward assertive, content-driven speech and women toward facilitative, relationship-oriented communication.

J. Gender Differences in the Use of Textual Functions

Significant gender-based differences in the use of discourse markers (DMs) emerged in the *Call Her Daddy* podcast episode "Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me." Ed Sheeran, the male guest, produced 591 DMs, while Alex Cooper, the female host, used only 197. This contrast reflects not just differing speaking time but distinct communicative strategies aligned with Deborah Tannen's (1990) Difference Theory. Tannen distinguishes *report talk*—typically male, focused on information, independence, and status—from *rapport talk*—typically female, centered on connection, cooperation, and support. Ed's dominance in fillers and information indicators reveals a preference for structuring content and narrative control, traits of report talk. Meanwhile, Alex's more selective use of DMs like "okay," "so," and "by the way" reflects her role in guiding the conversation and facilitating engagement, consistent with rapport-oriented communication.

Alex Cooper frequently uses turn-takers and topic switchers to steer the conversation smoothly and maintain inclusivity. For instance, in utterance TS16F—"Um, okay, can we talk about your wife though?"—she uses "um" to soften the transition and "okay" as a polite shift in topic. This pattern supports Tannen's dimensions of indirectness (orders vs. proposals) and intimacy (intimacy vs. independence), showing how female speakers often structure speech to preserve interpersonal harmony. Ed, in contrast, displays extensive use of fillers such as "like," "uh," and "you know," which, although traditionally associated with female speech, serve here as devices to maintain fluency and relatability in storytelling. In utterance F44M, Ed says, "...they're like, you know actual chicken wings…," using repeated fillers to build a vivid, informal narrative. His speech thus blends report-focused structuring with rapport features that enhance listener connection, challenging rigid gender stereotypes in communication.

Ultimately, while Ed Sheeran exemplifies report talk through his use of logical connectors ("so," "because," "and then") to explain and sequence ideas, he also incorporates rapport-oriented features like softeners and casual fillers. Alex Cooper, despite using fewer DMs, manages interaction through structured topic shifts and cooperative language, fulfilling her host role while aligning with rapport strategies. These findings highlight that gender influences language use, but conversational role and context also play vital roles. The podcast setting—informal, narrative-driven, and role-specific—encourages fluid adaptation of strategies beyond strict gender norms. Thus, while Tannen's theory provides a valuable lens, this study suggests that gendered discourse patterns are flexible, shaped by interactional goals, speaker roles, and situational demands rather than gender alone.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the textual functions of discourse markers (DMs) and gender-based differences in their usage in the *Call Her Daddy* podcast episode "Ed Sheeran: You Either Love Me or Hate Me." Based on Brinton's (1996) theory and Tannen's (1990) Difference Theory, the analysis identified 786 discourse markers categorized into eight types. Fillers emerged as the most dominant, followed by information indicators and sequence/relevance markers, while opening frame markers were the least used. Ed Sheeran (male) produced 591 markers, with a strong presence of fillers and sequence markers such as *like, um, so, then,* and *and then*, reflecting both narrative structure and spontaneous fluency. Alex Cooper (female) used 197 markers, particularly turn-takers and topic switchers like *okay, so, by the way*, and *but*, aligning with a rapport-oriented style of communication. These findings support Tannen's theory that

men and women employ different conversational strategies, highlighting how DMs serve both structural and interpersonal functions.

Future studies are encouraged to explore discourse markers beyond textual function, such as their interpersonal, pragmatic, or cross-cultural roles, especially in genres like political debates, classroom discussions, or multilingual contexts. Analyzing DMs across various media platforms—such as YouTube interviews, live streams, or social media discourse—can offer broader insights into how speakers manage coherence, identity, and relationships. Additionally, a corpus-based or computational approach could be applied to larger datasets, enhancing the generalizability of findings. Such developments would contribute significantly to discourse analysis, gender communication studies, and even language learning or artificial intelligence research, where understanding natural language use is essential.

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