The Evolution of Pragmatic Markers in English

Pathways of Change

Laurel J. Brinton

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Based on a rich set of historical data, this book traces the development of pragmatic markers in English, from *hwæt* in Old English and *whilom* in Middle English to *whatever* and *I'm just saying* in Present-day English. Laurel Brinton carefully maps the syntactic origins and development of these forms, and critically examines postulated unilineal pathways, such as from adverb to conjunction to discourse marker or from main clause to parenthetical. The book sets case studies within a larger examination of the development of pragmatic markers as instances of grammaticalization or pragmaticalization. The characteristics of pragmatic markers – as primarily oral, syntactically optional, sentence-external, grammatically indeterminate elements – are revised in the context of scholarship on pragmatic markers over the last thirty or more years.

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Preface

This book has provided me with the opportunity to revisit and rethink much of my work on pragmatic markers in the history of English. I am very grateful to Andrew Winnard of Cambridge University Press for presenting me with this opportunity for scholarly reflection and reassessment. The germ of my work on historical pragmatic markers was a small paper I presented in graduate school in 1980 entitled "*What ho, lo, list, yes, indeed*: Finding a translation of *Beowulf* for the freshman," later to take shape as "*Y'know what? Hwæt* as a discourse marker in Old English" presented in 1988. Two monographs have followed, as well as a sizeable number of articles.

This book contains revised versions of a number of previously published works as well as new material. All of the old material has been substantially revised and updated, and very little now appears verbatim. Much of this older work was carried out before the age of electronic corpora and resources, or when they were in their infancy, and it has been a challenge – as well as a pleasure – to update the work. The pleasure has been in discovering that all the painstaking work with concordances, dictionaries, and print texts carried out in the past was, in fact, not far off the mark.

The core concepts and data in Chapter 2 were originally published as Chapter 7 "Old English *hwæt*" in *Pragmatic markers in English: Grammaticalization and discourse functions* by Laurel J. Brinton. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996, 181–210. I am grateful to Mouton de Gruyter for permission to reuse this material. The original discussion is expanded here with a more detailed treatment of interjections in Old English, and a recent consideration of *hwæt* in Old English (Walkden 2013) is critiqued.

The treatment of *whilom* in Chapter 3 was originally published as " 'Whilom, as olde stories tellen us': The Discourse Marker *whilom* in Middle English" by Laurel J. Brinton in *From Arabye to Engelond*: *Medieval studies in honour of Mahmoud Manzalaoui on his 75th birthday*, ed. by A. E. Crista Canitz and Gernot R. Wieland. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999, 175–199. I am grateful to the University of Ottawa Press for permission to reuse this material. The section "Accounting for the change" has been updated to reflect current work on (de)grammaticalization.

Sections 4.1–4.3 were originally published as " 'The flowers are lovely; only they have no scent': The evolution of a pragmatic marker" by Laurel J. Brinton in *Anglistentag 1997*, ed. by Raimund Borgmeier, Herbert Grabes, and Andreas H. Jucker. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1998, 9–33. I am grateful to Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier for permission to reuse this material. The discussion of *if only* in Section 4.4 is new and unpublished work, incorporating as well current scholarship on "insubordination."

The core concepts in Chapter 5 were originally published as Chapter 8 "Middle English *I gesse*" in *Pragmatic markers in English: Grammaticalization and discourse functions* by Laurel J. Brinton. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996, 211–263. I am grateful to Mouton de Gruyter for permission to reuse this material. The original discussion has been substantially expanded with new data, and more recent treatments of the rise of epistemic parentheticals (e.g., Boye and Harder 2007; Fischer 2007a, 2007b) are treated, as is the argument (Wierzbicka 2006; Bromhead 2009) that epistemic parentheticals follow from the rise of English Empiricism. The original study of epistemic parentheticals in Chaucer has been shortened.

Chapter 6 was original published as "From performative to concessive disjunct: *I/you admit* and *admittedly*" by Laurel J. Brinton in *Language change and variation from Old English to Late Modern English: A Festschrift for Minoji Akimoto*, ed. by Merja Kytö, John Scahill, and Harumi Tanabe. Bern: Peter Lang, 2010, 279–302. I am grateful to Peter Lang Publishers for permission to reuse this material. Some updating has been undertaken throughout the chapter, but the argument and data remain much the same.

The content and data in Section 7.2 were originally reported on in "The development of *that said*," published in 2009 on *Language Log* http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=1807. The discussion has been updated and revised. The lengthy discussion of *I'm just saying/ all I'm saying/ what I'm saying* and data on the development of these constructions in Section 7.3 is entirely new and unpublished material.

Chapter 8 on *if I may say so* and *for what it's worth* is new and unpublished material.

The data and discussion in Sections 9.2–9.4 on *what's more* were originally published as part of Chapter 9 "*What's more* and *What else*" of *The comment clause in English: Syntactic origins and pragmatic development* by Laurel J. Brinton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 203–211. I am grateful to Cambridge University Press for permission to reuse this material and to adapt Figure 9.2. These sections have been updated. Sections 9.5–9.6 on the function and rise of the pragmatic marker *whatever* contain new and unpublished material.

Abbreviations

a	[date of composition]
Adj	adjective
AdjP	adjective phrase
Adv	adverb
AdvP	adverb phrase
BT	*An Anglo-Saxon dictionary*
BTS	*An Anglo-Saxon dictionary: Supplement*
c	circa [date of manuscript]
Chaucer, *TC*	*Troilus and Criseyde*
Chaucer, *CT*	*The Canterbury Tales*
Conj	conjunction
EModE	Early Modern English (c1500–1700)
LModE	Late Modern English (c1700–1920)
ME	Middle English (c1150–1500)
MED	*Middle English dictionary*
N	noun
NP	noun phrase
OE	Old English (c650–1150)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
Part	participle
PDE	Present-day English (c1920–present)
PP	prepositional phrase
Prep	preposition
S	sentence, clause
s.v.	sub verbo
s.v.v.	sub verbis
V	verb
VP	verb phrase
Ø	omission of *that*-complementizer

Corpora and Text Collections

For further information, see References and Appendix.

AA	*Accessible archives*
ARCHER	*A representative corpus of historical English registers*
BYU-EEBO	*BYU-EEBO 400 million words, 1470s–1690s* (Based on *Early English Books Online* from Chadwyck-Healey)
BYU-BNC	*BYU-BNC* (Based on the *British national corpus* from Oxford University Press)
CED	*A corpus of English dialogues 1560–1760*
CEECS	*Corpus of early English correspondence sampler (1418–1680)*
CEN	*The corpus of English novels*
CLMET3.0	*The corpus of Late Modern English texts, version 3.0*
CMEP&V	*Corpus of Middle English prose and verse*
COCA	*The corpus of contemporary American English: 520 million words, 1990–2015*
COHA	*The corpus of historical American English: 400 million words, 1810–2009*
DOEC	*Dictionary of Old English web corpus*
ECF	*Eighteenth-century fiction*
ED	*English drama*
EEBO	*Early English books online*
EEPF	*Early English prose fiction*
HC	*Helsinki corpus of English texts*
Lampeter	*The Lampeter corpus of Early Modern English tracts*
OBPO	*The Old Bailey proceedings online, 1674–1913*
SOAP	*Corpus of American soap operas, 100 million words, 2001–2012*
TIME	*TIME magazine corpus: 100 million words, 1920s–2000s*
UofV	*Modern English collection*. University of Virginia Electronic Text Center

1 Pragmatic Markers: Synchronic and Diachronic

1.1 Introduction

Following work in discourse analysis in the late 1970s and 1980s,[1] the study of discourse markers in Present-day English (PDE) and other contemporary languages has become a growth industry. Works on discourse markers in general – or *pragmatic markers*, as I term them here – and on individual forms (e.g., *well*, *right*, *now*, *so*, *anyway*, *in fact*, *and stuff*, *you know*, *I mean*) are too numerous to list. These studies have yielded a richly rewarding view of the multiple pragmatic functions of these little – and seemingly meaningless – words of the language.

The rise of historical pragmatics in the 1980s contributed a backward view: Could pragmatic markers be found in the written texts of earlier stages of the language? As a historian of the English language, my attention was first caught by *hwæt*, the infamously difficult-to-translate first word of the Old English (OE) poem *Beowulf*. Is it merely a spontaneous expression of emotion (*oh!*, *alas!*, *lo!*), or is it doing some more important discourse-pragmatic work (*listen to me! hear me!*)? A passage such as the following from Chaucer's *The Canterbury tales*, with its forms resembling *you know* and *I know* in Present-day English, would seem to leave no doubt about the existence of pragmatic markers in earlier periods of the language:

(1) I am yong and unkonnynge, **as thow woost,/** And, **as I trowe**, with love offended moost/ That evere was any lyves creature,/ For she that dooth me al this wo endure/ Ne recceth nevere wher I synke or fleete./ And **wel I woot**, er she me mercy heete,/ I moot with strengthe wynne hir in the place,/ And **wel I woot**, withouten help or grace/ Of thee ne may my strengthe noght availle. (1387–1400 Chaucer, *CT* A.Kn. 2393–2401)[2]

[1] See, e.g., James (1973, 1978), Crystal and Davy (1975), Svartvik (1979), Goldberg (1980), Edmondson (1981), Östman (1981, 1982, 1995), Schourup (1985), Warner (1985), Erman (1986, 1987), Schiffrin (1987), Fraser (1988, 1990, 1996, 1999, 2009).

[2] All quotations from Chaucer follow Benson (1987), using the textual abbreviations of Davis et al. (1979). *CT* = *The Canterbury Tales* and *TC* = *Troilus and Criseyde*.

> 'I am young and ignorant, **as you know**/ And, **as I suppose**, most injured by love/ That ever was any living creature,/ For she that causes me to endure all this woe/ Does not ever know whether I sink or swim./ And **well I know**, before she may promise me mercy,/ I must with strength win her in the lists/ And **well I know**, without help or grace/ Of you never may my strength ever avail.'

The question arises, however, as to how we can study pragmatic markers in the pre-tape-recorder age, since they are universally seen as a feature of oral discourse, rarely, if at all, appearing in writing. To what extent does Chaucer's use of these forms in represented speech approximate their use in spontaneous oral discourse in Middle English? More importantly, how can we, without the intuitions of native speakers, determine the subtle pragmatic functions such forms served in the past? While Chaucer's forms look much like the forms we use today (apart from the loss of the verbs *witan* and *trēowan*), were other quite different pragmatic markers used in the past? Has the inventory of pragmatic markers changed over time? If so, how did new forms enter the language and how did they develop syntactically and semantically? These are questions that have been enthusiastically taken up, with an increasing body of scholarship on pragmatic markers in the history of English.[3] They will be addressed as well in the body of this book, with a focus on the "how" of development.

In this chapter, I begin by discussing how we might define pragmatic markers (Section 1.2.1) and pragmatic parentheticals (Section 1.2.2), focusing on their functions (Section 1.2.3). Problems facing the diachronic study of pragmatic markers are treated in Section 1.3. The pathways by which pragmatic markers may develop are explored in Section 1.4, including both their many syntactic pathways (Section 1.4.1) and their semantic pathways (Section 1.4.2). The chapter then discusses what is perhaps the most controversial aspect, namely, the process of change which best accounts for the development of pragmatic markers, whether it be grammaticalization, lexicalization, or some hybrid process (Section 1.5). The chapter ends with a brief overview of the chapters in the book (Section 1.6).

1.2 Pragmatic Markers: Definition and Functions

1.2.1 Definition of Pragmatic Markers

While many have discussed how best to define pragmatic markers, a universally accepted definition remains elusive.[4] There is not even a consensus as

[3] Apart from my own monographs (Brinton 1996, 2008), numerous studies have appeared in edited volumes (e.g., Jucker 1995; Fischer 2006) and since 2000, in the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics.* See my review of the scholarship in Brinton (2010, 2015).

[4] Recent works defining pragmatic markers include Fraser (2009), Dér (2010), Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen (2011), Heine (2013), and Beeching (2016: Ch. 1). Schourup (1999) is an older but still very thorough and useful account.

to the label to be used for these forms. Dér (2010: 5–10) identifies forty-two different terms in English, but suggests that four have been most common: *discourse marker/particle* and *pragmatic marker/particle*.[5] These terms intersect in various ways and seldom comprise the same set of forms. I have chosen "marker" as it is both less strictly defined syntactically and more inclusive than "particle," covering phrasal and clausal forms as well as single-word items. And I have chosen "pragmatic" rather than "discourse" as it better captures the range of functions of these forms; Beeching likewise adopts the term "pragmatic markers" "to highlight their interpersonal rather than textual usages, though recognizing that pragmatic markers have procedural meanings" (2016: 5; see Section 1.2.3 below on the functions of pragmatic markers).

In Brinton (1996: 33–35), I set out a list of formal and functional characteristics of pragmatic markers. This list has been much quoted in the literature; however, it was never intended as a definitive list, but was merely a collation of work to date by a number of scholars, gleaned from works on pragmatic markers in general as well as studies of individual forms. While many of these statements remain accurate today, subsequent research has cast doubt on some, or might point to the need to revise others. I will begin by listing the original set of characteristics in abbreviated form (without the qualifications that originally accompanied them),[6] in their original order, and then discuss their applicability and validity (cf. Schourup 1999; Müller 2004: 4–10; Brinton 2008: 14–17; Dér 2010: 10–17; Heine 2013: 1209–1213; Beeching 2016: 5–6):

(a) *Pragmatic markers are predominantly a feature of oral rather than of written discourse.*
- The oral character of pragmatic markers would seem to be universally accepted. Their use in oral contexts is motivated by factors such as the spontaneity and lack of planning time of oral discourse, its interpersonal and interactional nature, and its informal and colloquial aspect.
- However, pragmatic markers are also found in written discourse. An alternative set of forms may appear in writing (e.g., *notwithstanding*, *of course* [see Lewis 2006], *to wit*), and even when similar forms occur in both oral and written discourse, we might expect their functions in the two media to differ. In writing, pragmatic markers may have more to do with discourse coherence and linkage than with interpersonal relations.

(b) *Pragmatic markers appear with high frequency in oral discourse*.

[5] On questions of terminology, see, e.g., Brinton (1996: 29), Schourup (1999: 228–230), Müller (2004: 3–4), Fraser (2009: 294), Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen (2011: 226–227), Heine (2013: 1207–1208), and Beeching (2016: 3–5).

[6] Müller observes that few of the features listed in the literature are seen as "defining criteria": "Non-compliance with one of them will rarely lead to an exclusion of the linguistic item from the group of discourse markers. Rather, there features are descriptive of the group of linguistic items the respective author has in mind" (2004: 4).

- While "high frequency" is undefined here, the frequency of pragmatic markers in speech – and of some forms in particular, such as the use of *like* in the speech of young people – would appear to be high enough to make these forms strongly salient. Comparing the occurrence of pragmatic markers in spontaneous writing (online debates, instant messaging) and in conversations, Fox Tree (2015) finds that overall pragmatic markers are much more common in speech than in writing (especially *like* and *you know* that mark knowledge states and the fillers *um* and *uh*).

(c) *Pragmatic markers are stylistically stigmatized and negatively evaluated, especially in written or formal discourse.*

- One only need look at online language blogs to see the strength of popular opinion about pragmatic markers. They are frequently deplored as signs of dysfluency, carelessness, laziness, or the decline of the language.[7] Of course, the opinion of scholars, who understand pragmatic markers as an important, even essential, element in the fabric of language, is decidedly different.[8]

(d) *Pragmatic markers are "short" items, often phonologically reduced or unstressed.*

- "Short" is again a vague term. Although some types of pragmatic markers are clausal and hence "long" (see "pragmatic parentheticals" below), pragmatic markers in Present-day English are typically "small" monosyllabic or disyllabic words (e.g., *now*, *then*, *right*, *well*, *so*, *look*, *see*, *besides*, *in fact*, *indeed*, *alright*) and less often longer forms (e.g., *actually*, *anyway*, *admittedly*). They may, but certainly do not always, undergo phonological reduction: e.g., *you know* > *y'know*, *in fact* > [nfækt] or [fæk] (Traugott 1995a: 14), *I mean* > [əmi:n] or [mi:n] (Crystal and Davy 1975: 97), *Jesus* > *gee* (Gehweiler 2008), *pray thee* > *prithee* (Busse 2002), *and stuff/something/things like that* > *and stuff/something/things* (Overstreet 2014), *sort of*, *kind of* > *sorta*, *kinda*. Dér (2010: 17) suggests that phonological reduction may be associated with the frequency of the form.

(e) *Pragmatic markers form a separate tone group*.

- This is likely an overstatement. Early opposition was expressed by Östman (1982: 149, 1995) and Redeker (1991: 1168), who note that pragmatic markers are intonationally bound to a clausal unit. The prevailing

[7] See, e.g., "'Actually' is the most futile, overused word on the internet" (https://newrepublic.com/article/116995/actually-most-futile-overused-word-internet [accessed June 9, 2016]) or "Literally – the much misused word of the moment" (www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2012/jan/29/literally-a-much-misused-word [accessed June 9, 2016]).

[8] In her recent book, Tagliamonte (2015) conducted a number of interviews with prominent variationist sociolinguists. She reports (p.c.) that some of these linguists were appalled when they saw the number of pragmatic markers they used and wanted them to be edited out of the written transcript.

view would appear to be that pragmatic markers – or at least "prototypical" ones – often do form a separate tone group (see, e.g., Heine 2013: 1210), but some forms never do (see, e.g., Holmes 1988 on *sort of* or Müller 2004: 61 on *so*), and others may alternate, sometimes being unstressed and part of the adjoining tone group and other times being stressed, having falling intonation, and being followed by a pause, thus constituting their own tone group (cf. Dér 2010: 15–16). The behavior of clausal pragmatic markers in this regard is highly variable; see below.

(f) *Pragmatic markers are restricted to sentence-initial position.*
- Clearly, this is incorrect. As I already noted in 1996, pragmatic markers may occur in medial or final position, although their preferred or predominant position may be at the beginning of the sentence or at clause boundaries (Schourup 1999: 233). Recent work (see, e.g., Haselow 2013; Traugott 2016; and the articles in Hancil, Haselow, and Post 2015) has focused on final pragmatic markers, or those on the right periphery, such as English *then*, *though*, *anyway*, and *but*.

(g) *Pragmatic markers are considered to have little or no propositional meaning, or at least to be difficult to specify lexically.*
- Pragmatic markers are no longer thought to be semantically empty fillers, completely devoid of meaning, as they once were (and among the general public continue to be). But it is generally agreed that they have little or diminished propositional (conceptual/referential) meaning and do not add to the informational content of the utterance.[9] For example, the pragmatic marker *well* retains little if any of its propositional meaning of adverbial/adjectival *well*. The meaning of pragmatic markers can, instead, be understood as "procedural" or "non-compositional"; they act as types of instructions or "linguistic 'road signs' " to guide the hearer toward the intended interpretation (Hansen 1998: 199; Schourup 1999: 245f.).[10] Procedural meaning can be understood as being related to the secondary nature, or "non-addressability," of pragmatic markers (Boye and Harder 2007; see below).
- As a consequence of their low degree of propositional meaning, pragmatic markers are difficult to translate into other languages.

[9] Wierzbicka (1986) attempts to refute the position that pragmatic markers are meaningless, have no discrete meaning, are semantically fuzzy, or can be elucidated only by pragmatic principles (see also Redeker 1991: 1139, 1159, 1164–1165). She believes that such a position simply reflects "analytical failure." She proposes a "semantic primitive" approach in which pragmatic markers are considered to have an invariant semantic content which can be captured in a precise formula.

[10] Procedural meaning is usually equated with non-truth-conditionality, but this is not unproblematic (see Schourup 1999: 232, 245f.; Ifantidou 2001; Brinton 2008: 26). Blakemore (2002: 4) notes that the terms "content" and "procedural" cut across truth-conditional meaning. I will omit the question of truth-conditionality from this discussion.

- Assuming that the procedural meaning of a pragmatic marker derives historically from its original propositional meaning, one would expect the two meanings would be related in some way (as will be discussed in Section 1.4.2).[11]
- Some pragmatic markers seem to retain propositional meaning to a greater extent. For example, Blakemore (1987: 334, 2002: 4) argues that forms such as *in other words*, *in confidence*, *seriously*, and *that is*[12] are conceptual in meaning. I would argue that they are (weakly) procedural in meaning, but retain a considerable amount of their original conceptual meaning. As we will discuss below (Section 1.5), pragmatic markers may, like all grammatical item, be understood as retaining some of their original meaning (see Hopper 1991 on "persistence").

(h) *Pragmatic markers occur either outside the syntactic structure or loosely attached to it and hence have no clear grammatical function.*

- The occurrence of pragmatic markers outside the syntactic structure – like disjuncts or parentheticals – is a matter of general agreement. In fact, syntactic independence may be "one of the most conspicuous features" of pragmatic markers (Heine 2013: 1210).
- While pragmatic markers are detached from the syntactic structure of the clause, phrasal and clausal pragmatic markers have internal grammatical structure (Schourup 1999: 232), albeit often elliptical (see below).
- Whether a syntactic position outside the clause makes pragmatic markers "agrammatical" (Goldberg 1980: 7) is highly debatable (see below, Section 1.5).

(i) *Pragmatic markers are optional rather than obligatory features.*

- Pragmatic markers are syntactically (grammatically) unnecessary but pragmatically essential. "[T]he structure and meaning of arguments can be preserved even without markers" and "[r]emoval of a marker from its sentence-initial position, in other words, leaves the sentence structure intact" (Schiffrin 1987: 55, 32). Their absence "does not render a sentence ungrammatical and/or unintelligible" but does "remove a powerful clue about what commitment the speaker makes regarding the relationship between the current utterance and the prior discourse" (Fraser 1988: 22). As Müller notes (2004: 6), "[O]ptionality only concerns grammatical well-formedness of the relevant sentence, and not its

[11] That there is a semantic relation between pragmatic and non-pragmatic meaning is not universally assumed. For example, Fraser suggests that in determining the meaning of a pragmatic marker, "any reliance on content meaning is ill-founded … discourse markers should be analyzed as having a distinct pragmatic meaning that captures some aspect of the speaker's communicative intention," though he does admit that conceptual meaning is "perhaps interesting from an historical perspective" (1990: 393).

[12] See Brinton (2008: 104–109) on *that is (to say)*.

pragmatic impact." A text without pragmatic markers might be more difficult to process and would sound decidedly odd (see Dér 2010: 14–15).

(j) *Pragmatic markers are marginal forms*.
- Pragmatic markers are "what happens to be left over" by the grammar of a language (Stein 1985: 299). They constitute a heterogeneous set of forms that do not constitute a formal grammatical class, though they are most closely aligned (and overlap to a large degree) with adverbs, conjunctions, and interjections.
- Many pragmatic markers have homophonous forms that function as standard parts of speech (Heine 2013: 1208), and from which they derive.

(k) *Pragmatic markers may be multifunctional*.
- Pragmatic markers operate on the global (i.e., pragmatic) level, simultaneously serving textual and interpersonal functions (see below, Section 1.2.3). As the wealth of studies of individual pragmatic markers have shown, it often proves difficult in individual cases to tease apart the different uses, which may form a complex network of meanings (see Beeching 2016: 6–10).
- As Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen observe, "Pragmatic markers can have an almost infinite number of functions depending on context. Moreover they can overlap with other markers in some of their meanings. Describing and constraining the multifunctionality of pragmatic markers is therefore a challenging task" (2011: 229).

(l) *Pragmatic markers are more characteristic of women's speech than of men's speech*.
- Erman (1987: 26–29) argues that, like tag questions and hedges, pragmatic markers express tentativeness or powerlessness. In 1996, I referred to the claim of greater frequency of pragmatic markers in women's speech as "a controversial suggestion," citing Holmes's study of *you know* (1986: 4). She found that the sexes use this pragmatic marker with equal frequency but different effect: Women use it to express certainty and for the purposes of positive politeness (thus it is not motivated by low self-confidence), while men use it for uncertainty, especially linguistic imprecision, and for the purposes of negative politeness. Beeching (2016) finds that in the *British national corpus*, women use all of the forms she considers more than men do; the difference is significant in the case of *well*, *just*, *like*, and *I mean*, but not significant in regard to *you know* and *sort of*. She does not consider the different uses of the same form by women and men, however. Work by Holmes (1988) shows that men and women use *sort of* about equally often in casual conversation, though women use it more often in semi-formal interviews. It is clearly used more often when addressing women. In general, women exploit the interpersonal potential of *sort of* while men use it as a modal signal. Obviously, a nuanced approach to this question is necessary.

Schourup (1999: 230–231) adds the characteristic of "connectivity," a feature obvious in, for example, Schiffrin's definition of pragmatic markers as "**sequentially dependent** elements which bracket units of talk" (1987: 31, emphasis in the original; see also Brinton 1996: 30 where a number of other such definitions are quoted). Fraser (2009: 299) considers a necessary condition of discourse markers to be that they signal a semantic relationship between two segments. As will become clear in the following section and throughout this work, "there are other functions that may be more central than sequential relationship" (Heine 2013: 1213).

As Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen (2011: 226) point out, the features I listed fall into five categories: phonological and lexical (a–c in Table 1.1), syntactic (d–f), semantic (g), functional (h) and sociolinguistic and stylistic (i–l). Following this order and based on the discussion above, I would like to revise my list as set out in Table 1.1.

1.2.2 Definition of Pragmatic Parentheticals

Clausal forms such as *I think/guess/mean*, *you know/see*, *it seems/appears*, *as you know/say/see*, *look/say/listen*, and *what's more (amazing/surprising)* have been variously described as "comment clauses" (Quirk et al. 1985: 1112–1118), "disjunct constituents" (Espinal 1991), "finite stance adverbials" (Biber et al. 1999: 197, 864–866), "parenthetical lexicalized clauses" (Schourup 1999: 227), "parenthetical supplements" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1359), "reduced parentheticals" (Schneider 2007), "comment clauses" and "adverbial clauses/clausal adjuncts" (Kaltenböck 2007: 29–30), and "formulaic/conceptual theticals" (Kaltenböck, Heine, and Kuteva 2011). These forms are parentheticals, or "expressions that are linearly represented in a given string of utterance (a host sentence), but seem structurally independent at the same time" (Dehé and Kavalova 2007: 1). A parenthetical is "a digressive structure (often a clause) which is inserted in the middle of another structure, and which is unintegrated in the sense that it could be omitted without affecting the rest of that structure or its meaning" (Biber et al. 1999: 1067).[13]

Pragmatic parentheticals have the following characteristics:

- they have a linear relationship with but are syntactically independent of their host or anchor[14] clause; i.e., they are not an argument or adjunct of the host clause;
- they have (limited) mobility: they may occur in sentence-initial, medial, or final position;

[13] See Dehé and Kavalova (2007: 1–22) and Brinton (2008: 7–14) for summary discussions of parentheticals.

[14] "Host" is the more common word used, but Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1351n.) prefer the term "anchor."

Table 1.1 *Characteristics of pragmatic markers*

Phonological and lexical characteristics
(a) Pragmatic markers are often "small" items, although they may also be phrasal or clausal; they are sometimes phonologically reduced.
(b) Pragmatic markers may form a separate tone group, but they may also form a prosodic unit with preceding or following material.
(c) Pragmatic markers do not constitute a traditional word class, but are most closely aligned to adverbs, conjunctions, or interjections.
Syntactic characteristics
(d) Pragmatic markers occur either outside the syntactic structure or loosely attached to it.
(e) Pragmatic markers occur preferentially at clause boundaries (initial/final) but are generally movable and may occur in sentence-medial position as well.
(f) Pragmatic markers are grammatically optional but at the same time serve important pragmatic functions (and are, in a sense, pragmatically non-optional).
Semantic characteristics
(g) Pragmatic markers have little or no propositional/conceptual meaning, but are procedural and non-compositional.
Functional characteristics
(h) Pragmatic markers are often multifunctional, having a range of pragmatic functions.
Sociolinguistic and stylistic characteristics
(i) Pragmatic markers are predominantly a feature of oral rather than written discourse; spoken and written pragmatic markers may differ in form and function.
(j) Pragmatic markers are frequent and salient in oral discourse.
(k) Pragmatic markers are stylistically stigmatized and negatively evaluated, especially in written or formal discourse.
(l) Pragmatic markers may be used in different ways and in different frequencies by men and women.

- they are typically, though not always, prosodically independent from the rest of the sentence (with "comma intonation"), and occasionally constitute a separate utterance;
- their internal structure may be elliptical; e.g., the verb may be missing an argument required by its valency; their "internal structure is built on principles of [sentence grammar] but can be elliptic" (Kaltenböck et al. 2011: 853);
- the host clause is complete (self-sufficient) without the comment clause;
- their meaning is procedural, not propositional.

Pragmatic parentheticals have been defined as "syntactically unintegrated elements which are separated from the host clause by comma intonation and function as comments" (Rouchota 1998: 105, also 97). However, the prosodic non-independence of parentheticals has been shown to be an unreliable criterion (see Wichmann 2001; Dehé and Kavalova 2007: 14; Kaltenböck et al. 2011: 854–855). For example, Dehé (2007) shows that comment clauses may

be set off by intonational breaks, but they may also be fully or partially integrated prosodically with the surrounding structure or they may join with some material from the host to form a prosodic domain.

I will follow Quirk et al. (1985: 1112) for the most part, who identify three types of finite comment clauses:

(i) those like the matrix clause of a main clause (e.g., *I believe*);
(ii) those like an adverbial finite clause (e.g., *as you know*); and
(iii) those like a nominal relative clause (e.g., *what was more upsetting*).

These three categories correspond to what Peltola (1982/83: 103ff.) calls "parenthetic epistemic main clauses," "parenthetic *as* clauses," and "parenthetic relative clauses." As we will see in the course of this study, however, a greater variety of types can be identified (see also Brinton 2008: 2).

Comment clauses function as "disjuncts" (see Quirk et al. 1985: 612 ff.), commenting either on the style or form of what is being said or on the content of the utterance. Quirk et al. observe that disjuncts are syntactically more detached, have scope over entire sentences, and are "in some respects superordinate" (1985: 613). Specifically they note that comment clauses may function as hedges expressing tentativeness over truth value, as expressions of the speaker's certainty, as expressions of the speaker's emotional attitude, or as claims of the hearer's attention (1985: 1114–1115). Following Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1352–1353), Kaltenböck et al. refer to the meanings of (para)theticals as "non-restrictive"; i.e., the meaning is not determined ("restricted") by the syntax of the host sentence but rather by "the situation in which discourse takes place"; they are not semantically part of the host clause but concern the "situation of discourse" (2011: 853, 856, 861). Factors important in the situation of discourse include text organization, source of information, attitude of the speaker, speaker–hearer interaction, discourse setting (extralinguistic situation), and world knowledge of participants (861–863; see also Heine 2013: 1210–1211).

By the characteristics set out in Section 1.2.1, comment clauses can be understood as a subtype of (clausal) pragmatic marker. They are often equated with disjunct adverbials in that they occur outside the syntactic structure and are grammatically optional (deletable); they are more or less freely movable, occurring in sentence-initial, medial, and final position. They do not retain their original propositional meaning (e.g., parenthetical *I guess* does not denote a cognitive act of the speaker); rather, they express a wide variety of pragmatic meanings, such as speaker (un)certainty, confirmation of common knowledge, claims for the hearer's attention, or expressions of speaker attitude. In functioning as "comments" on the host clause, they thus have procedural rather than conceptual meaning, serving to guide the hearer to the proper interpretation of the host clause.

1.2.3 Functions of Pragmatic Markers

Given the diversity of syntactic forms serving as pragmatic markers, it seems clear that the category must be determined by functional criteria (Schourup 1999: 236; Bazzanella 2006: 451; Diewald 2006: 406; Waltereit 2006; Fraser 2009). However, a wide range of functions and a number of varying typologies classifying these functions have been suggested in the literature. Reviewing a number of different approaches, Dér (2010: 21–25) observes that most classifications are based on two or three sets of major functions. For example, Erman (2001: 1341) identifies three classes of functions: the two well-established functions as "text monitors" (editing signs, repairs, hesitation markers) and "social monitors" (interactive markers, comprehension solicitors), and a third function as "metalinguistic monitors" (approximators, hedges, emphasizers). Halliday's (1970, 1979) identification of three functional-semantic "modes" of language – "ideational" ("language as representation"), "textual" ("language as relevance"), and "interpersonal" ("language as interaction") – which was adopted by Traugott (1982) as a means of discussing pathways of semantic change (1982; 1989 and passim) remains, I believe, an excellent way of understanding the multifunctionality of pragmatic markers and their course of development (see Brinton 1996: 35–40, 2008).

The "ideational" mode has been relabeled "propositional," "conceptual," or "referential." The sources of pragmatic markers in their original (non-pragmatic) function are understood as expressing this content, i.e., the speaker's experience of both the outside and inside world, including happenings, participants, and circumstances. Propositional meaning may be retained to a greater or lesser degree as pragmatic markers develop (see below).

In the textual mode, the speaker structures meaning as text, creating cohesive passages of discourse. Textual functions include the role of pragmatic markers in initiating or closing discourse, marking a boundary in discourse (new topic/ shift in topic/ resumption of topic), denoting new or old information, holding the floor or sustaining discourse, acquiring or relinquishing the floor, or marking sequential dependence.

In the interpersonal mode, which can better be understood as "(inter)subjective," the speaker expresses attitudes, judgments, expectation, and demands, as well as aspects of the social exchange. The subjective, or attitudinal, aspect comprises the means used to express a response or reaction to the preceding or following discourse, to denote an attitude, to signal understanding or continued attendance, or to hedge an opinion. The intersubjective, or interactional, aspect comprises the means used to effect cooperation or sharing, to show intimacy, to confirm shared assumptions or knowledge, to claim the attention of the hearer, to check on understanding, to request confirmation, to express deference, or to address the positive or negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]) of the interlocutor.