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PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN ENGLISH TEACHING

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Статья посвящена анализу дискурсивных маркеров в педагогическом дискурсе. Рассматриваются их прагматические функции и типология.

Ключевые слова: дискурсивные маркеры, англоязычный педагогический дискурс, прагматические функции.

This article focuses on the situation of discourse markers in English teaching. The author defines discourse markers and analyzes the pragmatic functions of discourse markers in English teaching from the perspective of teachers and students, which will have positive effects on English teaching activities.

Keywords: discourse markers, English teaching, pragmatic functions.

Discourse markers are a kind of markers at the discourse level. At present there are two prominent branches in the study of discourse markers. The first branch is based on the theoretical framework of discourse coherence in semantics. Another major branch is based on the Relevance Theory Framework of Cognitive-Pragmatics (D. Sperber) [3, p. 14], which redefined the discourse markers and pushed the study of discourse markers to a new stage. Generally speaking, the current research on discourse markers is fruitful, but these studies mainly focus on English itself. The various problems that English learners have in using English in practice have further highlighted the urgency and necessity of the study of discourse markers in English teaching.

The definition of discourse markers. Discourse markers are a kind of markers at the discourse level. They play a role of pauses, prompts and transitions in discourse, and play a role of organizing conversation in oral communication. Quirk was the first to study this phenomenon. In a lecture in 1953 entitled “casual conversation – some features of everyday spoken language”, he believed that language expressions such as “you know” and “well” play an important role in daily conversation.

The definition of discourse markers by scholars can be divided into two schools: one is the coherence school represented by G. Redeker [4, p. 233], B. Fraser [5, p. 386], etc. The other is relevance theory school represented by D. Blakemore [6, p. 35] and others. However, they all study discourse markers on the basis of their own theories.

Based on the results of previous studies, this paper defines discourse markers as follows: Discourse markers are short words, structures or sentences inserted into the structure of discourse propositions in natural spoken language, express the subjectivity of the speaker or connect with the structure of discourse. Insertion means that discourse markers do not make sentence components and have no structural relationships with other components [1; 2]. Discourse markers express the speaker’s subjective attitude towards what he says, which neither increases the propositional content of the basic discourse nor changes its true semantic condition. At the same time, discourse markers act as a link between the front and back discourse units, making the discourse a coherent whole.

Pragmatic functions of discourse markers. Teachers' use of discourse markers in English teaching plays a positive role in guiding students. Students can also use discourse markers to express more authentic English.

From the teacher's point of view, there are two types of functions of teacher's discourse markers in class: one is to take care of the needs of teachers' self-expression, that is, to express teachers' attitude towards discourse itself and their control over discourse construction. The second is to take care of the needs of interaction between teachers and students. English teaching is not a teacher's "one-man show". Teachers need to strengthen effective interaction with students to enliven the classroom atmosphere and improve students' learning efficiency.

From the student's point of view, on the one hand, students' classroom language should reflect students' attention to discourse coherence and discourse correlation. Students' thinking in a second language inevitably leads to insufficient thinking. In order to ensure the continuity of discourse, students use discourse markers to fill the gaps in language flow caused by thinking. On the other hand, we should pay attention to the interaction between teachers and students. Teachers need students to respond when teaching so as to determine whether students are paying attention and understanding their words. At this time, students use responsive discourse markers to respond to the teacher's teaching content and form, such as affirmation, doubt and disillusion. This cooperation mechanism can help teachers adjust the following classroom contents in time.

Discourse markers are short words, structures or sentences that are inserted into the structure of discourse propositions in natural spoken language, express the subjectivity of the speaker or connect with the structure of discourse. The pragmatic functions of discourse markers are complex. As an effective language strategy, the role of discourse markers in English teaching process cannot be underestimated. Taking pragmatics as the theoretical framework, this paper analyzes the pragmatic functions of discourse markers in the class, which reflects teachers' attention to the main teaching factors such as classroom discourse, context and students. Because the English teaching process is a dynamic cognitive process and the pragmatic functions of discourse markers are also dynamic, we should realize that their pragmatic functions are interrelated and deserve our attention.

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