Contrastive Analysis of Macedonian Discourse Marker Znaeš and the English You know in Spoken Interaction

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Abstract

This paper provides a comparative analysis of discourse markers you know in English and znaeš in Macedonian. Although it belongs to the inventory of discourse markers that have received due attention in English scholarship and thus represents one of the most analyzed discourse markers, its Macedonian equivalent has remained largely understudied in the context of spoken interaction. Therefore, the existing research on you know may serve as a basic framework for contrastive analyses of interpersonal functions of its functional counterparts in other languages. The main hypothesis underlying our investigation is that in both languages the markers have a common basic function: appealing to common knowledge and thus marking interpersonal relationships. To prove the hypothesis we conduct an analysis using data collected from authentic telephone conversations in Macedonian whereby determining the interpersonal functions of znaeš and comparing them to the functions of you know. The results confirm the main hypothesis and support the distinction of several functions of znaeš in everyday conversation.

Keywords: discourse marker; you know; znaeš; politeness; Speech Act; conversation analysis; pragmatics; discourse analysis

1. Introduction

The interpersonal function of discourse markers was proposed as a concept by Halliday [1], who finds that interpersonality in discourse is not limited to subjective characteristics such as modality or utterance intensity, but is reflected through actual language features as well.

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This paper strives to prove the hypothesis that these linguistic elements play a part in marking certain relations among interlocutors.

Having in mind that in everyday communication speakers maintain 'unwritten rules' of politeness and cooperativeness, the paper aims to discover how this specific discourse markers behaves within the framework of the most cited pragmatic theories, those of Speech Acts, and Politeness.

Traditional dictionaries[2,3] define the verb *znae* 'to know' in Macedonian as having the meaning: *to be familiar with; to have close relations with; to be familiarized with somebody or something.*

In its canonical meaning, *znae* 'to know' functions as predicate in the sentence and marks a mental state of the subject: to know/to be familiar with a certain somebody, or to know/to be familiar with a certain information. The absence of the predicate would render the sentence meaningless. This function may find the verb *znae* in all forms in indicative, in all persons, in all tenses, in imperative, as well as in one infinite form [4].

In cases when *znae* 'to know' does not appear in its canonical meaning, it does not contribute towards the content or the truth-conditionality of the utterance, meaning that its absence does not render the sentence meaningless. In such usage, this verb appears only in second person singular or plural, in present tense and does not follow the paradigm of a verb. It can rather be described as a 'fixed' form of the verb, thus in some cases it can even be considered as a particle.

This paper examines the usage of this 'particle', treating it as a discourse marker.

The difference between usage of *znaeš* 'you know' as a discourse marker and *znaeš* 'you know' in its lexical meaning is evident on two parallels: semantic and syntactic. For instance, the utterance (1) would undergo both semantic and syntactic changes if we were to subtract *znaeš* 'you know' from the utterance: the utterance would sound incorrect and not logical. On the other hand, this would not be true for example (2), the meaning of which would remain unhindered even if *znaeš* 'you know' would be absent.

(1)   *Зоки, го **знаеш** планот?*   'Zoki, do **you know** the plan?'

(2)   *А бе, **знаеш**, таков си е планот.*   'Well, **you know,** that's the plan.

Dictionaries do not contain accurate definitions of all functions that this linguistic element may have in discourse/pragmatic usage. One of the definitions of the verb *znae* registers its pragmatic usage as 'an expression referencing towards something familiar to the interlocutor' with the following example: *You know, the car that we saw yesterday* [2]. Similarly, another dictionary [3] defines the verb *znae* in second person as 'a particle with persuasive function', with the example given: *And this, you know, must be ready by tomorrow.*

Another definition reflecting the pragmatic usage of *znaeš* 'you know' is provided in the Digital Dictionary of

Macedonian Language, where it is described as 'a particle with function to grab attention, without any meaning').

The pragmatic usage of *znaeš* 'you know' demonstrates the existence of distinction between a canonical *you know* and a *you know* as a particle used only in every-day communication. However, dictionaries and traditional grammars show evidence of a need for more in-depth analysis of this discourse marker.

One of the main 'issues' with this particular discourse marker would be the lack of consensus on semantic components of this verb in pragmatic usage. Dictionaries provide evidence that *znaeš* 'you know' as a discourse marker is considered by some authors as semantically empty. Such a statement can be found in the English scholarship, where some authors state that *you know* is a mere conversation filler. For instance, Ostman states that *you know* in its usage appears as 'a speaker's habit' [5:27]. Similarly, Crystal [6:47] states that certain speakers use *you know* to avoid the need of thinking of the correct word. However, research by both authors [5][6] has shown that such usage appear only insignificantly in authentic speech. Similar conclusions have been reached by other examinations, stating that discourse markers must be treated as elements with semantic components, but with a procedural meaning, which is the stance followed by the analysis in this paper.

Another reason that indicates a need for deeper analysis of this discourse marker is the absence of detailed explanation of its functions in traditional grammars and dictionaries. When selecting this discourse marker, the interpersonal component was taken into account. Authors analysing the English *you know* emphasise this discourse marker as one of the most frequent when interpersonal relations are concerned, due to the fact that it is composed by the personal pronoun *you*, and is inherently interpersonal [7:97].

1.1. Review of related Literature

Numerous studies exist on the English *you know,* starting from examinations of the process of creation from a grammaticalization point of you, to analysis of marker's functions in every-day conversations, including sociolinguistic studies of this discourse marker.

This paper focuses on functions of discourse markers in every-day conversations. Studies of *you know* include older papers such as [5,8,9,10], as well as more recent studies such as [11,12,13,14,15].

This paper's theoretic al framework is comprised by theories related to the ways of conducting every-day conversations, focusing on constructing interpersonal relations between interlocutors.

According to [5], by using *znaeš* 'you know', the speaker offers the interlocutor cooperation opportunity inviting him to agree with utterance's content. Having in mind that disagreement on the interlocutor's part, would constitute a face-threatening act, Ostman proposes that *znaeš* 'you know' is used as 'a face saver' [5:17]. A similar function of *znaeš* 'you know' in positive politeness is proposed by [8:9], illustrating such function with the example *I'm confident you know the kind of thing I mean.* In the given example, the speaker expresses positive politeness governed by the idea that the interlocutor is familiar with the context.

Another function of *znaeš* 'you know' relating to politeness is its usage when the speaker assumes common ground with the interlocutor. As example for such usage, Reference [5] proposes the example of the professor using this discourse marker after the end of the lecture, signalling students to imitate him, which in turn shows that such a conversational style is accepted. According to [5:19], the usage of *znaeš* 'you know' in this case strives to offer the interlocutor a feeling of power over the conversation.

There is a consensus among authors on the term 'common ground'. Even though [5] states that the usage of *znaeš* 'you know' does not necessarily imply that the interlocutor 'knows', and even if Biber and his colleagues [15:1077] state that *znaeš* 'you know' may indicate a new information to the hearer, it can be generalized that the information introduced by *znaeš* 'you know' is one with which the hearer is familiar [16:193]. Such information may be specifically shared between the speaker and hearer [17:69], or it may be a generally-known fact to the society [9:274].

As for the common ground, Holms states that this discourse marker may have two contrasting functions: expressing certainty and expressing uncertainty or hesitation [8], agreeing with what is said by [10] on a paper published a year prior: that *you know* is used to signal common ground, but also to signal hesitation in that common ground. To illustrate it with an example, the author uses the utterance *I feel a chill, you know?*, where the speaker expects from the hearer to feel the same- or at least to be familiar with the feeling described [10:103]. Schouroup goes on to explain this function stating that it is especially important when the discourse marker *you know* does not refer to the content of the utterance but rather to the implicit meaning of that utterance. This is illustrated by an example of a speaker noticing the street lights going on and stating *It's six o'clock, you know* [10:105]. Since the relation between these two occurrences (the street lights turning on and the exact time- six o'clock) is not explicit, *you know* appears in the function to make sure that the hearer understands the implicature.

You know has also been examined as an interaction signal, rendered possible by its interpersonal nature [5,10]. Ostman states that when *you know* is proceeded by an interrogative form, the interlocutor is expected to answer, whereas when it is pronounced with falling intonation it indicates that 'everything has been said' [5]. According to [10] *you know* functions as 'interaction regulator' in the conversation when it appears in final utterance position, inviting the hearer to respond.

As far as the modal function of *you know* is concerned, Reference [11] states that a modal function of this discourse marker would be found within the framework of expressing subjective modality, implying subjective interpretation but not to the utterance itself – but rather to the illocutionary force of that utterance.

There are no papers offering an in-depth examination the usage of this discourse marker in Macedonian conversations. However, its conversational functions are emphasized on a paper by [4], where the interpersonal function of *znae* only in second person is referred to as a marker of cooperativeness.

2. Materials and methods

This is an empirical study of authentic conversations. Through analysing the linguistic sample we tested the

usage of this linguistic element in every-day communication.

There is no corpus of spoken language for the language analysed in this paper (Macedonian), hence the creation of our own sample composed through gathering authentic telephone conversations in the following ways:

- By searching, finding and gathering telephone conversations available on the internet, or
- By recording telephone conversations.

After gathering the material, it was transcribed in accordance with anonymization principles and saved in accordance to the criteria of the software used in future steps to perform the analysis of the element distribution in the sample. During transcription we should take into account that it is a process that encompasses those details that are considered necessary for the phenomenon at hand. In this analysis, we took into account that the transcripts need to reflect the authenticity of the sample material. In everyday communication, conversations are not always orderly. Oftentimes the speakers take the floor without waiting for their turn to talk, or it may happen for longer pauses to occur, or a sudden silence. Having in mind all these factors, but also the fact that such research papers are usually published only in written form, certain methods exist for noting such occurrences that characterize everyday talk. In the examples excerpted from our sample, the overlap in conversation is noted by =, longer pauses within the conversation are noted with (.), and laughing by <>. Another important and currently really relevant aspect while applying conversation analysis, is the respect towards human rights and the non-invasive aspect in the privacy of participants in the authentic conversations.While transcribing our sample, we performed complete anonymization of the material, meaning that the sample does not contain any identification data of the participants in the sample material. The sample is composed of authentic telephone conversations in Macedonian language. The total number of conversations is 203 containing 44 298 tokens, with a TTR of 0.139. The analysis is performed through the software program *AntConc,* which enabled us to find out the frequency of appearance of the chosen elements. However, such a procedure determines a result commonly referred to as 'unprocessed', since it includes linguistic elements in all their meanings. In other words, the procedure does not take into account the polysemy of words or phrases. Therefore, should we want to analyse linguistic elements with discourse or pragmatic functions, occurrences of elements in their main lexical meaning should be removed from the list of occurrences in pragmatic or discourse functions. We annotated the cases when elements were found as occurring in their cannonical meaning and the ones where they had discourse or pragmatic functions. This enabled us to avoid the possibility of generation of inadequate search results, as well as to focus on strict determination of pragmatic functions of the markers at hand. In order to test the hypothesis of connectivity between interpersonal marker's distribution and the types of speech acts within which they occur, we chose 23 speech acts that are considered as threatening the hearer's (addressee's) face (FTAs), within which we tested markers' distribution. These FTAs fall under one of the four speech act categories proposed by Searle's classification [18], based on their illocutionary force. The table below illustrates the speech acts within which we chose to analyse the occurrence and distribution of the discourse marker.

Table 1: FTA Categories**.**

| DIRECTIVES (5)	COMMISSIVES (1)	EXPRESSIVES (12)	ASERTIVES (5)
Warning	Promise	Apologising	Announcement of bad news
Mild order		Mockery	Non-approval
Suggestion		Admission of guilt	Reminding
Invitation		Criticizing	Mentioning unpleasant facts
Offer		Disagreement	Announcement of good news
		Agreement	
		Opposing	
		Emotive reaction	
		Boasting	
		Expressing admiration	
		Taking responsibility	
		Self-depreciation	
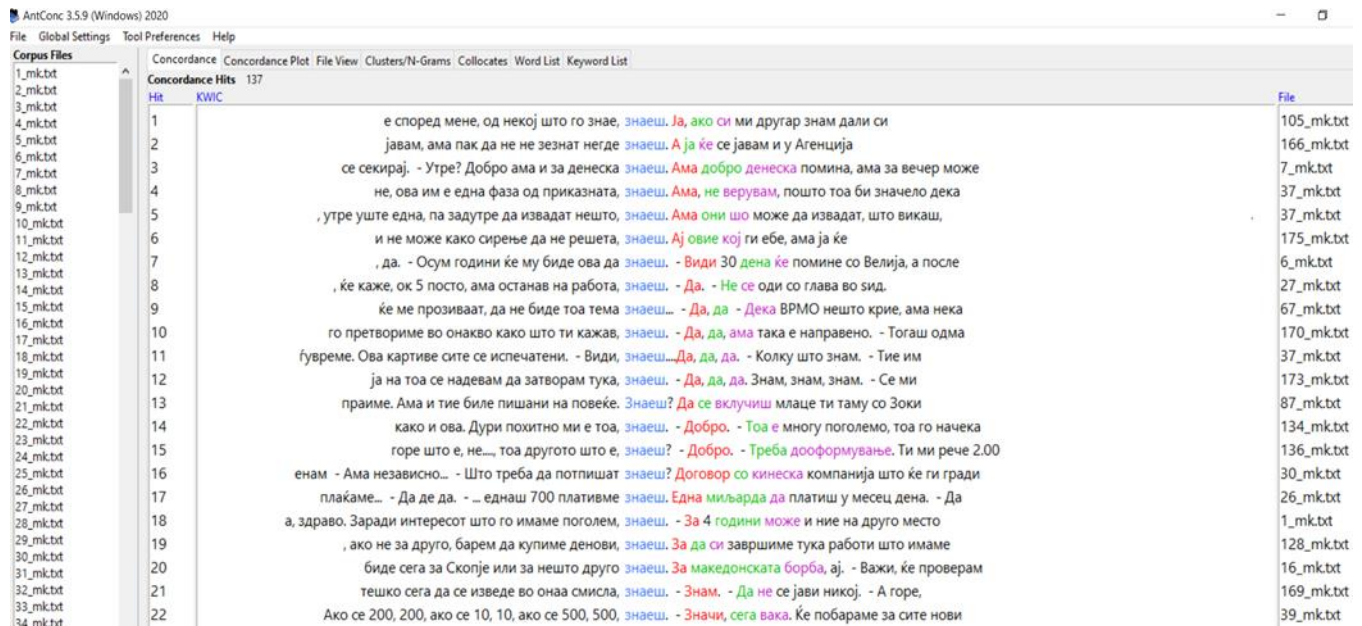
Figure 1: Example of AntConc search for discourse marker *znaeš* 'you know'.

3. Results and analysis

3.1. Functions of znaeš 'you know'

The discourse marker znaeš 'you know' may function within the framework of signaling politeness:

a) In face-threatening speech acts:

Znaeš 'you know' appeared 101 times in the sample. The analysis began with the objective to determine similarities and differences with what is known so far for the English you know. To analyse possible functions

of the marker in signaling face-saving strategies, we analysed the occurrence in 23 speech acts. The following table illustrates the distribution of znaeš 'you know'in our sample.

Table 2: Distribution of *znaeš* 'you know' in speech acts in percentages.

Speech Act	Usage in number	Usage in percentage
Mild order	13	54.5%
Suggestion	17	17%
Promising	1	1%
Apologising	1	1%
Mocking	6	6%
Admitting of guilt	8	8%
Criticising	1	1%
Announcing unpleasant information	1	1%
Disapproving	3	3%
Disagreeing	5	5%
Reminding	32	31%
Agreeing	4	4%
Mentioning unpleasant facts	4	4%
Countering	2	2%
Emotional reaction	3	3%

As Table 2 shows, *znaes* predominantly appears in speech acts of reminding, suggesting and ordering.

The following examples excerpted from our sample illustrate how these speech acts are implemented in daily conversations. Usage of *znaes* 'you know' is noticed in three speech acts, thus demonstrating the multifunctionality of the marker.

(3) Reminding

A: *Ааа, да не го заборавиш ова другото кај XX.*

Б: *Да, да, да, знам, океj.*

A: *Оти ја на тоа се надевам да затворам тука, знаеш.*

Б: *Да, да, да...*

A: Aaa, don't forget this other one at XX

B: Yes, yes, yes, I know, okay.

A: 'Cause that's where my hopes are on closing here, **you know.**

B: Yes, yes, yes…

(4) Suggesting

A: *Добро е да кажете за што е, **знаеш**.*

A: It would be good to say what it's for, **you know.**

(5) Ordering

A: *...**Знаеш**? Да се вклучиш малце ти таму со XXX и со XXX ама дефинитивно вака да испиташ дали е ок?*

A:… **You know?** You must get engaged a little bit over there with XXX and XXX but definitely to check if it's okay?

Besides being used in various speech acts, this discourse marker may have various functions even within the same speech acts. The next paragraph is an elaboration of various functions of *znaes* within usages of face-saving strategies.

b)*Znaes* as a positive-politeness signal

The functions of *znaes* in positive-politeness strategies can be grouped into two functions:

- The speaker presupposes common ground with the hearer
- The speaker establishes closeness to the hearer enabling a communication flow

While using positive-politeness strategies, the speaker invites the hearer towards a same-level communication, with no inequality in the conversation. For example, the utterance (6) from our sample shows usage of *znaes* with the function to establish friendly relations with the hearer and to establish a friendly flow of the conversation. In this function, *znaes* is often proceeded by the question *what*.

(6)

Знаеш што, *најмерак ми е што никој не очекуваше и сега гледаш како се смеам <>*

You know what, the best part is that nobody expected and now look how I'm laughing <>

Another function of *znaes* in this category is to refer the hearer towards information that is well-known to both parties due to the common situational context. In example (7) from the sample, the speaker uses *znaes* to invite the hearer to remember a common situational context, to which the hearer responds positively by continuing interaction.

(7)

A: *Ја мислам, **знаеш**, ја кажав тогаш шо кажав и посебно шо тоа е официјален податок, знаеш.*

A: I mean, **you know,** I said what I said then and especially since that is official information, you know

Б: *Не можеш да го направиш да не биде официјален. Тоа е.*

B: You can't make it not be official. It is what it is.

As already emphasized, in this function the speaker uses *znaes* since they are sure that the hearer is familiar with the common context and the conversation will gain in flow. However, for the sake of the discussion, we treat this function as a 'dual function' in this part of the paper, as proposed by Schouroup [10]. Specifically, the author states that even though *you know* marks or signals common knowledge, it may also serve as a mean to express uncertainty. For example, in conversation (8) it is clear that A refers the hearer towards something familiar, but through additionally explaining the afore-mentioned. A- after receiving the response, considers it necessary to elaborate by emphasising the information, using *znaes*. The response from B *Yes yes yes…* proves that the communication goal was achieved and *znaes* was used on an interpersonal level.

(8)

A: *Наш е човекот? Каков е?=*

Б*:=наш е тој мислам по (.) океј е=Порано во XXX малку луташе али наш е=*

A: *=значи вака може да го сметаме 100 % наш? Знаеш ама гарантирано нешто ако треба да застане јако на наша страна*

Б: *=да да да за тоа може да сметаме сигурно=*

   A:*=добро бе XXX за тоа те барав*

A: Is the guy our guy? What's he like?=

B:= he's our guy I mean (.) he's fine = he used drift in XXX in the past but he's our guy=

A:So we can count on him 100% our guy? **You know** guaranteed if we need something he should be strongly on our side

B: Yes yes yes you can count on that for sure

A:= okay XXX that's why I called you

Znaes in this function in Macedonian is often found in the company of other markers that boost the objective of clarification, such as for example in the conversation (9) below where it can be seen how explicitly adds to the pragmatic function of clarification. Similarly to other conversations, here it is clear that B is familiar with the situational context.

(9)

A: *чекај дали ние можеме освен ова да (.) муабетот да го пуштиме?*

Б: *зависи во каква форма муабетот?*

A: *да кажеме што било (.) Дознава Канал XXX дека тоа и тоа. Да го продаде името да направи ова?*

Б: *ај да го чуваме тоа за од утре-задутре да ја напишам пријавата денес оти знаеш денес*

A: wait can we except for this (.) can we leak the talk?

B: it depends in what form the talk?

A: say something whatever (.) XXX found out that this and that. Wants to sell out the name this and that?

B: Well let's save that for some other day let me write the report today **because you know** today we have to force this we must have charges so that there's no room for tensions for when XXX goes in, after he's in

мораме да ја исфорсираме да имаме пријава за да   it's another thing
нема простор за тензија он кога ќе си влезе во
XXX друг е муабетот више кога е внатре.

As has already been stated, the sample was analysed through AntConc, that offers the option of determining clusters for the processed word, meaning it identifies elements adjacent to each other in the utterances. In the function of clarification, *znaes* appears combined with several linguistic elements that serve as boosters of relations among sentences forming the utterance.

In our sample we have several clusters of *znaes* with other markers to achieve the following functions in the utterance:

- Clarification through boosting causation relations: *оти (знаеш)*'since (you know)'*; пошто (знаеш)*'cause (you know)',
- Clarification through boosting adversative relations: *него (знаеш); ама (знаеш)*, 'but (you know)'

The above-mentioned clusters boost the function of clarification by referring the hearer to the information that is familiar to both parties.

This paper proves that the discourse marker *znaes* 'you know' in authentic Macedonian conversations has interpersonal functions. The analysis showed multi-functionality in usage, thus proved the similarities in use with the English equivalent *you know*. The marker is mostly distributed in the speech act of reminding, and within face-saving strategies acts on several levels serving various purposes.

4. Recommendations

This paper proves that the discourse marker *znaes* 'you know' in authentic Macedonian conversations has interpersonal functions. The analysis showed multi-functionality in usage, thus proved the similarities in use with the English equivalent *you know*. The marker is mostly distributed in the speech act of reminding, and within face-saving strategies acts on several levels serving various purposes. In order to broaden the analysis and to deepen the understanding of the discourse usage of this discourse marker other research components may be taken into account. An example of such a component would be the socio-linguistic component of language in use. By adding such a variable to this study, it could be clarified the usage of the discourse marker depending on the age group or gender of the speakers.

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