

Yamawwad: A Discourse and Pragmatic Marker in Iraqi Arabic

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Abstract

The lexical item *yamawwad* *يمعود* is a functional discourse unit with several different functions that are dependent upon context. This makes its function difficult to define since it varies with context but, at the same time, it is a topic of great interest in the study of discourse, pragmatics and speech acts. To my knowledge, this marker has hitherto not been analyzed. The material used in this paper comes from dyadic conversations that were written and transcribed. The range of contexts where *yamawwad* occurs were identified and then classified into sections according to the various contextual meanings and functions of this pragmatic marker.

Keywords: *discourse; pragmatics; context; discourse marker; function*

1. Introduction

The discourse and speech act marker (Note 1) *yamawwad* is unique to the variety of Arabic spoken in Iraq, very common in regular conversations, and restricted to the informal spoken mode. It is also formulaic and difficult to define and translate into English due to its multiple pragmatic and interactional functions. (Note 2) It occurs exclusively at clause- or sentence-initial boundaries analogous to *well* in English.

Stubbs (1983) considered such facts about items like *well*, *right*, *now* and *anyway* an indication of their discourse function. Their function “is to relate utterances to each other, or to mark initial boundaries of units of written or spoken language, and they are therefore immediate indications that continuous discourse is analyzable into units larger than the sentence.” (Ibid: pp. 68-69). He argued that the problematic nature of such items cannot be explained by reference to syntax and semantics of single sentences but by reference to “the syntagmatic chaining of whole clauses and sentences.” (Ibid: p. 73). He concluded that they should be reclassified as functional speech acts.

In other words, full understanding of utterances cannot be derived from linguistic forms only but from the local context of the utterances, how the utterance is produced, the social context, who the participants in the conversation are, the setting, conventional strategies and cultural beliefs. All these factors, falling under the concept of “situational context” or the “context of situation”, jointly contribute to our understanding of what is being said and meant (Brown & Yule, 1983; Cook, 1989 & Widdowson, 2007).

In a similar vein, Levinson (1983, p. 87) also expressed an indexical function view of discourse markers. Schiffrin (1987) discussed the deictic function of discourse markers such as *and*, *so*, *well* and *because* and emphasized the need for a deictic dimension for a better understanding of their contribution to coherence. She (1987, pp. 191-227) argued that *so* and *because* mark effects and causes respectively at levels of structure, semantics speech act and communicative action. In Johnstone’s words “speakers give reasons and talk about causes and effects on several planes” (Johnstone, 2002, p. 204). The discourse markers *so* and *because* can indicate causality, logical reference, reasons for interlocutor’s actions or motives and evidential uses. The evidential uses of *so* and *because* can be expressed respectively as “X leads me to say Y.” “My evidence for X is Y” (Ibid: p. 205). In addition to these uses, *so* can also be used to mark boundaries of discourse, where and when a speaker’s turn is in the conversation. Johnstone referred to this function of *so* as a discourse-boundary marking function and illustrated how it acts as a conventional way of signaling the beginning of a narrative.

yamawwad is also pragmatic and problematic in nature and seems to serve as an “orientational focus” (Ibid: p. 207) with a wide scope of context-dependent references. As it will be exemplified in different contexts, this marker draws

attention and focus on the proposition being conveyed within and across sentence boundaries. It covers more or less the functions and meanings of *well, please, right, now, OK, so, no way, no problem, anyhow* and *anyway, hey fella* and so on.

A note on the translation of *yamawwad* and the examples to be analyzed is in order. As a discourse marker, its pragmatic meaning is embedded in its context and therefore is figured out from the context. Since each context is unique, *yamawwad* acquires a different meaning which calls for a different translation to reflect the new meaning. In other words, its different functions necessitate an appropriate equivalent in English. In each representative example, first the Arabic form is given, and then the transliteration followed by the translation into English placed underneath the example.

2. Functions and Contexts

Now I would like to discuss the distribution and functions of the discourse marker *بمعود yamawwad*. In order to illustrate the functions, examples of conversations are given for each context, giving an indication of the feelings and attitude of the speaker towards the proposition being conveyed and towards the speech act:

2.1 It May Have a Rather General Introductory Function to Open a Conversation

بمعود لو تد ري اليوم شصار بيه بالطريق للبيت خلي اكلك

Yamawwad lo tidri halyom shsar biyya btareeqi lalbet khalli agullak

“Hey, do you know what happened to me today on my way home?”

The role of *yamawwad* in this context is to resume the conversation and bring the whole communicative act into focus. It gives the speaker a license to begin telling his story to the partner in the conversation. The role is similar to the attention getter *hey* in English or “Y’ know what?”, or “Say, man ...” or simply “Say ...” which are often used in informal, casual and relaxed interactions to attract another person’s attention and start a new conversation on a new topic.

2.2 It May Function as a Marker of Politeness and Courtesy

اشكرك اهواي على هل مساعده

بمعود ماكو داعي احنه اخوه

Speaker A: ashkurak hwaya 9al hal almusada

“Thanks so much for all your help.”

Speaker B: yamawwad maku da9i lalshukur, ihna ikhwa.

“Never mind, no need to thank me; we are like brothers.”

This is equivalent to the English politeness device *never mind*. An alternative English response might be “Oh, it was nothing. Don’t even mention it.” Or the other way around: “Don’t even mention it. It was nothing.” Or “It was no bother.” *Yamawwad* expresses all these nuances of meaning.

Another example would be someone who could not visit his sick friend at the hospital. He sees him later and apologizes for not visiting him at the hospital:

تعذرني مالكدت ازورك بالمستشفى

بمعود ولايهمك احنه اخوه

Speaker A: ti9thirni ma gdart azoorak bilmustashfa

“Forgive me for not being able to visit you at the hospital.”

Speaker B: yamawwad wala yihmak; ihna ikhwa

“Never mind, we are like brothers.”(Note 3)

The English expression “never mind” often connotes “don’t worry about it. That is nothing. Or don’t even think about it. Or it’s no big deal, not a problem so forget about it.” However, if said with a different tone of voice, it signals irritation with the following message: “OK, if it’s so much trouble (I can’t rely on you for anything), forget about it. I don’t need your visit that much anyway.” Or “It’s not that important.” In this context *yamawwad* acquires the meaning “Yeah, no bother” or “not to bother”. In such circumstances, it can also be rendered as “It’s OK” or “Don’t worry about it” or even “That’s OK; I understand too.”

2.3 It Can be Uttered Alone as a Pragmatically Complete Unit That Substitutes for a Sentence to Express More Than One Function (Note 4)

- To end a conversation (3a)
- To express a shared background assumption that is taken for granted (3b).

(3a)

تعرف التاجر المليونير علي الحداد؟

اي اعرفه

هذا راح للحج سبع مرات واربع مرات للعمرة وبنا اربع مساجد

طلع يشتغل بالمخدرات

يمعود (اغسل ايدك منه)

Speaker A: tu9ruf attajir almilioner Ali Alhadad?

“Do you know the business man, Ali, the millionaire?”

Speaker B: ee a9arfa.

“Yes, I do.”

Speaker A: hatha rah lilhij sabi9 marrat u arba9 9umrat u bina thalith jawami9

“This man went for Hajj seven times, for Ummra four times and built three mosques.”

tila9 yishtaghil bilmukhaddarat

“It turned out that he is a drug dealer.”

Speaker B: yamawwad (ighsil idek min 9inda)

“Oh boy, what a hopeless case!”

So Speaker B is convinced that this individual, the millionaire, is depraved and degenerate “pillar of society” and “a wolf in sheep’s clothing”. *Yamawwad* gives this evaluation, judgment and conviction. Therefore, the speaker desires closure of the conversation and he does not intend to introduce a new theme related to the same topic. Alternative English equivalents for *yamawwad* would be “Oh my, Oh my” or “Oh my, my!” or even better “Yeah really ... he’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing, isn’t he?”

(3a)

ممکن ادخل

يمعود

Speaker A: Mumkan adkhul?

“Can I come in?”

Speaker B: yamawwad

“Most definitely!”

Most definitely!, in other words, the interlocutors are close friends or relatives ; there is most likely a pattern that they have been following and a history between the two, and therefore the expectation of both parties is that yes is a given. In English, one might say any of the following options: “You don’t have to ask, Do you have to ask?, you know you can, of course, of course you can, you know you don’t have to ask, do you have to ask, you are welcome here anytime”, or even the Spanish expression which some people are aware of and use “Mi casa es su casa” meaning “my house is your house.”

2.4 It Can Also be Interpreted as a Request or a Gentle Imperative to Get People to do Something

يمعود جيبينه حليب للأطفال

Yamawwad jiblna haleeb lalatifal

“Can you please pick some milk for the kids?”

Here it can be translated as “please” or “If it is not a trouble for you” or “If I am not imposing on you” or “If you don’t mind” or any such expression which has a persuasive effect and an effort to weaken the force of the utterance.

A gentle imperative in English is saying: “Can you stop by the store on your way home and pick up some milk for the kids please?” But if the person is angry like an irritated parent giving more of a command, it would be said more forcefully: “Get in here NOW!” And may or may not be followed by *please* to soften the commanding tone. Although the omission of *yamawwad* makes it a direct command, its inclusion when uttered with a demanding tone also makes it a command. This is analogous to “Please pick up some milk for the kids right NOW!” or “Please pick up your clothes off the floor NOW!” (with emphasis on now) which are definitely more of a command.

2.5 It Can Express Displeasure, Annoyance and Irritation

Consider the following conversational exchange:

ممکن تروح تشتريلنه قنينة غاز من محل ابو علي

رحت عله محل ابو علي ومالكيت

كل مادرك علي حاجه ماتجيبهه

رحت علي محل ابو علي ومحل احمد ومحل ابو سالم بس مالكيت

شسوي

بمعود دروح اني راح اشوف

Speaker A: mumkin truoh tishtarilna qineena ghaz min mihal abu Ali(Note 5)

“Can you go buy a propane tank from Ali father’s shop?”

Speaker B: rihit ala mihal abu Ali wmaliget

“I went to Ali father’s shop but didn’t find any.”

Speaker A: kulma adizzak ala haja ma jibliyyaha

“Every time I ask you to get something, you never do.”

Speaker B: rihit ala mihal abu Ali, w mihal Ahmad, w mihal abu Salim bis miliget

“I went to Ali’s father’s, to Ahmad’s shop, and Salim’s father’s shop but didn’t find any;

Shasawwi

“What can I do?”

Speaker A: yamawwad dirouh ani raah ashooof.

“Good for nothing; Get out of here; I’m gonna look for it.”

Speaker A is irritated and disgruntled and uses the linguistic form *yamawwad* to flag his annoyance with his partner and dismissal of his excuses and to express the underlying message that he cannot rely on him for anything. It is equivalent to the English expressions: “Go fly a kite”, “beat it!”, “Get out of my face”, “Get out of my sight” or “Go and jump in the lake” and “You’re useless” which are used to tell someone who is being annoying to go away. Obviously, the setting, the background knowledge and the relationship between the participants (e.g. father and son), their social roles and other deictic markers in this exchange are crucial for the proper understanding of the speech event (Brown & Yule, 1986).

2.6 It Can Convey Furiousness and Indignation

The social context is as follows: Speaker A has previously requested the hand of Speaker B’s daughter in marriage for his son. Speaker B is reluctant and has already given him a negative response. Now, Speaker A is trying again and raising the issue for the second time at a funeral for Speaker B’s son. In such a situation, most people are pretty solemn, quiet and respectful. The improper time made the latter furious and even more adamant about the marriage proposal. Speaker B is incensed, exasperated and enraged. It is normally uttered with a high intonation, an indignant, distant and an incredulous tone of voice with gesturing in such a context as this to give added force to the meaning of the utterance:

مانطيتني خبر عن السالفه (الزواج)الحجينه بيهه

بمعود هذا ماسواهه واحد قبلك. احنه بيا حال هسه

انته مصختهه وماتعرف الاحوال اني خما دافلي راس بصل

احنه بعدنه طينه بروسنه وانته تدور مره

Speaker A: ma intetni khabar 9an assalfat (zawwaj) alhichena biha

“Would you mind letting me know of your decision on the matter (of marriage) that we discussed?”

Speaker B: yamawwad hathi ma sawwaha wahid gablak. Ihna ib yahal hasa

What! Grab a brain! No one ever acted this way before. Look at the state we are in now.

Inta masakhitha w mat9arif lisool. Ani khomu dafinli ras busal. Ihna

You went overboard and have no etiquette; I'm not burying a head of

ba9adna tinna broosna(Note 6) winta iddawwir marra.

Onion(Note 7); we are still mourning and you are asking about marriage!

Yamawwad diroohh.

Get lost”

In this conversation in a funeral setting where no one talks about marriage proposals, *yamawwad* indicates extra display of emotion, connoting the following: “Don't fool around with me”, “Are you kidding me? You are really out of line”, “That is really inappropriate.” Since the person is really mad and *yamawwad* is said in as dumbfounded and stupefied way as possible, he is actually saying “How dare you! Go to hell. You're pathetic and disgusting. Or “Are you out of your tree? (Or out of your cotton-picking mind?)” Or “Have you lost your marbles?” Another similar reaction would be “What? Are you stupid? I feel sorry for you. I'm at my son's funeral asshole!”

2.7 Pleading, Apologizing and Admitting Responsibility

This additional meaning can be expressed by lengthening the initial vocalic segment for emphasis. يامعوّد Note the vowel is doubled in the transliteration and the plural form is used (the suffix -een marks plurality) to heighten the illocutionary force(Note 8) of the speech act:

يامعودين احنه سويناهه انتو نعرفكم اهل غيره لاتسونهه

يامعودين سامحونا الله يسامحكم ويرحم والديكم

yaamawwadeen ihna sawwenaha; intu n9arifkum ahal ghera latsawoonha

“Please this was a grievous and deplorable act; we have known you to be courteous and kind; you don't act likewise”

yaamawwadeen samhoona alla ysamihkumm w yrham waldekum

“For heaven's sake, forgive and forego; Allah will forgive you and shower his mercy upon your loved ones”

The person is pleading and basically saying that what they did was a terrible thing; it should have never happened; they are fully responsible for it and that nothing can make up for this depraved act of violence. To fully understand what is going on here, the above utterance needs to be situated in discourse within the wider social context. The person's son got into an altercation early that day which, by night time, escalated into a shooting incident which resulted in his son and two cousins being arrested and thrown into jail, being the main suspects of the crime. He is pleading with the other family to drop the charges against the arrested members of his family.(Note 9)

Note also the use of paralinguistic features such as high intonation indicated by italicizing *yaamawwadeen*, the plural form, sighing, wining, screeching or taking inward breaths intensifies the force of the message. Both hands were also raised to further signal humility and the desire for forgiveness. Such linguistic and non-linguistic elements are “contextualization cues” (Gumperz, 1982, pp. 130-52 cited in Johnstone, 2002, p. 204) or interpretive strategies used by interlocutors to emphasize and to pad the meaning with force. The imploring tone is one of the cues to make the issue sound more desperate and urgent and might have a more persuasive effect.

2.8 It May Serve as a Phatic Utterance Expressing Solidarity and Empathy as in Examples (8a-8b)

والله عندي ذنوب كثيرة

يامعوّد الله غفور رحيم

(8a)

Speaker A: wallah 9indi thunub kathira

“To tell you the truth, I have many shortcomings.”

Speaker B: yamawwad inna Allaha ghafurun raheem

“Fella no worries, Allah is very forgiving and forbearing.”

شغلي جثير تعبان ومريض مااكر اجيب بضاعه واتواجد بالمحل
 يمعود الدنيا مو كلهه تعب وركض وفلوس تحتاج راحه وصحتك اهم شي
 (8b)

Speaker A: shughli chitheer, ta9ban, mareeth magdar ajeeb bitha9a wa tiwajad
 “There is so much work, I’m tired, sick, can’t go get merchandise and be
 balmihal
 at the store”

Speaker B: yamawwad, addinya mu kulha ta9ab w rakith w floos
 “Fella, there is more to life than just hard work and making money;
 tihtaj raha w sihtak aham shi
 You need a rest too, you know? Moreover, your health is more important”

Speaker B intends to cheer up speaker A, lift up his spirit and morale, and boost his confidence. Here it expresses an affective function and has a boosting effect (Note 10) for extra reassurance.

2.9 It May Administer a Rebuke

The following example illustrates this:

يمعود كم مره كتاك لاتمشي بهل سرعه

yamawwad kam marra agullak latimshi bhassura

“What has come over you? How many times do I have to tell you not to drive so fast?”

The father is scolding his son for driving recklessly and causing an accident. The contextual information permits a translation of *yamawwad* in this context as “What has come over you? Or “Are you out of your mind?” Or “Are you crazy?” Or simply “Damn it!” and “How could you be so stupid and irresponsible? I oughta smack you!. *Yamawwad* makes the intensity of the father’s words and the anger behind the rebuke like a slap across the face.

2.10 It Can be Adversative in Function Expressing Disagreement and Opposition to a Given Proposition

اسعار البيوت راح تكون في نزول لان الاعمار كثر

يمعود ماتنزل لان السكان في تزايد

Speaker A: asaar albuyoot rah tkoon fi nizool lian ali9maar kithar
 “The cost of housing will be going down.”

Speaker B: yamawwad, matinzil lian alsukkan fi tazayud
 “I beg to differ; no, it wouldn’t because the population is on the rise”

Speaker B is disagreeing with speaker A and contending the latter’s statement, predicting a decline in the real estate market. He prefixes *يمعود* to his counter argument to be less conclusive so as to invite more conversation. The surrounding context in which *يمعود* is situated calls for a rendering in English as “Excuse me. I beg to differ” which expresses a slight difference of opinion inviting further thought and discussion. As a discourse marker, *yamawwad* has no intrinsic semantic content; it acquires a semantic property from the situational context. This is why it should be translated into English differently to reflect each context-specific meaning.

2.11 It Can Have an Explicative Function

The participant in the conversation is contributing to the topic being discussed by adding extra explanation. Once again, *yamawwad* is situated between the two utterances in the interaction.

هذا الكتاب اسلوبه شوي صعب

يمعود هذا فلاسفه يله يفهموه

Speaker A: hatha alkitab isluba shwwi sa9ub
 “This book is a bit difficult to read”

Speaker B: yamawwad hatta alkfalasifa mayifhamu

“Oh sure, even philosophers won’t be able to understand it”

The use of *Yamawwad* in this context, even if uttered alone, indicates that the book is too hard! And that one practically has to be a genius to understand it. Here it can be rendered as “well yes” with stress on “yes” for emphasis or as the automatic response “Give me a break”. We might add something like “It’s so damn difficult!” It also corresponds to the frequently used English discourse marker “Go figure” (Note 11) which reveals a speaker’s amazement or acknowledgement of an obvious fact. English expressions such as “You got that right!” Or “Boy, have you got that right!” Or “You’re damn right it is” or “It sure the hell is” also capture the meaning expressed by the Arabic *yamawwad*.

2.12 It Can be an Expression of Surprise and Astonishment at an Unexpected Outcome

سالم دعمته سياره

بمعود كنت وياه قبل خمس دقائق

Speaker A: Salim di9matta sayyara

“Salim was hit by a car”

Speaker B: yamm9awwad kinit wiyyah qabl khams daqaiq

“What! Don’t tell me I just saw him five minutes ago”

Given the context, the translation into “What! Don’t tell me!” is reasonable as it serves an expression of disbelief at something unexpected and surprising. Rendering it into “Oh no”, “oh Gosh”, “I can’t believe this”, “I can’t believe what I am hearing” or even “Don’t tell me!” or “What! Are you serious? No! Are you sure? No way! I don’t believe it! Would all be equally acceptable?”

Thus, *yamawwad* has a clear discourse function, in that it makes “metareference” (Stubbs, 1983) to the discourse itself. It occurs utterance-initially with or without a break in intonation contour.

2.13 To Express Strong will and Determination in the Face Difficulty and Adversity

الحمد لله على السلامه زين الله نجاك من هذا المفترس

ما تخربطت او وكعت جان اكلك

بمعود انتة تعرفني زين اني ابو زيد

Speaker A: alhmadu lilah 9assalam, zen alla najjak min hatha almuftaris; ma

“Glad you’re alive; it was by God’s grace you’re saved from this killer

tikhrbatit w wiga9t chan akalik

beast. Good you did not cow down and collapse; the beast would have eaten you.”

Speaker B: yamawwad inta t9arifni zen ani abu Zayd.

“You bet; you know me well; I am a real man”

Yamawwad in this context reinforces the defiant tone that Speaker B is the one person who can achieve the difficult and nearly impossible task of defeating the beast for example, to the point of being miraculous, that “he is the man for the job”. *Yamawwad* functions as an intensifier meaning: “Yeah really showed him who’s the boss, didn’t I?” or “You bet” or “You can count on me”. Translating it as “absolutely” is also appropriate. Another idiomatic English response can be “You got that right!”

2.14 Warning of an Imminent Danger

شنو رايك اذا اشتترك بمشروع تجاري وياه بيت ابو فارس

بمعود هذوله يورطوك بمشاكل كبيره مو خوش

عائله و عدهم مخالفات قانونيه كبيره

Speaker A: shinu ra’yak itha ashtarik ibmashroo9 tijari wa bet abu Faris?

“What do you think if I get into a joint venture with Faris’ father?”

Speaker B: yamawwad hathola ywartouk bmashakil kibeera; mu khosh 9a’ila w 9idhum mukhalafat qanooniyya chitheera

“Be careful, these people will cause you a lot of problems”

2.15 Resentment and Refusal

ممکن تشتغل ويانه شهر اخر
يمعود والله مالكر هذا الشغل دمرني

Speaker A: Mumkin tishtaghal wayana shahar akhar?
“Can you work with us for another month?”

Speaker B: yamawwad walla magdar hatha alshugul dammarni
“Come on, I can’t; this work is killing me.”

Here it is equivalent to, or can be accompanied by, a shrug in body language to express outright being overworked and underpaid. Prefacing the reply with *yamawwad*, Speaker B signals unhappiness and voices grievances like not being paid enough to stay and put up with this job. This is analogous to the English colloquial form “Nope” or “forget it!” in the corresponding utterance “Nope. Forget it! I’ve had it. Sorry, I’m done.”

2.16 Disappointment and Total Resignation

تدري المدرس انطاك صفر بمادة مهارات اللغة الانكليزية
يمعود شسوي المادة صعبه وهو مايفهم زين

Speaker A: tidri almudarris intaak sifir fi madat maharat alluga alingliziyya
“Are you aware that the teacher gave a zero in English Language Skills”

Speaker B: yamawwad, shasawwi almada sa9ba w huwwa ma yfahhim
“What the heck, the course is difficult and the teacher is difficult to understand”

In view of the social context, *yamawwad* is rendered as “what the heck”; “what can I do?”, “So what, who cares?” Or “Who gives a damn”, or “I don’t give a hoot” or “I could care less.” All would be appropriate to this informal situation.

2.17 Hope and Expectancy

وضع البلاد سي الناس شردوه ان شاء الله الجيش ينسحب والناس ترجع لدياره
يمعود بالكي الله يسمع من عندك

Speaker A: Wathi9 albilad sayy’i; annas sharradoha. Inshalla aljays yinsahib wannas tirja9 lidiarha
“The country’s situation is bad; they forced people out of their homes. Hopefully, the troops will retreat and people will go back to their homes”

Speaker B: yamawwad balchi alla yisma9 min 9indak
“I really hope so. Let us keep our fingers crossed”(Note 12)

This is an expression of urgent desire for a positive change. Speaker B employs *yamawwad* to strengthen the anticipation into high hopes for a brighter future.

In summary, it has become evident that the functional category *يمعود* has a wide range of functions. In each of the above contexts, *يمعود* signals a different communicative function. Sometimes it signals more than one function at the same time in the same context, perhaps one primary and another one secondary. This makes the classification of functions less than clear-cut. Obviously, the diverse functions and meanings are “sequentially situated” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 416); in other words, they have to do with context in the interconnected discourse, not with the syntax and semantics of single sentences.

3. Conclusion

The main speech functions of *yamawwad* *يمعود* have been identified. It serves many different functions in different social contexts: To express annoyance, regret, sadness, or agreement and to serve as a warning, to reprimand someone, to make a request or to express solidarity and friendliness, or to attempt to change the topic of conversation, and so on. The list of functions provided in this paper might not be comprehensive. Other functions might develop and thus other meanings might arise which will be a guide and a focus for further research.

The multiplicity of meanings and functions associated with *yamawwad* poses a real challenge for translators. Accurate translation requires pinpointing the exact meaning in each context which means that *yamawwad* must have numerous context-dependent translations. This multifunctional nature is an important aspect to focus on in teaching translation courses because without such recognition and awareness of the various functions and meanings through explicit teaching, inaccurate and incomprehensible translation will be inevitable in terms of both coherence and cohesion.

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Notes

Note 1. Fraser (1996, 1999, 2006), considered discourse markers as a subset of pragmatic markers. The basis for the distinction is the connectivity role of discourse markers; pragmatic markers are not necessarily connective. In this paper, the two terms are used interchangeably. They are also known as discourse connectives and pragmatic particles or simply as particles.

Note 2. In the field of Interactional Sociolinguistics, this interaction is between speaker and hearer on hand and the surrounding context on the other hand. What gives unity to this field is “the interaction between self and other, and context” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 105)

Note 3. In a context like this, an English speaker wouldn't say “We're like brothers” or “You're like a brother to me” or “You're like family to me” or “You're closer to me than my own brother.” If you didn't visit someone in the hospital and the patient, your close friend, wasn't mad and wanted to minimize any bad feelings or feelings of guilt or regret you might have, he might say “Oh forget it. I was okay and my family was visiting me every day. I was in good hands and it wasn't serious. So don't worry about it.”

Note 4. Stubbs (1983, p. 71) argued for an analogous role in connection with *please*; he provides the following example where ‘please’ stands for a whole sentence.

A: Would you like some tea? B: Please.

Note 5. The literal meaning of “Abu Ali” is the father of Ali. It is an address form of politeness and courtesy customarily used in Arabic instead of addressing people by their first name.

Note 6. Literally “The mud is still fresh on our heads”, a metaphor for the mourning period.

Note 7. This is an idiom meaning the son, the dead person, is not so unimportant or worthless.

Note 8. Austin (1962) distinguished three components of the speech act:

- 1- Locution: What is being said or pronounced, the utterance.
- 2- Illocution: What the speaker intends to communicate by the utterance, the message being conveyed such as request, promise, threat, warning, apology, condolences, etc.
- 3- Perlocution: The effect the illocution has on the addressee such as compliance or non-compliance.

Note 9. It is clear that the Western culture does not express the same things the way the Arabic culture would in the same context. If you are at church, people might pray or even pray at home or say their prayer or think to themselves: “May God show mercy upon him.” Or if one parent is talking directly to another they might say: “What my son did was terrible. I’m so sorry!” Or maybe “There are no words to express how awful I feel and how sorry I’m.” They wouldn’t ask the other parent to forgive their son. That would be an offence; that would be up to the other parent/family to express that if they wished at some point in their lives. “Can you forgive my son?” “No way.” If it is not in self defiance, it is not forgivable. “Can you drop charges for something serious?” “No way.” They would just hire a lawyer, if they wanted to protect their son and stand behind him.

Note 10. For a discussion of tag questions as boosting devices, see Holmes (1992, pp. 304-308)

Note 11. The following are two examples of the phrase “go figure” in context:

1. Well, I finally had a day off and it had to rain the day I planned to go on a picnic... Go figure.
2. Go figure, the answer was right under my nose the entire time.

Note 12. The translation adopted for this example and other illustrative examples in this paper is one of equivalence and correspondence or idiomatic as a literal translation would be unnatural and inappropriate. It would not translate accurately, nor be indicative of anything that would occur in such a context in the English language or in the Western culture. For example, no one would try to arrange a marriage outright and certainly no one would bring up marriage at a funeral – nobody in their right mind at least.