

What Are Discourse Markers?

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Abstract: Discourse markers, for a very long time, had been regarded as the detritus of a discourse, useless, meaningless and unworthy of academic attention. In tandem with discourse analysis and pragmatics in the last five decades, discourse markers have been attracting more and more attentions from scholars. Although recent research on discourse markers is astonishingly progressing, consensus on discourse markers' definition and function has not yet been reached. Generally speaking, two representative groups of scholars, namely coherence theorists represented by Schiffrin, Redeker, and Fraser, etc., and relevance theorists represented by Blakemore, Sperber, and Wilson, etc., delimit discourse markers in different categories and explore discourse markers' functions in different scopes. The former studies discourse markers mainly within discourse itself, claiming that discourse markers' crucial function is to contribute to discourse coherence locally or globally; on the contrary, the latter investigates discourse markers beyond the discourse, proposing discourse markers should only be those items with procedural meaning rather than conceptual meaning, and forgoing the notion of coherence, which is deemed to be secondary and derivative to relevance. After generalizing discourse markers' three necessary attributes (non-truth-conditionality, optionality, and connectivity) and two different views mentioned, we advocate exploring discourse markers in a micro and macro-level of discourse in a wider sense of context so that we can define discourse makers more comprehensively.

1. Introduction

Discourse markers (henceforth DMs) are very pervasive in our daily communication, but for a very long time, they had been regarded as the redundancy for they contribute nothing to the truth condition of the utterance. In 1953, Randolph Quirk in a lecture first drew attention to some frequent words, such as *you know, you see, and well*[1]. Since then, these 'useless' and 'meaningless' items begin to attract more linguists' attention, and many scholars commence on attaching considerable importance to their functions. In recent thirty years, with the development of many disciplines, discourse analysis and pragmatics in particular, more studies on discourse markers have turned up. Till now, the research on DMs has turned into a "growth industry" [2].

However, the definition of DMs is still of great controversy, and so is the function of DMs. Many linguists study DMs from different perspectives, so that their conclusions are rather divergent. Generally speaking, there are two groups of scholars in this field. One is those represented by Schiffrin, Redeker, and Fraser, etc., who presume discourse markers, although their memberships are not totally the same, do contribute to discourse coherence.

The other group represented by Blakemore, Wilson and Sperber, etc., who denominate DMs discourse connectives (hereafter DCs), hold that DCs are only those items with procedural meaning rather than conceptual meaning which express an inferential connection arising out of the way one proposition is interpreted as relevant with respect to another. Thus, DCs have the constraint on relevance, which is embodied in terms of context, i.e., contextual selection and contextual effect as well.

Undoubtedly, these two groups of linguists have made a momentous contribution to the study of

DMs. Schiffrin, Redeker, and Fraser find that DMs can play a vital part in connecting different segments of the discourse, thus contributing to discourse coherence; Blakemore claims that DMs may not be necessarily linking the discourse segments but facilitating the hearer's processing by indicating the direction in which relevance is to be sought by virtue of the inferential connections rather than cohesive connections.

At the meantime, the defects of both groups can never be negligible. For instance, Schiffrin, Redeker, and Fraser confine the study of DMs to the discourse itself, which diminishes the importance of DMs; Blakemore, on the other hand, advocates the study of DMs within the framework of relevance instead of coherence, but she sorts out DCs from the counterparts with conceptual meaning and she even rejects DMs' contribution to coherence.

Hence, even though the two main ideas on DMs have contributed a lot to the research on DMs, further meditation still deserves being taken over DMs, especially their definition and pivotal function.

2. Discourse Markers

2.1. Literature Review

In 1953, in a lecture on 'Careless Talk— Some Features of Everyday Speech', Randolph Quirk drew attention to the 'recurrent modifiers' *you know, you see and well*:

"It is easily demonstrable that these play, from the point of view of grammatical structure, no part in the transmission of information, yet not only is our present-day colloquy constantly embellished with them, but popular talk stretching back to Shakespeare and beyond has been similarly peppered with these apparently useless and meaningless items. ...since the desire to feel that the hearer is sharing something with one seems to be fundamental in the urge to speak, these sharing devices, these intimacy signals in our everyday talk, are of considerable importance." [1]

An early reference to DMs as a linguistic entity was Labov and Fanshel in discussing the issue of well with almost no other comments on DMs:

"As a discourse marker, *well* refers backwards to some topic that is already shared knowledge among participants. When *well* is the first element in a discourse or a topic, this reference is necessarily to an unstated topic of joint concern." [2]

In 1983, although he did not give it a name, Levinson regarded DMs as a class worthy of study on its own merits. He wrote that:

"There are many words and phrases in English, and no doubt in most languages, that indicate the relationship between an utterance and the prior discourse. Examples are utterance-initial usages of *but, therefore, in conclusion, to the contrary, still, however, anyway, well, besides, actually, all in all, so, after all*, and so on. It is generally conceded that such words have at least a component of meaning that resists truth-conditional treatment... what they seem to do is indicate, often in very complex ways, just how the utterance that contains them is a response to, or a continuation of, some portion of the prior discourse." [3]

Although Levinson did not pursue DMs beyond these brief comments, he had conducted a tentative study on DMs, from a pragmatic perspective, and revealed some pragmatic functions of DMs.

Zwicky made a sporadic exploration for DMs: "...we find at least one grammatically significant class of items, in English and in languages generally... here I will call them 'discourse markers'... On the grounds of distributions, prosody, and meaning, discourse markers can be seen to form a class." [4] Zwicky further stated that DMs must be separated from other function words, that they frequently occurred at the beginning of sentences to continue the conversation, and that they were prosodically separated from their surrounding context by pauses, intonation breaks, or both. The DMs were syntactically insulated from the rest of sentence in which they occurred and form no sort of unit with adjacent words; moreover, they had pragmatic functions, for example, the role of relating the current utterance with a larger discourse, rather than the narrowly semantic functions [4].

Schiffrin proposed DMs as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk”[5]. She analyzed in detail eleven expressions: *and, because, but, I mean, now, oh, or, so, then, well, and y’know*. Schiffrin examined these DMs’ functions in the interpretation of discourse, especially their contribution to discourse coherence. Schiffrin claimed that DMs did not easily fit into a linguistic class, and she offered some tentative suggestions as to what specific conditions allowed an expression to be used as a marker:

“It has to be syntactically detachable from a sentence. It has to be commonly used in initial position of an utterance.

It has to have a range of prosodic contours.

It has to be able to operate at both local and global levels of discourse, and on different planes of discourse.”[5]

Schiffrin also added that an expression which functioned within at least one discourse component could become a marker which functioned within other discourse components—simply because of the integration among components. This meant that expressions, through which speakers displayed their orientation toward a proposition, e.g. an adverb such as *frankly*, an interjection such as *gosh*, could become markers of other discourse components, as could expressions through which speakers organized action and exchange structures, idea structure, and information states [5].

Redeker argued that Schiffrin’s definition of DMs had not been adequately addressed and then she suggested a clearer definition of the component of discourse coherence and a broader framework that embraced all connective expressions:

“a word or phrase, for instance, a conjunction, adverbial, comment clause, interjection, that is 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. All utterance in this definition is an intonationally and structurally bounded, usually clausal unit.”[6]

Partly based on Redeker’s definition, Lenk asserted that “discourse marker refers only to expressions in spoken discourse that are used pragmatically, with a structuring and organizational function.”[7]

Fraser discussed DMs within the scope of Pragmatic Markers. He presumed that DMs were one type of pragmatic markers. Fraser saw a DM as “an expression which signals the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse. ... Discourse markers do not contribute to the representative sentence meaning, but only to the procedural meaning: they provide instructions to the addressee on how the utterance to which the discourse marker is attached is to be interpreted.” [8] Three years later, Fraser defined DMs as follows:

“I have defined DMs as a pragmatic class, lexical expressions drawn from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases. With certain exceptions, they signal a relationship between the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior segment, S1. They have a core meaning which is procedural, not conceptual, and their more specific interpretation is ‘negotiated’ by the context, both linguistic and conceptual. [2]

Hansen advocated defining markers “as linguistic items, which fulfill a non-propositional, metadiscursive (primarily connective) function, and whose scope is inherently variable, such that it may comprise both sub-sentential and supra-sentential unit.” [9] Hansen argued semantically that “markers are best seen as processing instructions intended to aid the hearer in integrating the unit hosting the marker into a coherent mental representation of the unfolding discourse.”[9]

As mentioned above, one of the most conspicuous problems is the disagreement on the definition of discourse markers. Owing to the failure to reach a consensus on what the DMs are, the membership of DMs is still fuzzy: Redeker’s definition alters the boundaries of the DM class set by Schiffrin, for example, non-anaphoric uses of *now* are excluded; Fraser assumes that pause markers, such as *well, oh, and so on*, should be excluded from DMs. In addition, the research on DMs is confined to discourse itself, and DMs functions are generally held to link different parts of discourse.

2.2. Conceptual Meaning and Procedural Meaning

Within the relevance theory (RT), many items as DMs are regarded as Discourse Connectives (DCs). Blakemore describes discourse connectives as “expressions that constrain the interpretation of the utterances that contain them by virtue of the inferential connections of the utterances they express.” [10] Later, Blakemore publishes a series of articles, make an account of DCs on the basis of relevance theory, and initially claims that DCs encode procedural, rather than conceptual information.

According to Blakemore, linguistic meaning comes in two varieties: one is conceptual meaning, a type of information that itself can form part of the conceptual representation that inferences are performed on; the other is procedural meaning, a type of information that triggers certain types of inference that the pragmatic system is to perform on these representations, as Blakemore says:

“On the one hand, there is the essentially conceptual theory that deals with the way in which elements of linguistic structure map onto concepts, i.e. onto constitutions of propositional representations that undergo computations. On the other hand, there is the essentially procedural theory that deals with the way in which elements of linguistic structure map directly onto computations themselves, i.e. onto mental process.” [10]

Roughly speaking, words with conceptual meaning contribute to the content of assertions and are analyzed as encoding elements of conceptual representations. Words with procedural meaning encode information about how these representations are to be used in inference, and they tell how to take these representations. DCs belong to the items that are classed as words with procedural meaning rather than conceptual meaning. Blakemore exemplifies DCs as follows [11]:

- (1) a. Tom can open Bill’s safe.
b. He knows the combination.

If the proposition expressed by (1a) is taken as part of the context in which (1b) is interpreted, at least two interpretations of (1b) are possible. One is that (1b) is relevant as evidence for (1a); the other is that (1b) achieves relevance as an implication of (1a). So the relationship between a and b in (1) can be either conclusion-premise, or premise-conclusion.

But consider (1’) and (1’’):

- (1’) a. Tom can open Bill’s safe.
b. *After all*, he knows the combination.
(1’’) a. Tom can open Bill’s sage.
b. *So* he knows the combination.

The propositions expressed by (1’) and (1’’) are unambiguously marked as conclusion-premise relation and premise-conclusion relation respectively. *After all* in (1’) and *so* in (1’’) does not affect the proposition expressed by the utterance in which they stand, and they simply provide a further constraint on the way in which that proposition may be interpreted. Thus *after all* in (1’) and *so* in (1’’) do not have conceptual meaning but procedural meaning.

In her early works, Blakemore suggests that the distinction between conceptual and procedural is coextensive with the distinction between truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional. In the light of arguments by Wilson and Sperber, Blakemore has abandoned the differentiation of non-truth-conditional from procedural meaning. Wilson and Sperber argue that the distinction between truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional is not coextensive with the distinction between conceptual and procedural [12]. In other words, truth-conditionality and conceptuality are not the same, for example, an expression may be simultaneously conceptual and non-truth-conditional. So using non-truth-conditionality as a criterion for membership in the DM class can result in lumping together conceptual and non-conceptual items in the same class. Blakemore suggests that while sentence adverbials, parentheticals, and certain so-called apposition markers are non-truth conditional, they clearly encode concepts [11]. For example, *frankly* in (2) is usually seen as contributing nothing to truth condition of the utterance:

- (2) *Frankly*, I find this party is boring.

It is awkward, however, to say that *frankly* has no conceptual content in its own right, because sometimes it can be reformulated by the other forms with the same conceptual content. Look at the following example:

(2') a. Peter: Frankly, I find this party is boring.

b. Mary: That's not true. You're not being frank. I've just seen you dancing with the blond beauty in blue.

Frankly in (2'a) has a conceptual representation which can be either true or false in its own right while still not affecting the overall truth-conditions of (2'a). Mary's response is used to falsify the conceptual representation of *frankly* with reformulated form of you're not being frank. So such adverbials as *frankly* can not affect the truth-condition of the utterance in which they are, but they have the conceptual content.

On the contrary, DCs like *but, so, nevertheless, etc.*, according to Blakemore, encode procedural rather than conceptual meaning; DCs are non-truth-conditional, and their function is to guide pragmatic inference, rather than to form part of the communicated message.

However, Blakemore argues that such apposition markers as *in other words, that is, that is to say, in short*, are conceptual, so they should not be classified into DMs. She points out, for example, that the appositional expressions in question appear to be compositional (e.g. compare *in other words* to *to put it in other words*)[11].

The distinction between procedural meaning and conceptual meaning has an important impact on the future of DM research. Just as Schourup comments: "If the distinction can be maintained, it will at the very least, require partitioning the current class of DMs into relational items of two very different sorts in terms of their contribution to conveyed meanings." [13] Schourup's remark is reasonable, for Blakemore suggests that although sentence adverbials, parentheticals, and certain so-called apposition markers are non-truth-conditional, they clearly encode concepts. Accordingly, they should be excluded from DMs[14]. Moreover, Blakemore holds that there is a clear line between two kinds of meaning: conceptual, on the one hand, and procedural, on the other hand[15].

Here arises an essentially important question: should the distinction between conceptual meaning and procedural meaning be the key criterion for judging whether an item can be classified into DMs?

Obviously, Blakemore's distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning is deeply influenced by Grice. The distinction "echoes Grice's distinction between saying and conventionally implicating" [16]. "What is said" is semantically explicit. But "conventional implicatures", according to Levinson, are non-truth-conditional inferences that are not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles like the maxims, but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items or expressions. Levinson quotes Grice's example to demonstrate conventional implicature: the word *but* has the same truth-conditional content as the word *and*, with an additional conventional implicature to the effect that there is some contrast between the conjuncts[3].

The clear cut made between "what is said" and "what is conventionally implicated" is based on, according to Grice, the principle of Modified Occam's Razor, i.e. senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity [17]. "What is said" has its own truth-conditional meaning, so it belongs to semantic category, but "what is conventionally implicated" does not encode truth-conditional meaning, and it is involved in pragmatic category. Thus, the clear cut between "what is said" and "what is conventionally implicated" means a clear line has drawn by Grice between Semantics and Pragmatics, which incurs strong criticism. For example, Levinson doubts the rationality of the distinction between "what is said" and "conventional implicature". Since implicatures derive from (a) what is said, and (b) the assumption that at least the co-operative principle is being maintained [3], "what is said" and "implicature" should be tightly interwoven and so should Semantics and Pragmatics be.

Blakemore's distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning is correlated with Grice's distinction between "saying" and "what is conventionally implicated". Moreover, Blakemore holds that "this procedural account has a number of advantages over Grice's conceptual account of similar

non-truth conditional expressions in terms of conventional implicature.”Procedural meaning can “distinguish discourse markers such as *well* and *so* from non-truth conditional sentence adverbials such as *seriously* or *unfortunately* which has synonymous truth conditional manner-adverbial counterparts.”[18] In Blakemore’s eyes, DCs are purely procedural rather than conceptual, that is, they don’t have their own propositional content. For example:

(3) a. Tom can open Bill’s safe. *So* he knows the combination.

b. That’s not true.

The response of (3b) could only be heard as claiming the falsity of the proposition that Tom knows the combination, or the proposition that Tom can open Bill’s safe. It can not under any circumstances be denying the procedural effect that one is the evidence for the other. Obviously, for Blakemore, DCs like *so* only possess the procedural meaning, and it seems unlikely to construct examples parallel to example (3) in which *so* encodes conceptual meaning. However, Schourup displays her skepticism by presenting the following example [13]:

(4) a. He insulted me. *So* I quit.

b. That’s not true. That’s not why you quit.

From the example, we can see that the distinction between conceptual meaning and procedural meaning is not absolutely clear-cut. While conceptual meaning and procedural meaning are two complementary kinds of meaning, doubts arise about how to treat the words that encode these two kinds of meaning. *So*, for example, is a DC with only procedural meaning, but has the “result meaning in its use as marker of potential participation transition” [5]. Hence, “conceptual and procedural should be regarded as two non-disjoint sets, and conceptual and procedural features can coexist within a single marker” [19].

Furthermore, it is inappropriate for Blakemore to claim that procedural meaning should be one key criterion for judging whether an item can be classified into DCs or DMs. We take parenthetical as an example. The parenthetical comments contribute to proposition with their own truth condition (conceptual meaning) —even though they do not contribute to the truth condition of the utterances that contain them, so they should be excluded from the list of DMs, just like *apparently* in example (5) [11]:

(5) His house, *apparently*, is very old.

However, if (5) occurs in (5’) with (5’a) as its context, it is genuinely unreasonable to deny the membership of *apparently* in DMs:

(5’) a. John lives in a very cozy house.

b. *Apparently*, his house is very old.

In sum, it is not appropriate to make a distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning and neither is reasonable to take procedural meaning as a necessary attribute of DMs. But DC with purely procedural meaning provides a new perspective to study DMs, that is, DMs may not necessarily be studied within the textual scope. For the sake of an accurate definition of DMs, a tentative discussion of features of DMs is essentially important and necessary.

2.3. Necessary Features of Discourse Markers

Schourup generalizes some features which are less consistently regarded as criteria for DMs: weak clause association, initiality, orality, and multi-categoriality. And Schourup believes that connectivity, optionality, and non-truth-conditional are all frequently taken together to be necessary attributes of DMs[13].

2.3.1. Non-truth-conditionality

DMs are generally considered not to contribute to the truth-conditions of the proposition expressed by an utterance. Blakemore asserts that “the fact that these expressions do not contribute to the truth conditions of the utterances that contain them, would qualify them as discourse markers.” [11]Hansen thinks that DMs fulfill a non-propositional function [9]. Hall supposes a DM is non-truth-conditional[20]. When non-truth-conditional of DMs is talked over, we should remember “saying that DMs do not change grammaticality judgement or truth conditions is not

meant to imply that they do not carry meaning”[21]. Non-truth-conditionality does not necessarily mean that DMs should not possess their own propositional content, namely, conceptual meaning. An expression, in spite of its conceptual meaning, may still be classified into DMs. Accordingly, the apposition markers can not be indiscreetly excluded by Blakemore from DMs. So in this sense, DMs not only include DCs with purely procedural meaning, but also contain some items with conceptual meaning. Now let’s look back at example (5’):

(5’) a. John lives in a very cozy house.

b. *Apparently*, his house is very old.

According to Blakemore, *apparently* in (5’) has its own truth conditions, namely, it has conceptual meaning, so it is not a DC and neither is it a DM. However, *apparently* does not contribute to truth condition of proposition expressed by (5’b) and *apparently* meets the other two necessary attributes of a DM.

2.3.2. Optionality

DMs are frequently claimed to be optional in two distinct senses. Firstly, they are almost universally regarded as syntactically optional in the sense that removal of a DM does not alter the grammaticality of its host sentence. Secondly, DMs are also widely claimed to be optional in the further sense that they do not enlarge the possibilities for semantic relationship between the elements they associate. Therefore, if a DM is omitted, the relationship it signals is still available to the hearer, though no longer explicitly cued. Utterances (6) and (6’), for example, may be understood in roughly the same way, and the only difference is that however in (6) makes the relationship between the two parts in the utterance explicit:

(6) My younger sister loves classic music. *However*, I am fond of pop music.

(6’) My younger sister loves classic music. I am fond of pop music.

To some extent, omitting the DMs renders the text neither ungrammatical nor unintelligible. Despite this, it is never held that optionality of DMs renders them useless or redundant. On the contrary, DMs are typically said to “display” or “reflect” existing propositional connections rather than create them[5], they are also commonly said to “reinforce” or “clue” the interpretation intended by the speaker [13]. Look at Schiffrin’s example[5]:

(7) a. Sue dislikes all linguists

b. I like her.

Without any marker preceding (7b), which meaning relation is assigned depends on a number of background conditions. One is the identity of the speaker and the speaker’s background beliefs. A linguist (or one who likes linguists) would no doubt interpret a contrastive relation between (7a) and (7b) which would be displayed by *but*. But someone who also dislikes linguist might interpret a resultative relation, such that *so* would best display their relationship. As a result, no matter *but* or *so*, the marker, although without it the utterance is still intelligible, can not only display the intended relationship of the utterance but also clue the speaker’s intentions.

2.3.3. Connectivity

The characteristic figuring most prominently in definitions of DMs is their use to relate utterances or other discourse units. Schiffrin operationally defines markers as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk”, and she specifies “brackets” as “devices which are both cataphoric and anaphoric whether they are in initial or terminal position” [5]. Redeker deems that the primary function of DMs is the linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context [6]. Fraser also asserts that DMs share one common property: they impose a relationship between some aspects of the discourse segments [2].

But Fraser emphasizes that DM introduces a separate message with its propositional content. In other words, a DM functions like a two-place relation, one argument lying in the segment they introduce, the other lying in the prior discourse. It can be represented by the form as <S1. DM + S2> rather than <S1, DM + S2>[2]. For example:

(8) a. Jack played tennis. *And* Mary read a book.

b. Jack played tennis, and Mary read a book.

And in (8a) is a DM, which introduces a separate message with its propositional content, whereas *and* in (8b) functions purely as a conjunction within a single message. Later, Fraser further adds that a DM “typically occurs in S2 sentence-initial position in a S1-S2 combination, and provides no semantic content value but rather signals a semantic relationship between the two sentences.” [22]

Obviously, those linguists above specify the connectivity of DMs only within the textual scope, i.e. DMs relate two textual units, which is criticized by some relevance theorists. For example, Blakemore holds that DM connectivity does not necessarily involve more than one textual unit. Consider example (9) [10]:

(9) [Seeing someone return home with parcels]
So you’ve spent all your money.

Blakemore argues that it is preferable to view certain DMs not as necessarily relating two segments of text, but as relating the propositional content expressed by the current utterance to assumptions that may or may not have been communicated by a prior utterance. As mentioned above, Blakemore describes discourse connectives as “expressions that constrain the interpretation of the utterances that contain them by virtue of the inferential connections of the utterances they express.” [10] DCs carry procedural rather than conceptual information about the inferential face of communication, thus DCs connecting host utterance directly or indirectly with the contextual effects, so connectives “link an utterance and a context or contextual effects” [16].

In sum, DMs not only relate the discourse segments but also connect the utterance with context. Similarly, Hansen echoes this viewpoint in his claim that DMs may link their host utterance not only to the linguistic co-text, but also to “the context in a wider sense” [23]. So Connectivity of DMs mainly refers to DMs’ linkage of utterance with context, linguistically or extra-linguistically.

2.4. Definition

Based on the historical research and features of DMs, we tentatively endeavor to give DMs a comparatively comprehensive definition. DMs refer to items, which are grammatically optional and multi-categorical (or “trans-categorical”, a category of discourse markers includes items referring to different parts of speech [24]) varying from words, such as conjunctions (e.g. *but*, *and*), adverbials (e.g. *frankly*, *apparently*), interjections (e.g. *oh*, *well*), to phrases (e.g. *as a result*, *in addition*), and even to clauses (e.g. *you know*, *I mean*). These items attribute nothing to the truth conditions of the utterance that contain them. They often appear initially in the utterance, introducing a separate message with its propositional content, and their primary function is more pragmatic than semantic. DMs, therefore, include both those DMs studied within the textual scope and those DCs with purely procedural meaning as well.

3. Conclusion

DMs are omnipresent in daily communication, which should never be regarded as the linguistic detritus unworthy of adequate consideration. The questions of what DMs are and what a role DMs can really play particularly deserve a further explorative effort. The further research on DMs, especially DMs’ definition should integrate those ideas from such coherence linguists as Schiffrin, Redeker, and Fraser, who study DMs in discourse itself with those ideas from such relevance theorists as Blakemore and Wilson who study DMs beyond discourse itself, so that we can define DMs more comprehensively and explore DMs’ core function more profoundly.

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