The Textual Functions of Discourse Marker *yalla* in Jordanian Arabic

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Abstract

The present study aims at proving that *yalla* 'hurry' is a discourse marker in Jordanian Spoken Arabic (henceforth, JSA). It also investigates the textual functions of *yalla* in different contexts. The data consisted of 104 scenarios, including the JSA *yalla*. The researchers relied mainly on observation to collect the data needed for the present study. A panel of four raters, who were four professors of linguistics, tested the validity of the data. Moreover, a group of 50 students studying English at Al Balqa Applied University tested the data based on acceptability judgment. The findings showed that *yalla* is a discourse marker as it holds the common features of DMs, such as connectivity, optionality, non-truth-conditionality, weak clause association, orality, initiality, multi-categoriality, and multifunctionality. In addition, the findings revealed that the DM *yalla* serves five main discourse functions, namely: indicating the end of a conversation, signaling a topic shift, initiating a topic, taking a turn, and yielding a turn.

Keywords: discourse analysis, discourse marker, textual function, Jordanian spoken Arabic, *yalla*

1. Introduction

Discourse markers (DMs) refer to a group of optional linguistic expressions that play a crucial role in connecting spoken and written discourse and ensuring coherence in the text (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1990; Lenk 1998), such as "you know," "I mean," "well," "moreover," "and," "nevertheless," "still," "at least," "okay," "anyway," etc. They are derived from linguistic expressions carrying a content meaning, yet they lose their meaning when used as discourse markers (Ostman 1995). For Redeker (1990), DMs are "words or phrases that are uttered with the primary function of bringing to the listener's attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context" (p. 1168)

Scholars disagree on the exact properties of discourse markers. Nevertheless, linguists agree on a set of common features for discourse markers. The first feature is connectivity, which refers to the function of discourse markers in linking units of text (Lenk 1998; Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999). The second is optionality, which refers to the ability to delete the discourse marker without affecting the grammaticality or semantic content of the sentence (Müller 2005; Schourup 1999; Brinton 1996; Lenk 1998). In this regard, Schiffrin (1987) states that "any utterance preceded by a marker may also have occurred without that marker" (p. 57). The third is non-truth conditionality. This feature means that DMs are not part of the propositional aspect of the utterance; rather, they are part of the textual or pragmatic functions (Schiffrin 2001; Blakemore 1987; Fraser 1999; Erman 2001; Lenk 1998).

The fourth feature of DMs is weak-clause association. This feature can be attributed to the fact that DMs are located outside the syntactic structure of the utterance (Fraser 1990; Schourup 1999; Brinton 1996). The fifth is initiality, which DMs generally tend to locate at the beginning of the utterance. On this point, Fraser (1990:389) assumes that DMs "typically occur only in utterance-initial position." The sixth is orality, where DMs usually occur in spoken discourse rather than in written discourse (Schiffrin 1987; Brinton 1996; Lenk 1998). The seventh is multi-categoriality, which means that DMs belong to different grammatical categories (Schiffrin, 1987). That is, DMs belong to different grammatical categories, ranging from verbs (e.g., listen, say), adverbs (e.g., then, anyway), conjunctions (e.g., but, or), interjections (e.g., gosh, oh), to phrases and clauses (e.g., you know, in other words, we conclude that, you see).

The last feature of DMs is multi-functionality. They serve different functions based on the context in which they occur (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999; Andersen 2001; Brinton 1996; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004; Muller 2005). For example, DMs connect discourse units with each other and contribute to text coherence (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999; Schourup, 1999). They may function as discourse fillers and markers to initiate a topic, end a conversation, or change a topic (Muller, 2005). Pragmatic functions of DMs include textual and interpersonal functions (Brinton, 1996). Textual functions contribute to the organization and structure of the discourse, such as initiating a topic, indicating the end of a turn, marking a topic shift, introducing new or old information, holding a turn, filling a pause, etc. On the other hand, interpersonal functions express speakers' emotions and attitudes, such as expressing politeness, certainty, uncertainty, agreement, understanding, evidentiality, intimacy, denial, etc.

One of the common DMs that is used by Jordanians in different spoken contexts is *yalla*. The researchers noticed that *yalla* occurred frequently in the speech of Jordanians. This inspired the researchers to conduct a study to explore the discourse functions and uses of this DM. An intriguing point for this attempt is that, after an intensive search, the researchers can state that the textual functions of *yalla* have not been studied yet. As a result, the current study was designed to fill this gap by investigating the most common characteristics of DMs that *yalla* may hold (i.e., optionality, connectivity, non-truth-conditionality, weak clause association, initiality, orality, multi-functionality, and multi-categoriality). The study also came to explore the textual and discourse functions of *yalla* in Jordanian spoken Arabic.

1.1 Questions of the Study

- Does the expression *yalla* serve as a discourse marker in Jordanian Arabic? If yes, what are the features it may hold?

- What are the textual functions of yalla in Jordanian Arabic?

2. Literature Review

Due to the significant pragmatic and linguistic roles of discourse markers in spoken language and verbal communication, a large number of studies have examined DMs that are widely used in different Arabic dialects. Respectively, idiomatic expressions such as yallah, Hasa , Yahummmalali, ʃuː, ʕadi, Inzeen ,Kama, maʕnafsak, tayyib, ta:lʕ, and wallahi were examined in various social and cultural contexts of Jordanian and Arabic dialects to investigate their pragmatic functions in addition to their semantic meaning.

Hamdan and Hammouri (2022) conducted a recent study that examined the functions of the JSA discourse maker *yalla*. They explored its personal pragmatic functions in various Jordanian spoken contexts. The data were collected using mini- and extended-form questionnaires. The sample of the study included 145 students studying at Jadara University and the University of Jordan. A total of 14 students sat for the mini questionnaire, while 86 students sat for the extended questionnaire. Both groups were asked to write down scenarios containing the *yalla* expression. The study found out that *yalla* conveyed 23 pragmatic functions. The results of this study revealed that the idiomatic expression *yalla* is used in Jordanian spoken Arabic to express 23 pragmatic functions. These functions are: "showing approval/acceptance, signaling the start of an action, spreading enthusiasm, suggesting, commanding/ordering someone, expediting/urging, expressing surrender or submission, announcing the onset of a new stage, requesting approval, rest assuring, prompting someone to act in line with an established routine, advising coupled with warning, asking for patience/calming someone down, encouraging/ cheering, drawing attention, reminding, wishing, stimulating, underestimating the importance of a complaint, ridiculing/mocking, expressing comfort, showing emphasis in addition to showing anger and boredom". (Hamdan and Hammouri, 2022, P. 138).

In fact, the methodology adopted by Hamdan and Hammouri (2022) was based on participants' judgments of imagined and proposed scenarios, not on naturally occurring speech. Despite the fact that the imagined scenarios were approved by Arabic native expert speakers, they do not accurately reflect real-life social situations in spoken Arabic. Moreover, Hamadan and Hammouri (2022) proposed the pragmatic functions of *yallah* and asked the participants to judge without leaving a room for negotiation. This could be considered a kind of limitation or constraint on the real pragmatic functions of *yalla*. Our current study, on the other hand, relied mainly on naturally occurring data that represented and reflected the real situation of yalla's pragmatic functions.

Another discourse marker *Hasa* (now) was also examined by Al Kayed (2021). He conducted a pragmatic study to explore the uses and meanings of the DM *hasa* (now) in Jordanian Arabic. The data contained 500 tokens of hasa 'now' collected from personal communications, Jordanian radio programs, and interviews with native speakers of Jordanian Arabic. The findings of the study revealed that *hasa* served different pragmatic functions, such as indicating reasons, orientation shifts, openings, expressing disagreement, and ideational shifting.

Hamdan and Abu Rumman (2020) investigated the JSA discourse marker *Yahummmalali*. The researchers intended to identify the pragmatic functions of *Yahummmalali* in Jordanian Arabic. To do so, the researchers created a list of scenarios that included *Yahummmalali* on the basis of their exposure to this expression and familiarity with its contexts in Jordanian society. Then, the data were analyzed and interpreted to identify the pragmatic functions of *Yahummmalali* in each scenario. The study found that *Yahummmalali* can serve different pragmatic functions, such as expressing anger, disapproval, doubt, sarcasm, threat, sadness, wish, surprise, and shock.

Jarrah, Alghazo, and Al Salem (2019) investigated the functions of the W/h-word u (what) as a DM in Jordanian Arabic (JA). They analyzed a corpus of spontaneously occurring instances. The findings showed that *ʃu:* had a discourse function of a discourse-linker besides its lexical meaning of an exclamative particle, an interrogative operator, and a relativizer.

Similarly, Al-Khawaldeh (2018) used Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) to investigate the functions of the DM *Kama* (as) in Arabic journals. He analyzed a small-scale corpus of journalistic discourse taken from two Arabic news websites: Alarabia.net and Aljazeera.net via adopting the Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) proposed by Mann and Thompson (1987). The results revealed that *kama* was used 290 times. The study also showed that *Kama* served four functions: exemplification (13%), evidence (16 %), similarity (19%), and elaboration (50%).

The discourse marker *wallahi*, which is one of the common DMs in Jordanian spoken Arabic, was also investigated by Al-Khawaldeh (2018). He studied the pragmatic functions of the *wallahi* (I swear) through examining a corpus of eight hours of spoken discourse, including face-to -face and cell phone conversations. The findings revealed that *wallahi* served many functions depending on context. For example, *wallahi* could be used to serve as a marker of elaboration, a request softener, a continuer, a filler marker, a marker of complying

with a request, a marker of confirmation, and to introduce a compliment, a threat, an apology, and an acceptance.

Al-Khalidy (2017) examined the pragmatic functions of the DM *ta:lʕ* (going out) in Jordanian spoken Arabic. He examined some YouTube videos to figure out the pragmatic functions of the DM "ta:lʕ" used in the videos. The results of the study showed that *ta:lʕ* had eight different meanings: ascending, from now on, going out, going, looking like, hearable, appear, and share.

DMs are contextually and culturally bound expressions in which the same discourse marker could serve different functions in various contexts. Thus, studies on DMs have tackled the semantic and pragmatic functions of DMs in several Arabic dialects. Al-Rousan (2015) investigated the functions of the DM *maʕnafsak* (with yourself) in Saudi Arabia. The author collected and analyzed 262 naturally occurring conversations from 17 young Saudi students through user diaries. The study showed that *maʕnafsak* served 12 functions: challenge, distancing oneself from others, objection or refusal, annoyance, carelessness, doubt, reprimanding, disappointments, scolding, unwillingness, preserving personal privacy, and choice.

Abdeljawad and Abu Radwan (2016) conducted another study on DMs in the Arab Gulf State The authors investigated the functions of the DM *Inzeen* (Okay) in the context of the Arabian Gulf's spoken variety of Arabic. The study aimed at examining the position of this marker in conversational exchanges, its role in global and local conversational coherence. The findings showed that *Inzeen* served a set of functions, including a cohesive marker, an agreement marker, a challenge/threat marker, a tag marker, a topic management marker, an interactive marker, and a structural marker.

The DM *ʕadi* is a common expression in spoken Iraqi Arabic that is widely used in social conversation. Alazzawie (2015) conducted a study to explore the function and distribution of *ʕadi* (it is okay) in spoken Iraqi Arabic. The author recorded nine hours of informal conversations and interviews and analyzed them. The findings revealed that *ʕadi* had the features of discourse markers, such as optionality. It was found that this discourse marker was used to achieve cohesion and support the spontaneous flow of conversation. Relatively, the same DM *ʕadi*, which was examined in spoken Iraqi Arabic, was also examined in Jordanian spoken Arabic by Kanakri & Al Harahsheh (2013). They examined 20 video-taped dyadic conversations in Jordanian Arabic to show the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *ʕadi* in Jordanian spoken Arabic. The findings revealed that *ʕadi* served different functions, including to ask for permission, to mitigate the effects of sad news, to show disappointment, to express disapproval, to express contempt, to show acceptance, to express courtesy, to save one's face, to express indirect criticism, and to show indifference.

Another DM that was investigated in Jordanian Arabic was *tayyib* (Okay). Al-Harahsheh & Kanakri (2013) found that tayyib served 10 functions: expressing objection, asking participants to be patient, indicating backchannel support, understanding the issue, showing challenge, marking the end of the conversation, initiating a new topic, mitigating disagreement, giving a permission, serving as a gap filler.

After reviewing the previous literature, it is clear that the only study that investigated *yalla* in Jordanian Arabic was Hamdan and Hammouri's study (2022). The present study differs from their study in the sense that it concentrated on the textual functions of the DM *yalla* whereas Hamdan and Hammouri's study investigated its personal pragmatic functions. As a result, the current study filled this gap by focusing on *yalla*'s textual and discourse functions. Moreover, compared to Hamdan and Hammouri's study, which was based on proposed and imaginary scenarios, the data of the present study were collected from spontaneous, naturally occurring speech. The researchers collected the data naturally depending on observation method. Yet, in their study, Hamdan and Hammouri asked a group of university students to provide *yalla*-based scenarios based on their Jordanian cultural background.

3. Methods

The researchers relied on the observation method to collect the data to use in the present study, where they spent a couple of months collecting 104 JSA scenarios, including the expression *yalla*. The data were collected between May and June 2022. The researchers recorded the scenarios right away and wrote them down with their transcription. The total number of *yalla's* samples were 104. After collecting the data, the researchers asked a panel of four raters who are professors of linguistics at Al-Balqa Applied University and the University of Jordan to figure out and classify the textual function(s) of *yalla* in each scenario. The panel found out that *yalla* served textual functions in 41 instances/scenarios. Having examined all scenarios that indicated textual functions, the researchers categorized *yalla* under five main textual functions: (1) end of conversation, (2) topic shift, (3) initiating a topic, (4) yielding a turn, and (5) taking a turn.

To ensure content validity, the researchers then resubmitted the classified list to the same raters to retest it. The panel accepted all scenarios and they reclassified some of them. All comments and recommendations provided by the members of the panel were highly regarded when preparing the resulting list of functions along with their scenarios. The distribution of the 41 scenarios under each category was as follows: ten scenarios for indicating the end of a conversation, nine for signaling a topic shift, seven for initiating a topic, ten for yielding a turn, and five for taking a turn.

A group of 50 male and female students, who are native speakers of Jordanian Arabic, were asked to give their judgment concerning the main textual functions and scenarios on a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix 1). The participants were undergraduate students at Al-Balqa Applied University. The researchers explained the five textual functions to the participants. Then, the participants read each scenario and decided to what extent each scenario represented the assigned textual function based on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The researchers collected and analyzed the responses of the participants, and only included in the study the scenarios that received 50% or more of the students' acceptance. The final list of *yalla*-based scenarios included 33 scenarios, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The final list of textual functions of *yalla*

The textual functions	Number of scenarios	Percentages
end of conversation	9	27 %
topic shift	7	21 %
initiating a topic	6	18 %
yielding a turn	8	24%
taking a turn	3	9%
total	33	100%

4. Results

This section presents detailed information related to the study's questions. It provides findings related to the features as well as the textual functions of the JSA discourse marker, *yalla*.

4.1 Results Related to the First Question: Does the Expression yalla Serve as a Discourse Marker in Jordanian Arabic? If Yes, What Are the Features It May Hold?

Having investigated the 104 yalla-based scenarios, the study found out that *yalla* actually served as a discourse marker with different functions in different JSA contexts. To verify that *yalla* is a discourse marker in Jordanian Arabic, the researchers matched the characteristics of DMs (optionality, connectivity, non-truth-conditionality, initiality, orality, multi-categoriality, weak-clause association, and multifunctionality) to *yalla*. The matching between these features and *yalla* was elaborated in the following examples. It is quite clear that the native speakers did not use *yalla* as a lexical item meaning 'hurry', rather it was used as a discourse marker with various pragmatic functions.

4.1.1 Connectivity

The most prominent feature of DMs is that they connect utterances or discourse (Schiffrin, 2001; Schourup, 1999), as shown in the following example:

(1) ماجد: كيف يوسف؟

Majed: keif Yousef?

'How is Yousef?'

جهاد: كويس, بس ما نجح. يلا ينجح السنة الجاية

Jihad: kwais, bas ma: nidʒiħ. Yalla, yindʒaħ ilsanah ildʒai

'Good, but he did not succeed. Yalla, He will succeed next year.'

Majed asked about Jihad's brother, and Jihad told him in his first utterance that his brother Yousef failed in secondary school. In the second utterance, Jihad thinks that his brother will succeed next year. Jihad used *yalla* to connect the previous utterance with the following one. This indicates that in this context *yalla* resumes the idea presented in the first half of Jihad's utterance. *Yalla* in the above example is not a lexical item meaning 'hurry'. However, it serves as a discourse marker connecting the discourse.

4.1.2 Optionality

DMs are optional in the sense that they do not affect the grammaticality or meaning of the host sentence if we remove them (Schourup, 1999; Fraser, 1988). To clarify, consider the following example:

(2) نور: يلا, بدي اروح

Nour: Yalla, bid-i: arawiħ.

'yalla, I want to go home.'

In this example, Nour was sitting with her friends, and she wanted to leave. She used *yalla* not as a lexical item meaning 'hurry', but as a discourse marker to indicate that she wanted to leave. The deletion of *yalla* in this utterance does not affect the meaning or structure of the utterance.

4.1.3 Orality

DMs are most commonly found in spoken language (Schourup 1999). *Yalla* is a discourse marker that is only used in spoken Jordanian Arabic. In standard Arabic, the lexical noun-verb *haya* (hurry) might be a possible equivalent for *yalla*; however, it does not fulfill all of its pragmatic functions.

4.1.4 Initiality

DMs usually occur at the beginning of utterances (Hansen, 1997; Fraser, 1990). The corpus of the study showed that *yalla* occurs at the beginning of 75% of the collected scenarios.

4.1.5 Weak Clause Association

DMs are linguistic items that occur either outside the syntactic structures or loosely adjoined to them (Schourup 1999). The study found out that *yalla* was not part of the structure of the clause and was attached loosely to it. The following example is clarifies it.

(3)   خضر: أنا فزت باليانصيب

     khader: ana: fuzit   bilja:nasˤi:b.

       'I won the lottery'

عمر: يلا, بلاش كذب

     Omar: Yalla!, bla:ʃ   ki ðib

       'yalla! (Hey!) Do not lie'

In example 3, Khader told his friend Omar that he won the lottery, and Omar disbelieved him. It was clear from this example that *yalla* was a DM, as it was not part of the clause *blaʃ ki ðib* (do not lie). It is located outside the clause.

4.1.6 Non-truth Conditionality

DMs have no effect on the truth-conditions of the utterance (Schourup 1999). The use of *yalla* never affected the stated proposition of the utterance. Consider the following example:

(4)   Context: A female student ends a conversation with her friend saying:

ملك: يلا, أشوفك بكره

     Malk: yalla,   aʃu:f-ik   bukra

       'yalla, see you tomorrow.'

In this utterance, if *yalla* is removed, the proposition of the clause is not modified or changed. In this context, the speaker used *yalla* to indicate to the listener that she intended to leave.

4.1.7 Multi-categoriality

One feature of DMs is that it is not possible to label them under one syntactic category (Schourup, 1999). The researchers found out that it was difficult to determine the syntactic category of *yalla*. As a discourse marker, it could be an adverb, a verb, or a phrase. For example, *yalla* can function as a verb phrase, as shown in the following example:

(5)   يلا, انت عارف انه مش صح

     Yalla,   intta: ʕs:rif   inuh   muʃ sˤah

       'Come on! You know that isn't true.'

As shown in the following example, *yalla* may also function as an adverb.

(6)   يلا, بدي أروح هسه. أشوفك بعد ساعة

     Yalla,   bedi: aru:ħ hasa. aʃu:f-ak   baʕd sa:ʕah

       'Anyway, I'd better go now. I'll see you one hour later.'

Yalla in Jordanian Arabic can be used as a verb followed by a plural verb to indicate a suggestion, as shown in the following example:

(7)   يلا, نشرب شاي

     Yalla niʃrab ʃa:i

       'Let's have some tea'

4.1.8 Multi-functionality

DMs serve different functions depending on context (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999). The study found out that *yalla* served different textual functions. The examples in Section 4.2 below demonstrate the textual functions of *yalla*.

4.2 Results Related to the Second Question: What Are the Textual Functions of yalla in Jordanian Spoken Arabic?

The results of the study showed that *yalla* served five textual functions: indicating the end of the conversation, indicating a topic shift, initiating a topic, yielding a turn, and taking a turn.

4.2.1 Indicating the End of the Conversation

As shown in the following examples, *yalla* can be used in Jordanian spoken Arabic as a topic marker to signal the end of a conversation.

(8)   Context: A conversation between two friends on campus.

محمد: أشوفك بكره؟

     Mohammad: aʃu:f-ak   bukra?

'Can I see you tomorrow?'

عبد الله: ان شاء الله. يلا أنا لازم أروح

Abdullah: in-ʃaʔallah, yalla, ana: lazim aru:ħ

    'Deal, I have to go now.'

In this context, *yalla* initiates the closing sequence of the conversation between speakers A and B.

   (9) Context: A conversation between two friends after spending a night at the cinema.

مروان: كان يوم رائع

Marwan: kan joum ra:ʔiʕ

'It was an amazing day'

عيسى: أكيد. يلا أنا رايح. سلام

Issa: aki:d. yalla, ana ra:jiiħ, sla:m

'Sure. Anyway, I want to go, bye.'

Issa used *yalla* in this example to indicate to the listener that he wanted to end the conversation and go home.

   (10) Context: Yaqeen is sitting with her friend and she wants to end the conversation.

يقين: يلا, نحكي بكره

Yaqeen: Yalla, niħki: bukra.

'yalla, talk to you tomorrow.'

Here, Yaqeen used *yalla* to inform her friend that she is about to end the conversation.

   (11) Context: A female student is talking with her friend on the phone and she ends a conversation with her saying:

عبير: يلا سلام.

Abeer: yalla, sala:m.

'yalla, bye.'

In this example, Abeer signaled the end of the conversation by including the DM *yalla* in her utterance.

4.2.2 Indicating a Topic Shift

Usually, speakers of Jordanian Arabic resort to use *yalla* as a marker of topic shift. Consider the following example:

   (12) Context: two friends were waiting for their colleague.

ديما: أحمد اتاخر كثير, صح؟

Dima: Ahmed ʔitʔaxar kθi:r, Sah?

'Ahmed is very late, isn't he?'

جواد: اه والله, يلا قوليلي شو اخبار اخوكي بالجامعة؟

Jawad: ah wallah, yalla, gu:lil-i: ʃu: axba:r axu:-ki: bi-ameirika:

'Yes. Anyway, tell me about your brother in America.'

In this context, Jawad used *yalla* to indicate that he is about to shift to another topic.

   (13) Context: Three friends are talking about Corona virus in Jordan and they are disappointed about the rising number of cases and deaths. Then one of them said:

لما: يلا احكونا دفعتوا رسوم الجامعة؟

Lama: Yalla, iħk-u:-na, dafʕt-u: rsu:m il-dʒa:mʕah?

'Yalla, tell us did you pay the fees of the university'

The three friends were discussing Corona virus updates in Jordan when one of them, Lama, got sick with the bad news, so she used *yalla* to change the topic and ask them about paying university fees.

   (14) Context: Rashed and Taim were talking about 2022 FIFA World Cup

راشد: كاس العالم رح يكون ممتع, صح؟

Rashed: kaʔs ilʕalam raħ jiku:n mumtiʕ, sˤaħ?

'The world cup will be amazing, right?'

تيم: اكيد, يلا, احكيلي متى امتحان الصرف؟

Taim: aki:d, yalla iħki:li: mta: imtiħa:n ilsˤarf?

'Sure. Yallah, tell me when will be the morphology exam?

راشد: الخميس القادم

Rashed: ilxami:s ilqa:dim.

'Next Thursday'

In the previous example, Taim changed the topic by using the DM *yalla* to ask about the date of the morphology exam.

4.2.3 Initiating a Topic

The findings of the study showed that *yalla* could be used to initiate a topic, as shown in the following example:

نسمة: كيفك اليوم؟ (15)

Nismah: Keif-ik   iljoum?

'How are you?'

لينا: تمام

Lina: Tama:m

        'Good'

        [Pause]

نسمة: يلا احكيلي كيف كان امتحانك؟

Nismah: yalla,   iħki-li: keif   kan   imtiħa:n-ik?

'Yalla, tell me how was your exam?

In this conversation, Nismah and her friend Lina were talking to each other, and then there was a pause. Nismah wanted to kill time by starting a longer talk. She started a new topic, introduced by *yalla*.

4.2.4 Yielding a Turn

The findings also showed that *yalla* can be used to give a turn to other speakers, as shown in the following examples:

(16) (Context: a teacher was discussing global warming with his students, then he said to one of his students :)

حاتم: يلا نسمع لزميلكوا محمد.

Hatim: yalla, nisma؟ Lazami:lku: Mohammad

'Let's listen to your colleague Mohammad.'

In the previous example, the teacher used *yalla* to signal Mohammad's turn to speak.

(17) (Context: three close friends talking about what they do if they feel stressed)

فارس: أنا بروح دائما مع اصدقائي على القهوه

Faris: ana: baħib aru:ħ daʔman ma؟ asˤdiqaʔi: ؟la: ilqahwa

'I always go to the café with may close friends.'

عون: وانا احب اروح اصيد , يلا احكيلنا شو تحب تعمل يا أسامه

Own: wana: baħib aru:ħ   asˤi:d, yalla iħki:lna: ʃu: tiħib ti؟mal ja: Osama

'Yeah, I prefer going finishing. Yallah, let's see what Osama do.'

اسامه: بحب احضر افلام اكشن

Osama: baħib ʔaħḍar ʔfla:m a:kʃin

'I prefer watching action movies'

Own used *yalla* to yield the turn to Osama in the previous example.

4.2.5 Taking a Turn

The study also found that the native speakers of JSA used *yalla* to take a turn. Consider the following examples:

(18) (Context: three friends were discussing a football match and Mashhour wanted to speak but they did not give him the turn.)

مشهور:يلا بدي احكي كمان

Mashhour: yalla, bedi: Aħki: Kama:n

'I want to talk too'

Mshhour and his friends were talking about Al-Failsali match (a popular Jordanian football team). Mashhour took the turn from the other speakers by using the discourse marker *yalla*.

5. Discussion

In general, the results indicated that *yalla* is a JSA discourse marker, as it holds most of the features of any discourse marker. Yalla in all scenarios carries seven features of discourse markers, namely: optionality, connectivity, weak clause association, non-truth-conditionality, multi-categoriality, orality, and multi-functionality. Only 25% of *yalla* instances did not come initial.

Having examined the collected scenarios, the researchers figured out and differentiated between five textual functions of the JSA expression *yalla*. A recent study examined *yalla* in Jordanian spoken Arabic was carried out by Hamdan and Hammouri (2022). Their research, on the other hand, focused on the personal pragmatic function of *yalla*. They identified twenty-three personal pragmatic functions of this expression.

As shown in table 1 above, the three most frequent textual functions of the expression *yalla* were an end of a conversation, yielding a turn, and a topic shift, respectively. These functions emerged in various scenarios expressing different daily life settings. In scenario 8, for example, two students were talking to each other on campus, and one of the students used *yalla* to let the other student know that he is about to leave. This scenario indicates the most frequent textual function, indicating the end of a conversation. In scenario 13, three friends were talking about Corona virus and its impact on the entire situation in Jordan. One of them get bored and used *yalla* to change the subject, saying, "Yalla, tell us did you pay the fees of the university?" In scenario 16, a teacher was discussing global warming with his students, and then he decided to enroll one of the students in the discussion. The teacher wanted to yield a turn to one of his students by saying, "*yalla,* let's listen to your colleague Mohammad." The least frequent textual functions, on the other hand, manifested in scenarios that indicated initiating a topic or taking a turn.

In general, the frequency of these functions in Jordanian settings gives a hint that such expression is mostly used to finish or change a topic. Moreover, the researchers observed through examining the collected scenarios that when *yalla* indicates a textual function, it must be part of an utterance since it has a textual function, whereas when it indicates a personal pragmatic function, such as acceptance, encouraging, wishing, etc., it may come alone without being included in an utterance, as shown in the following example:

أحمد: تشرب شاي (19)

Ahmed: tiʃrab ʃa:i

جهاد: يلا

Jihad: yalla

In the previous example, *yalla* is used alone to serve a personal pragmatic function, which is acceptance.

6. Conclusion

The present study assigned eight features of the JSA discourse marker *yalla*, namely: optionality, connectivity, weak clause association, non-truth-conditionality, initiality, multi-categoriality, orality, and multi-functionality. Additionally, it managed to identify five textual functions of *yalla*: indicating the end of a conversation, initiating a topic, indicating a shift in the topic, taking a turn, and giving a turn. However, the unequal representation of each textual function in the collected sample indicates that yalla serves certain textual functions such as ending a conversation and yielding a turn more than other textual functions in the Jordanian context. Future research may focus on additional idiomatic expressions to learn more about their textual and personal pragmatic functions in Jordan and other Arab countries. The study also recommended investigating the pragmatic functions of *yalla* in Arabic dialects such as Gulf Arabic, Syrian Arabic, Tunisian Arabic, etc.

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Appetencies

Appendix 1

Table 1. An example of the judgment test

Textual function	scenarios	Strongly agree	agree	Not certain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Yielding the turn	Context: a teacher was discussing global warming with his students, then he said to one of his students : حاتم: يلا نسمع لزميلكوا محمد. Hatim: yalla, nisma? lazamilku: Mohammad Let's listen to your colleague Mohammad					

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