

Sequencing of Discourse Markers

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Note: This PPT presentation has undergone some modifications since it was first presented and I have added some commentary where it seemed to be needed.

Introduction

- Goal: To present an analysis of spoken sequences of DMs, containing at least *but*, which occur in the left periphery (LP) of a sentence.
- For example (DMs is bold):
 - S1. S2 [**Oh, but in conclusion**] we must wait and see.
 - S1. S2 [**Well, but, before I forget**] have you paid the bill?

Initial Questions

- What is the frame for the research?
- What approach for the research (written/spoken)?
- What is the definition of PM (broad/narrow)?
- What are the types of PMs (one/many types)?
- What sorts of constraints on sequencing PM?
- How many tokens justify a definite sequence?
- How to define the left/right periphery (LP)/(RP)

Pragmatic Markers

- PM are lexical expressions and phonological features which provide contextualizing cues and processing instructions for use in achieving the desired interpretation of a sentence.
- They:
 - Contribute procedural rather than conceptual meaning
 - Are polyfunctional
 - Usually occur at the left periphery of the sentence

Three Types of Pragmatic Markers

- **Discourse Markers:** This group signals the structuring of information and interaction of S2. We are concentrating on them. There are two classes:
 - 1. Those, such as *and*, *but*, *so*, which signal the relationship between S1 and S2.
 - 2. Those such as *to begin*, *anyway*, *listen*, which signal emphasis, concession, or comment on some aspects of S2/CC.

PM cont.

- **Stance Markers:** signal the speaker's stance towards aspects of the Conceptual Component of S2 (*I think, I guess, I mean, in fact, in truth, probably, exactly*)
- **Inter-Personal Markers:** signal the speaker's anticipation towards the upcoming discourse interaction (*you see, If I may, y'know, frankly, Politeness Markers; Vocatives*)

Our focus is on DM sequences in the LP which include the DM *but*

- S1. S2 [DM + Conceptual Component]
 - DMs (*but* + other DM, e.g. *so*, *after all*, *well*)
 - Conceptual Component

E.g.

S1: I want to stay.

S2: DM[But] + CC[you should go home.]

NB: Not considering: Stance and Interpersonal PM in this presentation.

Focus: LP - PM Sequences with *but*

- General Shape:

S1. (PRE-but) – but (POST- But) + CC

S1. *right but listen* + CC

S1 A: You will have to leave early.

S2 B: **Right, but listen**, who cares?

Consider DM only in LP of S2, not RP-final position (*anyway, then, and stuff*); or medial position (*please, in fact, dammit*)

Potential Types of Data

- Formal Writing
- Informal Writing
- Scripted Conversations
- Structured Interviews
- Free-wheeling Conversations

Chosen Data Source – COCA

520,000,000 words

- Used:
 - Only **spoken examples** (often reduced)
 - At least 10 examples
 - Intuition, only rarely
 - Only examples which made sense
- Caveats
 - Prosody (*I think; dammit*)
 - Comma placement

Pre-*but* PM

- Signaling surprise (*oh*)
- Signaling contemplation (*well*)
- Signaling resignation (*oh well*)
- Signaling orientation (*alright, I guess so, ok*)
- Signaling enthusiasm (*boy, gosh, holy cow*)

What Not Considering

Fillers

(*like, ah, eh, mhm, uh, hug, un-huh, ooh, sssh,*)

Transcription is not clear

Often the sequence can't be interpreted

Sequences without *but*

OK! Let's do it! (support)

Wow! So soon? (surprise)

PM Signaling Surprise

- A: I see no chance of the bill passing. B: **Oh, but** that's a depressing thought.
- A: The store's going bankrupt. B: **Oh, but** what can you do about it?

NB: Maybe other signals from *oh*

PM Signaling Contemplation

- A: I see virtually no change of it passing the House. B: **Well, but** something has to be passed.
- A: They aren't going to be binding. There're recommendations. B: **Well, but** the language here says they would be binding on that issue.
- NB: *Well* is used in other contexts as well.

PM Signaling Resignation

- So it's not as if you're missing someone and you go, **oh, well, but** I'll watch next week.

This was a single example and was written, not spoken

[I missed the play. **Oh well but** I can watch it next week.]

Signaling Orientation - Agreement

- A: They want you to stay here. B: **Well, alright, but** I don't really care.
- A: I want you to leave now. **Ok,** fine with me, **but** don't push it.

Sig. Orientation – Response to S1

Yes and *No* before **but** signal a complete elided sentence in response to S1. Not PMs

- A: Do they say that about you? B: **Well, yes, but** I really don't care.
- A: Do they say bad things about you. B: (**Well**) **no**, but I really don't care.

Signaling Enthusiasm

- **Boy but** I miss those two
- **Holy cow, but** it's hot in here.
- **Gosh, but** I can't choose between them

But + other DMs

- Contrastive DM (*OTOH, instead, OTH, in contrast*)
- Elaboration DM (*in addition, also, furthermore, moreover*)
- Inferential DM (*therefore, as a result, then, thus*)

NB: Only a small part of these DMs are listed

Ambiguity of *but*

- Contrast [**in contrast**]
John is dumb **but** Mary is quite smart.
- Contradiction & Elimination [**despite**]
A: I'm going swimming. B: **But** it's cold today.
- Challenge [**in opposition**]
A: Jack is terrible. B: **But** he's not so terrible.
- Change of Topic [**change of focus**]
I saw Harry yesterday. **But**, is Mary at home?
- Concession [**like it or not**]
You might not believe me, **but** I'm going to leave.

But + CDM

- S1. But+CDM+S2

(CDM: *instead, OTOH, OTC, in contrast*)

- We wanted to go to the circus. **But instead** we went to the movies.
- We could go to the game. **But, OTOH**, we could just stay home (**instead**)

NB: 1. *But* takes on the **contrast** meaning

2. No other type of PM follows *but+CDM*

But + EDM

- S1. But+EDM+S2

(EDM: *also, furthermore, in addition, besides*)

- He hopes to go to Boston. **But also** he wanted to see NYC.
- James has disgraced the school. **But in addition** he disgraced his family **as a result**.
- **NB:** The meaning of *but* is the C&E reading.

But + IDM

- S1. But+IDM+S2

(IDM: *therefore, then, as a result*)

- A lot of that sand on the continental shelf got carried landward to form our beaches. **But as a result (*anyhow)**, the continental shelf is devoid in many places.
- I understand that my competitors did what they thought they had to do. **But, as a result, (*by and large/*anyhow)** they changed the ground rules.

*Forbidden Sequences

- Bill Clinton did not enjoy good press during his presidency.

But, OTOH, neither did Abraham Lincoln

But, then, neither did Abraham Lincoln.

But OTOH (*then) neither did Lincoln

NB This is a different *then* than used previously

*Sequences

- That's how the law works

But besides [EDM] there's always a loophole

But after all, there is always a loophole

***But besides after all there is always a
loophole.**

Post-*but* PMs

- Signals Aspect of Topic
 - Relative Position of Discourse Topic
 - Topic Change
 - Clarification of Previous
- Signals Polarity to Preceding Message
- Signals a Concession
- Signals Emphasis
- Signals Annoyance
- **NB:** Note the sense of *but*

Signals Relative Position of Topic

(first, to continue, next, to conclude, finally)

- We'll talk about the opera in a minute. **But first**, here's your local weather.
- **But continuing**, you are to take you flute home.
- ...People are fascinated by assassinations. **But to sum up**, most people believe the Kennedy shooting was a plot.

Signals Topic Change

(by the way, if I may interrupt, incidentally)

- **But (listen) before I forget**, Easter is next Sunday.
- **But if I may interrupt for a minute**, where is the beer?
- **But to move to a different point**, where is the party going to be held?

Signals Clarification of Topic

(in other words, specifically, for example)

- A: John isn't walking well. B: **But, in other words**, is he drunk?
- **But finally, before I forget, let me clarify something**: we are not going to say no.

NB: Stacking occurs here.

PM of emphasis & annoyance may co-occur.

Signal Polarity re Earlier Message

(yes, yeah, no, nope, alright, ok)

- We're divided. **But, yeah, (as you mentioned)**, there are problems.
- I like to have doors opened for me. **But no**, I don't like to be followed.
- A: Don't you want to visit Boston.
B: [**No**. I don't want to visit Boston.] **But yes (after all)**, I will pay for your fare.

Signals a Concession/Explanation

(after all, at any rate, of course, oh well, ok, then, now, anyway, when you think about it, actually, after all, for the most part, anyhow, you know, likewise, by and large, still and all)

- I didn't much like John. **But anyway**, he's dead now.
- She really well dressed. **But after all**, she's rich.
- I don't much like it. **But oh well**, let's do it.

Signals Emphasis

(listen (here), look, stop, just consider this, hey)

- **But, listen**, you have no right to act that way.
- **But look**, we've got to get organized.
- I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a jury. **But, gosh, even to me**, it sounds like he's guilty..

NB: Emphasis PMs are movable.

Signal Annoyance

(hell, dammit, phooey, nuts, by god)

- He made an error. **But, by god**, it wasn't just a simple error; it was a cascade of errors.
- He felt he didn't have to play by the rules. **But dammit**, rules are important.

Extended Sequences: Gloss?

- I know I'm being emotional, **but oh man, you know, wow** seeing all those bodies.
- **Then I think well, but gosh, yes I mean** this is quite a woman.
- Trump can't beat him. **I mean, look, but right now,** this is important.
- **Oh but man you know** no one is going to buy that.

To Review

- Three major groups of Metatextual PMs
 - *Pre-but*
 - But+(DM)
 - *Post-but*

Pre-*but* PM

- Signaling surprise (*oh*)
- Signaling contemplation (*well*)
- Signaling resignation (*oh well*)
- Signaling orientation I and II (*alright, I guess so, ok, yes, no*)
- Signaling enthusiasm (*boy, gosh, holy cow*)

But + other DMs

- Contrastive DM (*OTOH, instead, OTH, in contrast*)
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Post-*but* PMs

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Conclusions

- Beyond 2 DM sequences, intuitions not good
- Seems to be at least three DM groups
 - Pre-*but* (few classes)
 - CDM *but* (second/third DM possible. Little more
 - Post-*but* (several distinct classes)
- Some sequences in data are unintelligible
- Other 2 groups of PM must be integrated into the schema
- Sequences seem relatively fixed

Conclusions (con/t.)

- More than 1 item from a Class sometimes OK
- Basic Meaning: *anyhow* & *anyway* *synon.*?
- Problems with prosody (*I think*)

Well, ok, anyhow, I hope you enjoyed the talk
but as a result appreciate the need for lots more
work.

Thank you.