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A CORPUS-BASED STUDY ON THE DISCOURSE MARKER maʕleš

A Thesis Submitted to
Department of Applied Linguistics

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

by Mukhtar Sayed

(under the supervision of Dr. Zeinab Taha)
May 2018
The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Graffiti from Cairo, Egypt
This monograph is an attempt to capture the pragmatic functions and the syntactic behavior of the discourse marker *maʕleš* in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. It also aims to highlight any potential correlations between the syntactic behavior of *maʕleš* and its pragmatic functions. Additionally, the collocational behavior of *maʕleš* within its different pragmatic functions is investigated. The data of this study is a purposeful sample drawn from a corpus of an Egyptian series. Utilizing a corpus-based, qualitative method, the data is analyzed by using *WordSmith Tools*, a functional corpus software that has the capacity for the search for a word or a set of words at the same time, in addition to the search for the collocations of a particular word. The results of the study are interpreted within the framework of Politeness Theory, as well as Speech Act Theory, based on the notion of the illocutionary force that utterances bring into conversation. The findings of the study show that *maʕleš* performs as a politeness marker, flagging and/or attenuating a variety of performative acts. Moreover, the findings demonstrate that there is a significant correlation between the illocutions marked by *maʕleš* and both its syntactic and collocational behaviors.

*Keywords*: discourse marker, pragmatic function, syntactic behavior, collocation, corpus, Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, Egyptian Colloquial Arabic
To the soul of my nephew,
Rayyaan
September 4th, 2010 – July 12th, 2017
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Finally, nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this master’s degree than the members of my family: my wife, my two sisters, my brother, my nieces, my nephews, and above all my beloved, kind-hearted parents who have made me the man who I am now. My family, I love you all.
LIST OF SYMBOLS

Broad phonetic transcription rather than narrow is used for the Arabic data.

The symbols of Arabic vowels:
[a] as in kalb (dog)
[e] as in bent (girl)
[i] as in benti (my girl) only at the end of a word
[o] as in dofr (fingernail)
[ā] as in bāb (door)
[e] as in fēn (where)
[ī] as in mīn (who)
[ō] as in kōra (ball)
[ū] as in nūr (light)

The symbols of the consonants shared with English:
b, t, g, d, z, s, j, š, f, k, l, m, n, h, w, y

The symbols of the consonants specific to Arabic:
[ʔ] a glottal stop, as in ʔalb (heart)
[q] a uvular voiceless plosive, as in qesm (department)
[r] a trill, as in rāgel (man)
[ḥ] a voiceless fricative, as in ḥabar (news)
[ġ] a voiced fricative, as in ġani (rich)
[h] a pharyngeal voiceless fricative, as in hayā (life)
[ʕ] a pharyngeal voiced fricative, as in ʕelm (science)

The symbols of the velarized sounds:
[ṭ] as in matār (airport)
[ḍ] as in darb (beating)
[ṭ] as in sūt (voice)
[ẓ] as in zarīf (cute)

Geminated (or stressed) consonants are represented by doubling the symbol.
Two or more words uttered as one entity are transliterated with a hyphen between each.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theoretical Background

Discourse markers (DMs) have a strong tendency to be extremely frequent in spoken language. A sizable body of empirical evidence has supported this fact (Altenberg, 1990; James, 1983; Kwong, 1989). Such a high frequency of DMs differentiates them from other ordinary discourse items (or word classes) in language. DMs are metalingual or metadiscoursal means used to organize the content of discourse on different levels (Lenk, 1998a). According to Aijmer (2002), DMs are “dispensable elements functioning as signposts in the communication facilitating the hearer’s interpretation of the utterance on the basis of various contextual clues” (p. 2). By dispensable, Aijmer does not connote that discourse markers are meaningless linguistic units that are of no importance to discourse; rather, she underscores the importance of approaching them within the disciplines of pragmatics and discourse analysis, not within the discipline of semantics. This is due to the fact that discourse markers have little or no semantic values and do not augment the informational or the propositional content of the utterance containing them (Fraser, 1996, 2006). However, they bear a vast number of pragmatic values indispensable to managing and organizing discourse and to maintaining successful communication (Camiciottoli, 2007; Degand, Cornillie, & Pietrandrea, 2013; Matei, 2010). In other words, the literal meanings of DMs are usually overridden by the large number of pragmatic values with which they can be associated. These pragmatic values (or functions) involve the speaker’s relationship to the addressee, to the utterance, or to the subject matter, and the interpretation of such functions are bound by the context in which they occur (Karin Aijmer, 2002).
In consequence of these facts, it is argued that the use of DMs by native speakers greases the wheels of implementing efficient interaction. As maintained by Crystal (1988), DMs act as the “oil which helps [interlocutors] perform the complex task of spontaneous speech production and interaction smoothly and efficiently” (p. 48). Therefore, they play a pivotal role in establishing and sustaining effective communication, and insufficiency or lack of employing them in conversation will likely lead to poor communication or even to a total breakdown in communication.

Because DMs are very frequent in spoken discourse and have different pragmatic functions, one or more of which may be more recurrent than the rest, native speakers and even teachers of a given language usually translate them intuitively. Based on their intuition, they often employ a word or a phrase from a foreign language to represent the most common pragmatic value that a DM has. This kind of translation is misleading and confusing to learners who study a second language (L2) because it restricts the various pragmatic functions that the DM serves to its most salient, popular one. This, in turn, will likely cause misinterpretation and misuse of the DM by L2 learners, since they do not have sufficient awareness of its multifunctionality. To exemplify, the DM under investigation in this thesis, *maʕleš*, is no exception. *maʕleš* is a highly prevalent DM in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) and is used in spoken discourse most likely to grease the relationships between interactants and to avoid conversational bumps. *maʕleš* occurs as part of the discourse segments, yet it does not contribute to the propositional content of the message conveyed. Although *maʕleš* seems to carry out a variety of pragmatic functions, it is still usually intuitively translated by native speakers and teachers of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) as *sorry*, being pictured as a politeness device that only conveys the apologizing act in conversation. However, the real and thorough picture of *maʕleš* is far more complex. Even though the meaning
value of *apology* signaled by *maʕleš* is one of its primary pragmatic functions, there are other numerous functions that *maʕleš* can still mark in spoken discourse. For this reason, it is one of the DMs in ECA that merits attention and investigation, bearing in mind its commonness in spoken language and the incomplete and inaccurate intuition that native speakers have regarding its usage.

Since DMs are usually attended to within the domains of discourse analysis and pragmatics, it is worth taking a brief look at these two subdisciplines of linguistics.

1.1.1 *Discourse analysis.* In the medium of language, the term *discourse* is accounted for from different perspectives. It denotes authentic occurrences of communicative action where real linguistic structures (whether spoken or written) larger than the sentence are used by people (Brown & Yule, 1983; De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). In addition, discourse is occasionally used as a synonym of ‘text’ (Schneider & Barron, 2014), meaning that it is composed of long stretches of meaningful linguistic forms that are created and interpreted in the context of “social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 3). In this sense, not only does discourse comprise patterns of language in use, but it also involves patterns of people’s knowledge, beliefs, and habitual actions that are depicted in it (Johnstone, 2018). From a different point of view, discourse may also apply to the multiplicity of the semantic representations of connected sentences and to the diversity of the communicative encounters (Schneider & Barron, 2014).

Hence, the analysis of discourse is committed to the analysis of language in use. It describes linguistic forms in association with the functions for which those forms are used within cultural and social contexts (Brown & Yule, 1983; Paltridge, 2012; Stubbs, 1983). The term *discourse*
was first introduced by Harris (1952), in that it referred to the examination of both language beyond the sentence level and the correlation between linguistic and nonlinguistic (cultural) behavior. In broad terms, discourse analysis is concerned with “what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about language . . . [to] exchange information, express feelings, make things happen, . . . and so on” (Johnstone, 2018, p. 2).

1.1.2 Pragmatics. Pragmatics is concerned with meaning beyond what is being explicitly said. The two domains of pragmatics and discourse analysis are closely related, and they often overlap. This is attributed to the fact that the study and the understanding of pragmatic meaning, such as indirect speech acts, conversational implicature, and deixis, necessitate the accommodation between linguistic context, cognitive context, and social context, all of which are essential constituents of discourse (Schneider & Barron, 2014). As such, pragmatics is particularly pertinent to “people’s intentions, assumptions, beliefs, goals, and the kinds of actions they perform while using language,” as well as with “contexts, situations, and settings within which such language users occur” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000, p. 19).

What speakers say does not always or even usually indicate what they really mean. The message that people aim to convey can frequently be rather different from what their explicit words say or may even contradict the utterance. This is what pragmatics is about. In linguistics, whereas semantics deals with abstract meaning (the meaning assigned to entries in dictionaries), pragmatics appertains to contextual meaning (Blakemore, 1992; O’Keeffe & McCarthy, 2010; Thomas, 1995). In broad terms, pragmatics is “the study of language usage” (Levinson, 1983, p. 5). It attends to “meaning in use or meaning in context” (Thomas, 1995, pp. 1, 2). This definition, as Thomas indicates, is twofold. On the one hand, it is interpreted by some scholars as “speaker
meaning” (p. 2). In other words, the pragmatic meaning is the meaning intended by the speaker regardless of the semantic content of his or her utterance. Such an interpretation of the definition lays the emphasis firmly on the producer of the message, ignoring the interpretation process carried out by the addressee. On the other hand, other practitioners equate the definition with “utterance interpretation” (p. 2), focusing their attention on the receiver of the message, neglecting the role played by the utterance producer in the context. A comprehensive understanding of pragmatic meaning cannot be reached without taking account of both perspectives embraced by the two camps.

1.1.3 Markers. Schiffrin (1988) has made substantial contributions to the definition and the study of markers. Firstly, she is one of the first scholars who identified markers as a distinct, definable linguistic class and highlighted their grammatical heterogeneity. Secondly, she has laid the ground for the corpus-based empirical approach as to the study of markers and has shown their invaluable role in sustaining discourse coherence (Feng, 2010). In addition, a large body of research has adopted her discourse approach as a point of departure in accounting for markers’ functions (Redeker, 1991).

Schiffrin (1988) defines markers as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (p. 31). The ‘sequential dependence’ feature of markers pertains to the fact that they function on the discourse plane (Onodera, 2004). By the notion of ‘bracketing,’ which was first introduced by Goffman (1974), Schiffrin means that markers occur either as initial or as terminal brackets in the utterance so as to mark the different relationships between different units of talk (or discourse segments). Markers also act as frontiers of social life and social organization. In other words, markers do not only have a role in the organization of talk, but they are factors in
signaling social relationships between the producers and the recipients of talk, too. Moreover, as stated by Schiffrin, the conception ‘units of talk’ is deliberately left vague in the definition in order to allow for various discourse units (or segments) of different kinds and sizes to be figured, that is, not to be restricted to a particular kind of unit of talk, the sentence, but to include other units such as propositions, speech acts, tone groups, verses, and so forth (Onodera, 2004; Urgelles-Coll, 2010).

1.1.4 Discourse markers. A discourse marker (DM) is a linguistic item that can fulfill a variety of functions in conversation and that contributes to the production of coherent discourse, in textual, expressive, cognitive, and social domains (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001). These domains are facets of the communicative knowledge (competence) upon which interlocutors draw in the interactive processes of communication they undergo. Textual communicative competence is the ability to produce and organize forms and convey meanings across linguistic units longer than the single sentence. The cognitive domain of knowledge stands for the ability to present concepts and ideas through language. The expressive and social competences are closely related to each other; they denote the capacity to indicate attitudes, perform actions, negotiate relationships, and display personal and social identities. Thus, it seems that a discourse marker does only operate at the textual plane where it helps in gluing segments of discourse, but it has an impact on the cognitive, affective, and social properties of discourse.

From a pragmatic perspective, a discourse marker, labeled also as a pragmatic marker (Aijmer, 2013; Aijmer, Foolen, & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2006; Fraser, 1996; Hansen, 2005), is a linguistic device or a lexical expression that may have several pragmatic functions that signal the interlocutors’ potential communicative intentions, attitudes, or emotions (Fraser, 1990, 1996, 1999;
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Schourup, 1999). However, the DM is not an essential part of the propositional content of the utterance. That is to say, it is a distinct and separate linguistic item that has very little or no influence on the syntactic features (grammaticality) of the proposition, yet it affects the pragmatic characteristics of discourse.

1.1.5 Hedges. Many researchers have written about the notion of *hedging*; however, Lakoff (1973) is the first scholar to focus attention on the concept and to popularize it. According to Lakoff, hedging is a pragmatic, not a semantic, phenomenon that involves the attenuation of the impingement of an utterance on the addressee, by the use of a linguistic device. As such, a hedge is a pragmatic, politeness marker that does not contribute to the propositional content of the utterance, yet it alleviates its strength; it is a particle, a word, or a phrase that attenuates the seriousness of the proposition and functions as a mitigation marker (Wilamová, 2005). The interpretation of the impact of the hedge on the utterance depends on context.

Lakoff (1973) has indicated that there is a kind of interaction between hedges and performative acts in utterances, in that hedges modify the force of a speech act, but he has not followed up on this observation to explain what type of modification is made by hedges. On the other hand, Brown and Levinson (1987), in their effort to account for politeness theory, have stated that the use of hedges in discourse softens or mitigates the illocutionary force of speech acts, leading to communication that avoids interactional threats, by creating a kind of distance between the speaker and his or her own utterance in order not to threaten the addressee’s face. This phenomenon is referred to as *speech act hedging* (Fraser, 2010).

Wilamová (2005) presents different kinds of hedging devices, each of which modifies a certain type of speech acts. *Performative hedges*, for example, diminish the intensity of the utterance by
refining its illocutionary force. Such hedges are utilized to signify, for example, illocutions of requesting, suggesting, asking, advising, and disagreeing. The key function of performative hedges is decreasing the directness of the utterance, which is likely to make it more acceptable to the addressee. *Downgraders* are another group of hedges that minimize the extent to which facts about the hearer or the information he or she is acquainted with are negative or undesirable. The could be used to weaken negative or unpleasant assertions or claims made about someone or something.

1.1.6 Approaches to discourse markers. There have been several approaches within which the functions and the usages of DMs have been studied. One approach constitutes *integrative theories*, which describe how DMs behave in discourse or how they affect it (Aijmer, 2013). This integrative approach has commenced with the pioneering study conducted on DMs by Schiffrin (1988). It involves multiple, integrated contextual planes (structural, semantic, pragmatic, and social) within which DMs are analyzed to show their significance in creating and maintaining discourse coherence. In this integrative framework, DMs are regarded as multifunctional lexical items that play a key role in the structure and the organization of discourse and that have indexical functions according to which a DM may index the utterance to the speaker, to the hearer, and to the upcoming or the prior segment of text.

Another model within which DMs have been examined is *relevance theory*. While this theory is first developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995), it is brought to the study of DMs by Blakemore (2002). Within the framework of relevance theory, the purpose (or the function) for which a DM is used changes in conformity with the communicative principle of relevance that drives the addressee to infer the interpretation intended. In other words, unlike the integrative
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model, relevance theory does not hold an integrated standpoint on how DMs are interpreted; instead, it views DMs from a hearer perspective, deeming them to be signals from the speaker to the hearer, allowing the hearer to choose a specific inferential route in interpreting the DM, based on optimal relevance of contextual assumptions.

A third paradigm accounting for the functions of DMs is that propounded by Fraser (1990, 1996). In this framework, two types of DM functions are distinguished: *propositional* and *non-propositional* functions. The former stands for the truth-conditional content of the utterance, showing the structural relations between the utterances or the stretches of discourse, where DMs may be a fundamental part of the propositional meaning of discourse. The latter is responsible for highlighting intentions, emotions, attitudes, feelings, and stances of interlocutors in conversation, where DMs are not constituents of the propositional content of the utterance, yet they are parts of the discourse segments and mark aspects of the message conveyed. Furthermore, Fraser (1996) differentiates between four types of DMs that can occur in four types of messages: 1) *basic markers* that are parts of a single, basic message constituting the propositional content of the utterance, 2) *commentary markers* which are optional in commentary messages that make comments on the basic message, 3) *parallel markers* which are also optional in parallel messages that are separate from both the basic message and the commentary message, and 4) *discourse markers* which are optional as well, in discourse messages that signal the relationship between the basic message and foregoing discourse.

Another approach within which DMs have been investigated is *meaning potentials*, developed by Norén and Linell (2007). In the heart of this theory, “parts of a word’s meaning are evoked, activated or materialised, foregrounded or backgrounded, in different ways in the different types
of contexts, in which it is exploited” (p. 390). This theory stresses the importance of the interaction between the functions of DMs and the dynamic properties of context, arguing that DMs are contextually bound. It posits that, in contrast to lexical items that have stable lexical meanings, DMs do not have a fixed meaning; they have meaning potentials which are developed in the actual situations of use. The theory of meaning potentials describes the relationship between the meaning potential of a DM and context, in that the contextual factors are responsible for selecting the meaning of the DM in communication situations.

**1.1.7 Significance of corpus-based studies.** Because corpora are composed of a large body of authentic texts that can be examined via various software programs, they are highly flexible as to different data analyses (qualitative and/or quantitative). Corpora can be utilized to determine the linguistic behavior of certain words, phrases, or chunk, that is, how these items are used in language, and to reveal whether they are frequent or not. Another important usage of corpora is the verification and the validation of intuitive judgments made by linguists and teachers on how language is authentically used. In addition, ‘historical’ and ‘diachronic’ corpora, which contain texts from different periods of time, can be used in studying language variation and change, by tracing the developments and the changes of language aspects over time. ‘Monitor’ corpora, with texts added annually, monthly, or even on a daily basis, can be used to pursue the current, ongoing changes in language. ‘Learner’ corpora, which is made up of texts produced by learners of a second language, benefits the discipline of second language acquisition in a variety of ways. It can be used, for example, to determine differences among L2 learners and to shed light on how their language differs from that of native speakers (compared in this case to another corpus of texts produced by native speakers). A ‘pedagogical’ corpus, constituting language-teaching
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materials to which learners of an L2 have been exposed, compared to a general corpus of L2 texts, could also be valuable in terms of observing whether the learners experience input of beneficial language or not (Hunston, 2002, 2006; O’Keeffe & McCarthy, 2010; O’Keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Several intellectuals have provided evidence that there is a correlation between informal conversation and the use of discourse markers (Biber, 1988; Mosegaard Hansen, 1998; Östman, 1982). As has been highlighted above, DMs tend to be highly frequent in oral discourse. They have a major role in establishing and maintaining effective interaction and successful communication among interlocutors, due to the broad range of pragmatic values they can index in conversation.

For such reasons, over recent years, the study of discourse markers has received considerable attention in the linguistic literature. Fraser (1999) states that the investigation of discourse markers “has turned into a growth industry in linguistics, with dozens of articles appearing yearly” (p. 932). This seems to be true in several languages: English (Aijmer, 2002; Amini, 2014; Bolden, 2009; Burridge, 2014; Fraser, 2013; Furkó & Abuczki, 2014; Gaines, 2011; Khaghaninejad & Mavaddat, 2015; Liu, 2013; Lutzky, 2012; Müller, 2005; Schourup, 2011; Sun, 2013; Vickers & Goble, 2011), German (Abraham, 1991; Adam & Dalmas, 2012; Onea & Volodina, 2011; Overstreet, 2005), French (Butler & King, 2008; de Rooij, 2000; Mosegaard Hansen, 1998; Siepmann, 2005), Spanish (Camarero, 2014; Chodorowska-Pilch, 2008; Cornillie & Gras, 2015; Fuentes Rodríguez, 2014; Rincón, 2007; Roggia, 2012; Rojas Gallardo, 2008; Tanghe, 2016), Chinese (Chen & He, 2001; Feng, 2008, 2010; Jones & Carter, 2014; Meng & Nakamoto, 2018; Tsai & Chu, 2015; Tseng, 2013), and Japanese (Matsui, 2002; Maynard, 1993; Meng & Nakamoto, 2018; Onodera, 2004;
Suzuki, 2007), to name just a few. However, the case in Arabic in general and in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, in particular, is different. Because there have been very few pieces of research undertaken on discourse markers in ECA, the inspection of them in Arabic would be an area of research worth exploring. Thus, in furtherance of this, the present study is an attempt to take one step further toward bridging this existent gap between research conducted on DMs in Arabic and on DMs in other languages.

As far as I have searched, there have been very few studies that have analyzed DMs in ECA. Hussein (2017) has investigated the DM *kedas*. Ismail (2015) has studied three DMs: *ba’a*, *ṭayyeb*, and *ṭab*. Marmorstein (2016) has analyzed the DM *yaʕnī*. Ghobrial (1993) has also examined *yaʕnī* and *ṭayyeb*, in addition to ḥenta ṣāref. Finally, Elshimi (1992) has introduced the first work carried out on the DM *yaʕnī*. Additionally, because there have been no research studies carried out on the DM *maʕleš*, it would seem to be one of the DMs that is worth studying, taking into consideration its considerable frequency in ECA and the several pragmatic functions it can perform. The present paper, therefore, focuses on the investigation of the pragmatic values that can be indexed by the use of *maʕleš* in spoken discourse.

Moreover, the study of DMs might be beneficial to many disciplines in Arabic applied linguistics, such as discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics. More importantly, this study could benefit the field of teaching AFL, by shedding light on the significance of teaching Arabic DMs to AFL learners. Throwing a glance at the current AFL material ascertains the inescapable fact that there has been a marked shortage (if not a total lack) of underlining and introducing DMs to learners. As evidenced by Trillo (2002), “[t]he lack of this competence [the use of DMs by nonnative learners] leads to pragmatic fossilization and, possibly, to communicative failure in
many cases” (p. 783). Trillo defines pragmatic fossilization as “the phenomenon by which a non-native speaker systematically uses certain forms inappropriately at the pragmatic level of communication” (p. 770).

Finally, this paper may take part in an in-depth comprehension of the linguistic behavior of DMs. This, in turn, can assist syllabus designers, material developers, and teachers in finding a way to systematically implement and introduce DMs to AFL learners.

1.3 Research Questions
A plethora of studies conducted on DMs have focused on identifying their different pragmatic functions and their contributions to the pragmatic and communicative competence of interlocutors. Such different functions of DMs are usually associated with particular syntactic patterns, as well as with some collocations. Distinguishing these syntactic constructions and pinpointing the collocational habits of DMs are likely to help in properly interpreting and using them. Hence, this study is an attempt to answer the questions below.

1. What are the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker \textit{maʕleš}?
2. What is the syntactic behavior of the discourse marker \textit{maʕleš}?
3. What is the collocational behavior of the discourse marker \textit{maʕleš}?
4. What is the correlation between the syntactic behavior and the collocational behavior of the discourse marker \textit{maʕleš} and its different pragmatic functions, if any?

1.4 Key Definitions

1.4.1 Chunk. A chunk (also termed a lexical bundle, a lexical phrase, and a cluster) is a multi-word unit (a string of two or more words) that regularly occur in a successive manner and that has a unitary meaning or function (O’Keeffe & McCarthy, 2010; O’Keeffe et al., 2007).
1.4.2 Corpus. A corpus is a collection of samples of naturally occurring (authentic) texts that are representative of either a language or a language variety. These texts are stored in a machine-readable (electronic) format and may comprise transcripts of spoken language (Hunston, 2002, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012; McEnery, Xiao, & Tono, 2006; Sinclair, 1991).

1.4.3 Concordancing. Concordancing is the process whereby a corpus software generates and presents all the occurrences of a specific word or phrase in its textual environment in the context where it is used. In a concordance, the target word or phrase (the node) is shown in the center of the line, with a number of words to the left and to the right of it (Hunston, 2002, 2006; O’Keeffe et al., 2007; Sinclair, 1991, 2003).

1.4.4 Collocation. A collocation is a combination of two or more words that tend to co-occur together, either adjacent to each other or parted by other words. A collocation usually holds a unitary meaning and a particular function (Hunston, 2006(103,607),(544,704); McCarthy, O’Keeffe, & Walsh, 2010; O’Keeffe et al., 2007; Sinclair, 1991).

1.4.5 Communicative competence. Richards and Schmidt (2013), based on the research reported in Canale and Swain (1980), define communicative competence as the “underlying systems of knowledge and skill required [by the interactants] for communication (e.g. knowledge of vocabulary and skill in using the sociolinguistic conventions for a given language)” (p. 12).

1.4.6 Metatalk. Metalanguage or metatalk is the use of language to describe or talk about language, that is, about a particular language feature in lexicon, syntax, etc. (Ellis, 2004; Gutiérrez, 2016; Hu, 2011).

1.4.7 Pragmatic competence. According to Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), pragmatic competence is “set of internalized rules of how to use language in socioculturally appropriate ways,
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taking into account the participants in a communicative interaction and features of the context within which the interaction takes place” (pp. 19, 20). It is the ability of interlocutors to communicate and interpret their intended message with all its nuances in a particular sociocultural context (Fraser, 2010).

**1.5 List of Abbreviations**

- **AFL** Arabic as a foreign language
- **DM** Discourse marker
- **ECA** Egyptian Colloquial Arabic
- **L2** Second language
- **SAT** Speech Act Theory
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Particles [i.e., DMs] are very often highly idiosyncratic: ‘untranslatable’ in the sense that no exact equivalents can be found in other languages. They are ubiquitous, and their frequency in ordinary speech is particularly high. Their meaning is crucial to the interaction mediated by speech; they express the speaker’s attitude towards the addressee or towards the situation spoken about, his assumptions, his intentions, his emotions. (Wierzbicka, 1991, p. 341)

DMs differ from ordinary words due to the high number of pragmatic values associated with them. In contrast to ordinary lexical items, DMs’ literal meanings are overridden by their complex pragmatic functions that demonstrate the relationship of the speaker both to the hearer and to the utterance (Aijmer, 2002). These complex pragmatic functions that they embody vary considerably according to situated use. Nevertheless, these meanings are hard to determine, since it is not sufficient to only explain and understand them through words of another language in a dictionary. This complex linguistic phenomenon of DMs can be ascribed to their metalinguistic nature, in a sense that they act as signals to what takes place in communication and influence the ongoing speech event, by marking the speaker’s attitudes, intentions, assumptions, and emotions (Aijmer, 2013). Accordingly, throughout the communication process, DMs are likely to facilitate the addressee’s interpretation of the speaker’s utterance.

Moreover, because of their numerous pragmatic functions, DMs have a high frequency in discourse that also distinguishes them from other words in language. As stated by Altenberg (1990), of 50,000-word sample from London-Lund Corpus, discourse particles represented 9.4% of all word classes. They ranked fourth after verbs, pronouns, and nouns; they outranked the basic
grammatical categories of language, namely prepositions, determiners, conjunctions, adjectives, and adverbs.

2.1 Defining Discourse Markers

A challenging area in the field of the study of DMs is to achieve a consensus on defining them. Due to the multiplicity of functions that DMs can perform, some of which are discourse connectors, topic switchers, turn-taking indicators, intimacy signals, attitude markers, repair markers, hesitation markers, fillers, prompters, and hedging devices, they have been studied from different linguistic perspectives: textual, as discourse-structuring devices signaling openings and closings of text units and transitions between them; cognitive, as indexes of interlocutors’ assumptions, intentions, and relationships; attitudinal, as modality markers; and interactional, as indicators of how utterances are processed (Jucker & Ziv, 1998). As a result of these miscellaneous frameworks within which DMs have been investigated, there has been a terminological diversity in referring to them, as well as a multiplication in defining them.

Among the variety of terms used to refer to these elements are discourse marker (Schiffrin, 1988; Schourup, 1999), discourse particle (Abraham, 1991; Kroon, 1995; Schourup, 1985), discourse connective (Blakemore, 1987; Kempson, 1988), discourse operator (Redeker, 1991), pragmatic marker (Aijmer, 2013; Brinton, 1996; Fraser, 1996), pragmatic particle (Östman, 1981), and pragmatic expression (Erman, 1987). From these terms, it appears that there are two common factors characterizing DMs. First, they are of a discursive nature, operating at the discourse level. Second, they have a pragmatic essence, serving a wide variety of pragmatic functions.

There has been no agreement on an operational definition of what a DM exactly is. The definitions of DMs have been lacking clarity and consistency due to the polyfunctionality of DMs.
Different scholars have employed varying descriptions and different definitions for DMs, depending on the approach used to study them and the functions they are capable of carrying out. After analyzing eleven English discourse markers, Schiffrin (1988) provides a theoretical, expressive definition for DMs as “contextual coordinates” (p. 327). This simple definition underlies the fact that DMs index the utterance containing them to the context in which they are produced and interpreted.

According to Aijmer (2002), DMs are “particles placed with great precision at different places in the discourse and give important clues to how discourse is segmented and processed” (p. 1). Similarly, Carter and McCarthy (2006) refer to DMs as “words and phrases which function to link segments of the discourse to one another in ways which reflect choices of monitoring, organisation and management exercised by the speaker” (p. 208). These two definitions reflect the fact that DMs do not appear randomly in discourse nor in turns taken by interlocutors. Conversely, their placement in the host utterance, which is related to their function, is rule-governed. In addition, they play an essential role in the management and the organization of discourse. In this sense, DMs can occur both forwards and backwards to link discourse stretches (Aijmer, 2013).

Calling them ‘pragmatic markers,’ Fraser (2009) defines them as “expressions [that] occur as part of a discourse segment but are not part of the propositional content of the message conveyed, and they do not contribute to the meaning of the proposition, per se. However, they do signal aspects of the message the speaker wishes to convey” (p. 295). This statement indicates that DMs neither affect the syntactic properties of the segment where they appear, nor do they constitute a part of its truth-conditional meaning or content (Blakemore, 2002). Rather, DMs flag other aspects of the message conveyed. These aspects can be demonstrated in the following
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definition. Making explicit more levels on which DMs can operate, DMs are considered a set of unique linguistic devices that function at the cognitive, expressive, social, and textual planes (Tannen, Hamilton, & Schiffrin, 2015)

In spite of the nuances that can be detected in these definitions of DMs, they all seem to set out the fact that DMs are significant discourse elements that serve on several contextual levels. They signify how segments of ongoing discourse relate to each other or how discourse connects to other discourse, illustrating the discourse structures to the interlocutors and sustaining discourse coherence. Additionally, DMs are pragmatic devices that perform a variety of pragmatic functions, achieving communicative roles at different dimensions.

2.2 Characteristics of Discourse Markers

The special features of discourse markers have long been recognized by many intellectuals. Müller (2005) has listed a multitude of DM properties from a large number of monographs. DMs nearly occur in all languages in both written and spoken varieties, with their pragmatic force being plain and easy to see in verbal interaction (Lenk, 1998a). Phonologically, as noted by Schiffrin (1988), DMs “have a range of prosodic contours, e.g. tonic stress and followed by a pause, phonological reduction” (p. 328). The phonological reduction feature of DMs is also cited by Brinton (1996) and Jucker and Ziv (1998). Morphologically, they do not fit into one single word class; they are drawn from different categories throughout the lexical inventory. They can be adverbials, interjections, coordinate conjunctions, subordinate conjunctions, or even words and phrases that cannot be classified under the usual word classes (Fraser, 1990, 1999).

Syntactically, even though DMs occur within an utterance, they are independent and optional, in that they are not integral to the syntactic structure of the utterance. If DMs are removed from
an utterance, the syntactic construction of discourse will not be rendered ungrammatical (Erman, 2001; Jucker & Ziv, 1998; Schiffrin, 1988). In addition, many researchers claim that the occurrence of DMs in discourse is restricted to utterance-initial or turn-initial position (Fisiak, 1990; Fraser, 1990; Jucker & Ziv, 1998). However, some DMs have been found out to occur very frequently in the middle of the utterance or the turn (Erman, 1987, 1992). Brinton (1996) also concedes that DMs have frequently been used by interlocutors in utterance medial and final positions in several studies. Moreover, Du Bois et al. (as cited in Lenk, 1998b) report that DMs may also appear as separate tone (standalone) units.

Semantically, DMs bear little or no semantic content in themselves; in other words, their semantic representation is unapparent (Erman, 2001; Kirk, 2000; Schiffrin, 1988). DMs also have little or no effect on the propositional meaning of the utterance and make no contributions to its informational, truth-conditional content. That is to say, if they are eliminated from discourse strings, the semantic values will remain untouched (Bazzanella, 1990; Brinton, 1996; Östman, 1981).

From a pragmatic point of view, DMs are different from ordinary linguistic items in terms of their multifunctionality. They are inherent in the pragmatic content of discourse, and their importance and the pragmatic values with which they are associated are not controversial. Numerous researchers have cited that they fulfill a large number of pragmatic functions (Aijmer, 2002; Erman, 2001; Fischer, 2000; Lenk, 1998b; Müller, 2005).

Another significant characteristic of DMs is their orality. Schourup (1999) highlights that most of the studies carried out on DMs have been based on speech data, and “[m]ost forms claimed to be DMs occur primarily in speech” (p. 234). Schiffrin (1988) also acknowledges this fact of
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orality in her definition of DMs as “contextual coordinates of talk” (p. 327), although she does not explicitly list it as one of the features characterizing DMs. This might be attributed to the fact that she does include DMs that are present in written texts in her analysis of eleven English DMs, such as and, but, and or. Furthermore, Erman (1987, 2001) goes so far as to contend that not only are DMs copious in spoken language, but they are even exclusively used in it. Watts (1989) also counts DMs use as “one of the most perceptually salient features of oral style” (p. 208).

There are also researchers who have looked at the occurrence of spoken DMs in written texts retrieved from journalistic, literary, and advertising sources. Those researchers have argued that the use of spoken DMs in written genres is a substantial factor in the judgment on the extent to which spoken linguistic features are present in written texts (Fox, Hoey, & Sinclair, 1993).

2.3 Discourse Markers and Procedural Meaning

Taking relevance theory developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995) as a point of departure, Blakemore (1987, 1992, 2002) distinguishes between two kinds of linguistically encoded meaning: conceptual and procedural. This distinction coincides with the truth-conditional/nontruth-conditional differentiation. Conceptual meaning, on the one hand, accords with semantic or truth-conditional meaning, in that it guides the hearer across the ongoing comprehension process until he or she arrives at a conceptual representation of the utterance. Blakemore states that most lexical items in a given language encode conceptual meanings that are constituents of conceptual representations. These items influence the truth conditions of the utterances where they occur. On the other hand, there are some lexical units that have no effect on the truth conditions of the utterances. These expressions play a crucial role in the inferential comprehension process, by encoding procedural constraints on the pragmatics of comprehension drawn by the
hearer. Such meanings are known as procedural meanings. They correspond to pragmatic or nontruth-conditional meaning.

Blakemore advocates that, in order to achieve an adequate understanding of the way in which DMs operate, a primary focus should be provided to the cognitive processes of inferences undergone by interlocutors so that they can accomplish an appropriate interpretation of the utterance. She maintains that since DMs serve a variety of procedural (pragmatic) meanings, they should be analyzed as encoding inferential procedures that impose constraints on the cognitive process of inference undertaken by the hearer, which directs him or her toward a specific interpretation of the utterance or the message intended by the speaker.

2.4 Pioneering Research on Discourse Markers

Fraser (1999) points out that early reference to DMs, as a linguistic category or entity in itself, appertains to Labov and Fanshel (1977) when discussing the functions of ‘well’ in discourse. They mention that “[a]s 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” (p. 156). Another early reference to DMs is made by Levinson (1983). Though he did not label DMs, he recognized them as a distinctive class that has its own linguistic merits to be studied. Levinson maintains that most languages have many words and phrases that mark the relationship between an utterance and the prior discourse. Such words and phrases usually resist propositional or truth-conditional treatment (Grice, 1975; Wilson, 1973), in that they are superfluous linguistics units that are not an essential part of the semantic content of the constituents encompassing the structural entity of proposition. Rather, DMs serve a wide variety of pragmatic functions. Zwicky (1985) has also made an
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initial input into the study of DMs. Pointing out that DMs account for a great collection of a grammatically significant class of linguistic items that exist in all languages, he voices support for the presumption that all DMs are operative at the pragmatic level, rather than the semantic level. Although Zwicky does not explain how DMs form an independent linguistic class, he says that they must be separated from other function words, and he further remarks some important, distinguishing features of them. He states that DMs differ from other linguistic classes in that they occur most frequently at the beginning of utterances and are syntactically detached from the proposition of the utterance in which they appear. Zwicky adds that DMs are usually monomorphic, but they can still be morphologically complex (such as y’know) and are prosodically independent, that is, being accented and prosodically disassociated from the surrounding context by intonation breaks, pauses, or both.

Still, the work reported in Schiffrin (1988) is the first supreme and the most deliberate, detailed effort expended on the study of DMs. Defining them as ‘discourse markers,’ she analyzes in detail the usages of and, because, but, I mean, now, oh, or, so, then, well, and y’know as they are employed in talk. Within a framework relating the DMs’ pragmatic functions to their contributions to discourse coherence, Schiffrin introduces both qualitative and quantitative empirical analyses of the functions of these DMs mentioned above in a corpus of unstructured interview conversations. In her analyses, using a model of discourse coherence to account for the contextualized interpretation of DMs, Schiffrin assumes that language is always intended to be used in communicative contexts and for communicative purposes and that language structures, reflected in the relations constructed between the adjacent units of discourse, show such a communicative basis of language use. Taking a position similar to what is declared above by Zwicky
(1985), Schiffrin adverts to some common features of DMs that must be found in a linguistic item so as to be considered a DM. A DM is not syntactically attachable to its host utterance, occurs at its initial or final position, and usually has certain prosodic contours. She sets forth five different discourse planes on which DMs can operate, each of which has its own type of coherence: 1) an ‘exchange structure’ plane which deals with the mechanics of the conversational interchanges of turn-taking between interlocutors; 2) an ‘action structure’ plane which shows the utterances functioning as contextually situated speech acts, occurring in linear sequences as parts of discourse; 3) an ‘ideational structure’ plane where particular relationships between the different propositions of discourse are illustrated, including cohesive, functional, and topic relations; 4) a ‘participation framework’ plane reflecting how speakers and hearers relate to each other and to the utterances; and 5) an ‘information state’ plane which mirrors the ongoing process of organizing and managing relevant knowledge and metaknowledge shared by the producers and the recipients of talk, as it evolves across the course of discourse. Schiffrin’s chief interest is the ways whereby DMs serve different integrative functions in discourse and, as a result, contribute to discourse coherence. She suggests that DMs do so by providing contextual coordinates for the utterances via a) indexing an utterance to the preceding and/or succeeding discourse; b) indexing the utterance to the speaker, the addressee, or both; and c) relating the utterance to one or more planes of discourse. Additionally, being very broad in describing what counts as a DM, Schiffrin endorses the notion that DMs cannot be easily classified into one linguistics category. She argues that DMs constitute an extremely diversified set of linguistic items, yet with shared characteristics, moving so far as to propose that even paralinguistic and nonverbal elements may act as DMs in some contexts.
2.5 Empirical Research on Discourse Markers

Regarding recent empirical research on DMs, as has been outlined in the ‘Statement of the Problem’ section in Chapter One above, there have been waves of studies, applying corpus-based and other techniques, devoted to investigating the use of numerous DMs and to determining their special characteristics in many languages, such as English, German, French, Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese, to name just a few. However, the picture in Arabic, especially in ECA, is rather different. There have been a tiny number of studies conducted on DMs in ECA, and few researchers have attempted to address this gap thus far.

Adopting direct observational techniques of conversational analysis, Elshimi (1992) investigates the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker yaʕni in educated Egyptian Arabic in a corpus of radio and television interviews. Within the theoretical frameworks of Schiffrin (1988) and Leech (1983) and based on the syntactic and the phonological characteristics of yaʕni as guidelines for the interpretations of its different functions, Elshimi identifies seven categories of functions for it. She demonstrates that yaʕni operates as: 1) an ‘extension marker’ signaling a referential relationship (elaborating, explaining, exemplifying, justifying, etc.) with the main proposition in the utterance; 2) a ‘subordination marker’ introducing the termination of a discourse segment that deviates from the main point as a subordinate expression; 3) a ‘broad interpretation marker’ acting as a transition from a lexical description of a particular group of objects to all its broader counterparts, just as ‘et cetera’ and ‘and things like that’ are used in English; 4) an ‘inner-negotiation marker’ reforming a speaker’s inaccurate proposition when his or her utterance suffers from stutter, pause, or false start; 5) a ‘deictic-center marker’ modifying the certainty of a proposition that is not an extension of a prior point, by ascribing the facts established
within it to the speaker, not to the world; 6) a ‘degree of intensity marker’ occurring before an utterance on which the speaker intends to place emphasis, with the middle consonant of yaʕni being lengthened in articulation; and finally 7) an ‘indirect intention marker’ marking the concealment of the speaker’s indirect intention that is communicated via the proposition, including disagreement, euphemism, and sarcasm.

From a pragmatic perspective, Ghobrial (1993) also studies yaʕni, in addition to ṭayyeb and ʔenta ʕāref in colloquial Cairene Egyptian Arabic. Based on an analysis of a corpus of unstructured interview conversations, he underscores that these three DMs flag some important pragmatic tasks in discourse, aside from any propositional dimensions inherent in them. As interpreted by Ghobrial, yaʕni is a pragmatic device that shows a speaker’s orientation toward different aspects of the meaning of talk, in a sense that it is used by the speaker to signal his or her conformity to the general cooperative principles governing conversational interactions, as proposed by Grice (1975). In particular, yaʕni relates to the maxims of quality, relevance, and manner. In respect of ṭayyeb, it serves social and interactional functions, in that it marks both the speaker’s orientation toward the dynamics of the interactional process and the speaker’s communicative intentions vis-à-vis prior discourse. Thus, ṭayyeb may be used to specify contrastive points of view, claim turns, initiate new topics, resume conversations or close them, and diminish face threats that might emerge from such interactional moves. Concerning ʔenta ʕāref, as a lexical entity whose propositional qualities, unlike yaʕni and ṭayyeb, contributes to its pragmatic function in discourse, Ghobrial states that it helps bridge the informational gaps that often occur between interlocutors, promoting the cognitive development of discourse. In addition, it indexes the
speaker’s willingness to feature some communicated messages as mutually shared knowledge with the addressee.

In another paper also examining yaʕni, Marmorstein (2016) attempts to capture the cognitive processes underlying its usages and the communicative goals it performs in conversation. The researcher states that yaʕni is highly frequent in unplanned discourse (spontaneous talk) in Egyptian Arabic. Carrying out the analysis in a corpus of interviews conducted and recorded with some Cairene women in Cairo in 2011, Marmorstein points out four pragmatic usages for yaʕni, one of which is its core function. In this core function, yaʕni serves as a point marker, relating the ongoing utterance of the speaker to the local or the global topic of discourse, by expanding or developing this topic previously established. In the other three functions, yaʕni acts as a ‘stating the point’ marker, introducing new information not activated in the previous span of discourse, as an ‘elaborating on the point’ marker, prefixing or suffixing a chunk of information accessible to the addressee, yet with reference to some pre-presented information, and as a ‘stressing the point’ marker, initiating or concluding utterances in which information that has already been provided in previous discourse is repeated (these repetitions either occur immediately after the utterance or are separated from it by other discourse strings).

Ismail (2015) analyzes three DMs considerably frequent in ECA, namely ba’a, ṭayyeb, and ṭab. His empirical evidence that is based on a corpus of Egyptian movies suggests that these DMs fulfill a plethora of functions both on the discourse level and on the interpersonal level, in addition to marking various speech acts. The DM ba’a plays a key role in managing discourse segments, by signaling some of the functions involved in maintaining discourse coherence. These functions performed by ba’a are marking: contrast, the end of an encounter, and a conclusion.
On the level of interpersonal management, ba’a is used to flag the affective stance of the speaker, conveying subjective attitudinal meanings: impatience, surprise, and sarcasm. Furthermore, on this level, ba’a operates within the ‘politeness’ parameter proposed by Aijmer (2013), in company with the ‘coherence’ and ‘management’ parameters, to account for the interpretation of DMs. In this denotation, ba’a alleviates the strength of the utterance in which it occurs. As for the DM ṭayyeb, Ismail mentions that its role in coherence is represented in its use as a turn-taking device for second and third moves, as well as its use as a particle signaling vertical transitions, i.e., breaking into or existing from conversations. In addition to its coherence-establishing role, ṭayyeb operates on the interpersonal level as a marker for giving consent, mitigating directive speech acts, and threatening. Just as ṭayyeb, ṭab is utilized in spoken discourse to regulate second and third moves and vertical transitions. However, within the interpersonal dimension, it is used only to soften directive speech acts.

Lastly, in another corpus-based study, Hussein (2017) explores the pragmatic meanings and the syntactic features of the discourse marker keda in ECA, depending on a corpus of Egyptian films. Hussein conducts her analysis within the theoretical framework of ‘propositional and non-propositional’ meanings, presented by Fraser (1990, 1996) as a model for understanding how DMs behave in discourse (review 1.1.5 in Chapter One). The researcher concludes that the pragmatic functions of keda as a part of the propositional structure of discourse include expressing blame, denial, and surprise; expressing the understanding of a situation; indicating the closure of a conversation; and acting as a deictic device. On the other hand, its non-propositional functions embrace marking conversation closure, softening the message and saving face, asserting or
emphasizing the utterance, particularizing, specifying, minimizing, approximating, delaying, and expressing viewpoints, along with other metaphoric and expressing-attitude functions.

2.6 Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory (SAT) attends to utterances as performing actions. It is developed in the 1960s in the work done by some language philosophers, the most important of whom is Austin (1962). SAT is proposed first in Austin’s seminal work on functions of language, of performative utterances, and his theoretical model of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary forces of utterances. SAT is concerned with the ways whereby words can be utilized not only to present information, but also to carry out actions in the world. When one makes an utterance, he or she “can do things, as well as say things” (Kaburise, 2011, p. 69).

According to Austin, a speech act is a performative utterance or an act performed through speech, in other words, an utterance via which one does not only say something but, in fact, does something. Moreover, Austin claims that there are particular circumstances which must be met if an utterance is to perform an act. He states that “[t]he uttering of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even the, leading incident in the performance of the act” and adds that “it is always necessary that the circumstances in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, appropriate, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should also perform certain other actions, whether ‘physical’ or ‘mental’ actions or even acts of uttering further words” (p. 8).

As a consequence of this hypothesis, utterances are perceived to be capable of yielding some types of different forces and performing several functions. For example, when one names a newborn baby, he or she does not only utter the name but, actually, makes an action, giving the baby
a name. If a judge sentences someone who is guilty of a crime, he or she does not only say the sentence, but also a punishment is imposed on the criminal. Such utterances result in the performance of acts. These are the speech acts.

Austin describes the circumstances to be met, in order for a performative utterance of a speech act to be successfully performed, as certain felicity conditions. Firstly, a conventional procedure must exist so as to carry out the action intended. This procedure designates who should say and do what in what conditions. Secondly, participants must properly implement this procedure and adhere to it to its completion. Finally, the requisite feelings, thoughts, and intentions must be present and active in the participants.

Austin identifies three levels of force (or act) on which utterances are said to perform. These three forces must be performed simultaneously so that an utterance can be considered a speech act. These acts are locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions. The locutionary act is the performance of an utterance (the actual words uttered and their ostensible meaning). The illocutionary act is the pragmatic force of the utterance, that is, its intended significance as a socially valid verbal action. Finally, the perlocutionary act is the actual effect of the utterance. If the illocutionary force leads the hearer to do or realize something, then it results in a perlocutionary act.

Moreover, Austin attempts to classify general families of related and overlapping speech acts (Ballmer & Brennstuhl, 1981). He differentiates between five categories of speech acts: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives. Verdictives are speech acts characterized by the giving of verdicts by, for instance, a jury, arbitrator, or umpire. Austin provides 27 examples of verdictives, among which are estimates, grades, assesses, and appraisals. Exercitives refer to speech acts of exercising powers, rights, or influences. They denote the giving of
decisions to approve of or to object to a certain course of action. Austin gives 42 instances of exercitives, some of which are appointing, voting, ordering, advising, offering, enacting, and withdrawing. Commissives are speech acts typified by committing the speaker to doing something (or to a certain course of action), some of the 33 of which mentioned by Austin are promising, undertaking, intending, vowing, swearing, and consenting. Behabitives are speech acts that pertain to reactions to other people’s attitudes and social behaviors. Austin presents 33 examples of them, such as apologizing, congratulating, welcoming, commending, cursing, and criticizing. Expositives are speech acts that apply to the way whereby the speaker makes his or her utterances fit into the course of an argument or a conversation. They include the expounding of views, the clarifying of usages, and the conducting of arguments. Austin introduces 53 examples of expositives, among which are correcting, revising, apprising, mentioning, and remarking. Despite this categorization of these five classes of speech acts, Austin states that his classification is not definitive, since some of the categories are not clear and too broad, and others may overlap.

On the other hand, Searle’s taxonomy of illocutionary acts is one of the best elaborations on Austin’s primary proposal. Searle’s focus is mainly on how a listener perceives a certain utterance to be influenced by the force it may carry from the speaker, what he calls the ‘uptake’ of the utterance (Wardhaugh, 2006). Searle (1969) has further developed Austin’s classification, proposing the same number of basic classes of illocutionary acts, in which he restates Austin’s categories by determining their purposes. According to Searle, the basis of his taxonomy is what he calls ‘illocutionary point’ or “the point or purpose of a type of illocution” (Searle, 1976, p. 3). To some extent, Searle’s classification could be deemed to be a specification and an amendment to Austin’s categories. The first category of speech acts proposed by Searle is assertives or
representatives, where the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition expressed or to the belief that the propositional content of the utterance is true. Such speech acts can be seen, for instance, in assertions, statements, claims, suggestions, and complaints, as in: ‘Oats are very nutritional.’ The second category is commissives, in which speech acts commit the speaker to perform a future course of action that is represented in the propositional content. These speech acts contain promises, oaths, offers, threats, and vows, as in: ‘Would you like to come to the film with me’? The third category is directives. The illocutionary acts in this class are attempts by the speaker to have the hearer carry out a particular action. These illocutions are exemplified in commands, requests, invitations, advises, dares, challenges, and so on, as in: ‘Please join us for dinner on Friday.’ The fourth class of speech acts suggested by Searle is expressives whose illocutionary point indicates the speaker’s psychological state of mind, attitude, or emotion toward the propositional content of a previous action. Such acts are represented in greetings, apologies, excuses, congratulations, condolences, and expressions of giving thanks, as in: ‘Wow! That was a brilliant speech.’ The last category of illocutionary forces posited by Searle is declaratives. These forces are characterized by expressing a change having taken place in the world. The successful performance of one of them results in “the correspondence between the propositional content and reality” (Searle, 1976, p. 13). These illocutionary forces can be seen in declaring war, marrying, hiring, firing, resigning, and so on, just as in: ‘You are hired.’

In broad terms, Searle (1976) briefly explains the five categories he proposes. Assertives are “tell[ing] people how things are.” Commissives are “commit[ing] ourselves to doing things.” Directives are “try[ing] to get them [hearers] to do things.” Expressives are “express[ing] our feelings and attitudes.” Declaratives are “bring[ing] about changes through our utterances” (p. 23).
THE DISCOURSE MARKER maʕleš

He adds that speakers may often perform more than one of these speech acts at once in the same utterance.

2.7 Politeness and Face

The concept of politeness has originally evolved from the pioneering work carried out on ‘face’ by Goffman (1955, 1967). Linguistically speaking, by face, Brown and Levinson (1987) denote that it is “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [by virtue of the use of language, amongst other factors]” (p. 61). They differentiate between two types of face: positive face which is the interactants’ inclination to gain approval, acceptance, respect, and positive evaluation, and, on the other hand, negative face which is the desire not to be impinged or imposed on by others and to be free and independent. In this sense, as stated by Wardhaugh (2006), positive face aims for solidarity, whereas negative face aims at acting without offending others.

Politeness is a dynamic sociolinguistic phenomenon and an important principle in language use which necessitates social and linguistic awareness of interlocutors while taking part in an encounter, if they want to apply one or more of its suitable strategies. It is a pragmatic facet essential to successful communication. Moreover, within an interaction or an encounter, according to Yule (1996), politeness is “the means employed to show awareness of another person’s face” (p. 60). In other words, from a linguistic perspective, it stands for any linguistic strategies (grammatical, lexical, and/or phonological) used by conversationalists in order to save one’s face or another person’s face. Hence, the appropriate choice of words in their proper context and the correct use of devices that are capable of marking politeness are mandatory for accomplishing it (Crystal, 2005).
Lakoff (1973) proposes three simple principles or rules of politeness that, if adhered to by conversationalists, assure the pragmatic correctness and the acceptability of an utterance: not imposing, giving options, and making the addressee feel good—being friendly. Politeness can be, then, described as a special method of using the language that lays emphasis on self-fulfillment, self-defense, and smooth communication. When people interact and communicate, they should be aware of the positive face and the negative face of each other, leading them to have a choice of two kinds of politeness: positive politeness and negative politeness (Wardhaugh, 2006). Positive politeness results in expressions aimed at achieving solidarity (appreciating the addressee’s positive face and sharing the same values) through mitigated offers, the use of compliments, and the display of sympathy. Negative politeness leads to the adoption of different strategies that help avoid threatening others’ face, for example, refusal, disagreement, critique, etc., through apologizing and softening the utterance with certain linguistic instruments, such as politeness markers. Politeness markers are words or phrases employed in the utterance in order not to threaten one’s face or others’ face, that is, to be polite.

**2.7.1 Negative politeness.** Brown and Levinson (1987) define negative face as “redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded” (p. 129). That is to say, the principal aspect of negative politeness is the speaker’s respect toward the addressee, allowing him or her to have the requisite space to react in a free manner. The addressee is given a chance to express refusal or disagreement in a conversation so as to feel more comfortable. Therefore, in negative politeness, interlocutors employ particular words, phrases, or expressions, such as politeness markers, that are
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *мафлењ*

c conventional in a given language of a certain culture and that preserve the negative face of the hearer.

Brown and Levinson introduce a detailed model for negative politeness strategies in which they classify them into five main categories divided into ten subcategories, aimed at alleviating the face-threatening acts. Only the strategies relevant to the DM under investigation are to be discussed. One significant strategy of them is ‘*Do not presume/assume.*’ The chief feature of this category is that the speaker avoids presuming or assuming anything, such as wants and interests, that may involve the hearer, therefore, keeping the necessary distance from them. The primary technique in this class is the use of hedges. Hedges are a subgroup of Pragmatic markers through which politeness can be realized, by reducing the strength of utterances (Wilamová, 2005). Some examples are words and expression like: *please, kindly, perhaps, by no means,* etc.

Another fundamental strategy is ‘*Do not coerce,*’ meaning that the speaker should avoid threatening the hearer’s negative face, i.e., coercing the hearer into doing or accepting something that he or she might not want to, for instance, when performing an act of requesting or forbidding. This could be done by giving the addressee an option not to carry out the act, via the use of certain words or phrases. Some sub-strategies are brought into play here, two of which are ‘*Be pessimistic*’ and ‘*Minimize the imposition.*’ In the former technique, the speaker redresses the hearer’s negative face by expecting that he or she may be resistant to the illocutionary force of the act or may feel disappointed or upset because of it. As a result, the speaker injects their acts with linguistic instruments that convey indirect requests, as in the use of the subjunctive in English: *could you . . ., would you . . .,* etc. In the latter technique, the speaker tries to downgrade
the seriousness or the strength of the imposition through using markers that do so, such as the use of *just* in English in the following sentence: *I just wanted to ask you . . .* and so forth.

Another class of redressing the addressee’s negative face is *‘Communicate speaker’s want not to impinge upon the addressee.’* The speaker, in this class, satisfies the demands of the hearer’s negative face by means of indicating that he or she is aware of them and is taking them into account while communicating a specific speech act. This effect could be accomplished through some basic subclasses. One of them is straightforwardly *‘Apologize,’* where the speaker recognizes the impingement and makes amends for it. When apologizing for performing a face-threatening act, the speaker communicates either *reluctance to impinge on the hearers’ negative face,* *admitting the impingement,* or *begging forgiveness.* In this case, the addressee adopts certain words or phrases, as in: *Sorry for bothering you; excuse me, but . . .; please forgive me if . . .;* etc.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design

The analysis of the data of the present study is conducted within the theoretical framework of Speech Act Theory, developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The pragmatic functions of the discourse marker under investigation are classified under Searle’s taxonomy of the different, potential illocutionary forces responsible for carrying out an act through saying something and performed by the speaker.

In order to study the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker maʕleš and its syntactic and collocational behaviors, as well as any potential correlation between its different functions and the syntactic and collocational properties, the present paper adopts a corpus-based, qualitative linguistic analysis approach which lays emphasis on the description and the exploration of a phenomenon in authentic, verbal contexts rather than on the frequency of the phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This, however, does not mean that qualitative research, including this thesis, does not use numbers or statistics; qualitative studies can yield numbers in the manifestation of the frequencies of occurrence of a particular phenomenon, employing various statistical methods and tools such as the corpus-analysis software used in this present study that can provide numerical information on maʕleš’s frequencies, collocates, and clusters (Perry, 2005).

Further, a corpus-based, qualitative paradigm is adequate to answer ‘what’ questions, uncovering particulars from information-rich purposeful samples derived from natural settings without attempting to manipulate the situation under investigation (Dörnyei, 2007). Qualitative research can also broaden the repertoire of possible interpretations of the phenomenon being studied (constrained by the theoretical framework whereby the study is conducted), consequently,
leading to enlarging the scope of understanding the phenomenon and to adding depth to its analysis (Duff, 2008). In addition, the descriptive, exploratory design can analyze how language is actually used in a corpus through examining concordances and examples in context.

3.2 Data and Sample

The corpus used in this research involves collecting data from the two parts of a recent Egyptian series, 

\[ \text{sābēf gār}, \]

which was broadcasted in 2017/2018. The two parts of the series consist of 76 episodes (47 episodes in the first part and 29 episodes in the second part). The first five episodes of the second part are a collection of a brief plot of the main events and incidents that took place in the first part; thus, they were not included in the data gathered and were excluded from analysis. It is worth mentioning that the corpus is composed of the transcripts, not the script, of the discourse segments in the series where 

\[ \text{mašleš} \]

has occurred. This is ascribed to the fact that, when performed on screen, series and movie scripts are usually modified and noticeably differ from what is actually said by the performers. As evidenced by Bogucki and Kredens (2010), working on a corpus of American movies, the transcriptions of the movies differ considerably from their scripts. For instance, whereas the script of one movie contains 10,660 words, the total number of words transcribed for it is 11,490. Moreover, the nature of the present study and the research questions do not necessitate having the entire transcripts of the series, since the analysis of the data requires focusing only on the stretches in which the discourse marker under investigation has appeared. Hence, only those discourse stretches were transcribed. A discourse stretch in this study is defined as the entire scene in which 

\[ \text{mašleš} \]

has been articulated by the speaker(s).

One of the purposes of selecting this contemporary series is that, compared to another corpus comprised of 19 Egyptian movies where 

\[ \text{mašleš} \]

has occurred 103 times, it has witnessed the use
THE DISCOURSE MARKER \textit{maʕleš}

of \textit{maʕleš} 274 times, which makes it a better choice in this study over the corpus of films because it provides more examples of \textit{maʕleš} to analyze. This is ascribed to the fact that the time frame in series is much larger than is it in movies. Another reason for choosing \textit{sābeʕ gār} is that it reflects a large variety of social classes, ages, and historical backgrounds, as well as different characters with diverse education levels who use everyday speeches and conversations. The scenario and the storylines of the series are based on the very ordinary life situations to which Egyptians are exposed in their daily life; that is to say, they portray real people in real situations. In consequence, the language code (or codes) used in this series could be representative of authentic Egyptian spoken Arabic, the language variety within which this research is conducted. Furthermore, this series has achieved widespread popularity when released on television, to a great extent that it topped the search list on Google in Egypt and was watched by more than nine million people only two weeks after broadcasting.

Although the sample in this research is a small one of purposefulness and convenience, it is still feasible to rely on it in order to find answers to the research questions of this study. As highlighted by Perry (2011), such studies with purposeful, convenience sampling are not of little value; by contrast, they can be easily replicated with other samples so that one can find out whether or not the findings are repeated. By doing so, researchers who conduct similar studies can have more confidence when answering their research questions. Besides, in research of pragmatic nature, as stated by O’Keeffe, Clancy, and Adolphs (2011), there is no need for a big corpus; a small one is valuable because the researcher can easily have access to its entire contextual details and can conveniently use it for both qualitative and quantitative purposes.
Furthermore, because the audiovisual files of the series are available and easy to access and because the researcher is familiar with storylines of the series, it is possible to contextualize the different usages of the discourse marker under inspection. Therefore, whenever deemed necessary, the researcher will consult the audiovisual files in case the concordance lines are not enough to interpret the function of the DM.

3.3 Film and Drama Language Authenticity

It has been claimed that face-to-face conversation (natural spoken language) is the quintessence of spontaneity, while film and drama conversation (planned and edited spoken language) is the quintessence of artificiality, resulting in the belief that language of movies and series cannot be representative of authentic spoken language (Lombardo, Haarman, & Morley, 1999). Authentic language has been defined by many scholars as the spoken or written texts that are not specifically initiated as illustrative material for the purpose of language teaching and that are produced by native speakers or writers for native audience in genuine communicative encounters in a particular language community, in order to communicate meaning, to convey a real message, or to fulfill personal or social functions (Benson & Voller, 2014; Gilmore, 2007; Holden, 1977; Little, Devitt, & Singleton, 1989, 1994; Nunan, 1988, 1989; Porter & Roberts, 1981; Swaffar, 1985). The characteristics of authentic language manifested above are likely to allow that film and drama texts fall into it. In fact, there has been mounting evidence in support of this view. Notwithstanding the assertions that film and drama dialogues lack, to some extent, some of the features of the spontaneity of genuine oral language, such as having fewer repetitions, interruptions, and DMs than encountered in authentic conversations, there are still many linguistic similarities between face-to-face conversations and conversations found in films and dramas (Aarts &
McMahon, 2006; Sinclair & Carter, 2004; Taylor, 2004). These findings are based on the comparison of large corpora of film and drama scripts and transcriptions. In the same vein, Bamford, Cavalieri, and Diani (2013) argue that there are no sufficient empirical studies that actually compare conversation in real life with film and drama conversation and, correspondingly, that demonstrate dissimilarities between these two conversational types. In fact, they state that most of such claims about the unspontaneity and artificiality of film and drama language are based on intuition rather than on empirical evidence. Further, they provide empirical data showing a striking resemblance between the linguistic features of both genuine spoken language and movie language (transcriptions, not original scripts). Akin to this, in an exploratory research based on drawing a comparison between, on the one hand, the conversational constructs (or features) and the collocations in the face-to-face conversations in the British National Corpus as a reference corpus and, on the other hand, a micro-corpus of movie transcripts, Rodríguez Martín and Moreno Jaén (2009) present comprehensive data showing that the similarities between the two conversational types in the two corpora are far more significant than are the differences. Likewise, several of the collocations in the reference corpus also occur in the corpus of movies. Such findings support the certitude that the characteristics of authentic spoken language are also found in film language.

This controversy of the authenticity of film and drama language and whether it is representative of naturally-occurring language or not may be credited to the linguistic differences that can be shown when comparing written scripts of movies and series to their transcriptions. Scripts “are invented, written usually by one person putting discourse into the mouths of many diverse characters” (Taylor, 2004, p. 76). Scripts embody artificially produced situations which, in turn,
yield unrealistic discourse. However, Taylor provides statistics which illustrate that there is always a drastic change observed in the use of langue between original written scripts and acting them out by actors and actresses. The latter version (the transcriptions of the actual film scenes) nearly invariably incorporates more natural linguistic elements of spoken language. In the artificially created situations in scripts, when actors and actresses perform the scenes, they naturally modify the original script. They create communicating contexts (even if invented by the author, they are meant to be real, resembling authentic contexts). Actors and actresses attempt to occupy, act, speak, and live the contexts they establish. For this reason, actors and actresses are responsible for adding realistic linguistic features to written scripts, making them more authentic. This can be easily demonstrated when comparing the script and the transcription of the same film or drama.

3.4 Film and Drama Language Significance

Mestre de Caro (2013) argues that film and drama language is an important, helpful tool to study the linguistic characteristics of a given speech community. Film and drama language has the potential to supply researchers, as well as teachers and learners, with convenient and easy-to-access sources of spoken data for linguistic analysis, as an object of study in itself and as a substitute for natural conversations (Quaglio, 2004). In addition, different corpora of series and film language, if sampled continuously and diachronically across a period of years, can provide detailed data for the study of variation and change in spoken language.

From a pedagogical perspective, the strong resemblance between face-to-face conversation and movie conversation may have profound implications on the teaching and the learning of spoken discourse. Movies and series can be effectively utilized as valid sources of material,
facilitation the learning of the linguistic aspects of spoken discourse. An experiment performed on Italian learners of English prove that movies have the potentiality to help them in learning several characteristics of spoken language, among which are repetitions, elisions, false starts, and discourse markers (Bamford et al., 2013). Film language, as a source of content in classroom settings, can enhance the learning of language skills, particularly speaking and listening (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). Moreover, films and series, as they display the ways according to which people live and behave in real life, can open up an opportunity for learners to learn about how native speakers negotiate meaning and how they nonverbally communicate. Films and series “are contextually rich sources of authentic material which can be exploited in the language classroom. Through films learners see how people communicate in real life in different conversational contexts” (Seferoğlu, 2008, p. 1). This is due to the fact that they “help bring the outside world into the classroom” (Tomalin, 1986, p. 9) by presenting “realistic slices of life” (Allan, 1985, p. 48). Overall, films and series can be highly beneficial to learners in terms of understanding both the target language and the target culture, since they depict different types of voices in a variety of situations, with their visual dimension being a great advantage to be able to understand the pragmatics of spoken language (Sherman, 2003).

3.5 Corpus and the Study of Discourse Markers

Corpora allow for both quantitative and qualitative direct, careful observations on DMs (Aijmer, 2013). Through the analysis tools of corpora (such as concordance and collocate generators), one can investigate the syntactic behavior of DMs, their pragmatic functions, and their collocational behavior. Depending on the corpus available, the investigation of the use of DMs can be carried out through different genres as well as across social and regional vernaculars. Further, corpora
of films and series make it possible to study DMs in a great variety of situations in which several speakers play different social roles.

3.6 Data Analysis Instrument

The instrument employed to analyze the data of the present paper is *WordSmith Tools*, an integrated suite of corpus-analysis applications that facilitate and expand the capacity to search for how words behave in texts, using plain or web text files (Scott, 2018). This software was created by Mike Scott and was first published in 1996. It has developed and improved over the last few decades, and many new features of corpus analysis have been added to it. Integrated into WordSmith Tools are diverse programs that allow for various corpus-based analyses. The three major programs are ‘Concord,’ ‘KeyWords,’ and ‘WordList.’

Concord creates concordances for the search word or phrase specified, presenting it in the center of the line, making it easy to spot it. It does so by looking for the linguistic item(s) under examination in all text files inserted into the software suite. Thereafter, it displays lists of all concordance lines in which the target word or phrase has occurred, granting access to extracting a wealth of information, such as the collocates of the search word, the dispersion plots revealing where the search word or phrase has appeared in each file, and cluster analyses showing the word combinations or the clusters of the target word or phrase that has occurred repeatedly, in addition to other mines of details.

The WordList program generates word lists based on one or more text files. The word lists can be automatically presented both in alphabetical and in frequency order. Such word lists are extremely advantageous, for instance, to studying the type of vocabulary used, to identifying the
common word clusters, to comparing the frequency of a word in different text files or across genres, and to obtaining a concordance of one or more of the words in the lists.

The KeyWords application identifies and locates the key words in a given text(s). Key words here denote those whose frequency is unusually high in comparison with some norm. This application does so by comparing all words in one or more texts with a reference set of words which is usually taken from a large corpus and which provides background data for reference comparison. Any word found to be outstanding in its frequency in the text(s) is considered to be key, and all key words are presented in a descending order.

All such information retrieved by the programs amalgamated into the WordSmith Tools suite can be edited, printed, copied to word-processor applications, or saved as text files for later use.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

After watching the whole episodes of sābeš gār and transcribing the discourse stretches where the DM under investigation has been found, the transcripts have been converted into a plain-text format which is mandatory in order for WordSmith Tools, the software used in analysis, to be able to read them. Since the corpus utilized in this research paper is relatively small, all tokens of the DM studied, maʕleš, have been analyzed.

In an attempt to answer the research questions, of all the programs integrated into the software, Concord, which is responsible for generating the concordance lines for all of the occurrences of maʕleš, has been used to identify both its pragmatic functions and its syntactic behavior. It was safe to do so because the concordance presents maʕleš in the center of the line, surrounded by its textual context, which makes it easy to spot its syntactic patterns and to interpret its pragmatic functions. Additionally, the concordance lines are sorted alphabetically according
to either the word before or the word after *maʕleš*, which facilitates the determination of the different syntactic patterns in which *maʕleš* has been used. However, occasionally, the audiovisual files of the series were consulted so as to ascertain the pragmatic function of *maʕleš*, if the concordance line was not sufficient to do so. This is due to the fact that it was sometimes requisite to fully grasp the larger social context and the overall situation in which *maʕleš* was used, in order to be capable of settling its function, especially if paralanguage and body language took part in assigning a certain pragmatic meaning for *maʕleš*.

*Figure 1. maʕleš* in concordances

With respect to the identification of the collocational behavior of *maʕleš*, the process was simple and straightforward. The collocates were automatically computed by the *Collocates* command in the *Compute* drop-down menu in the Concord application. However, after the classification of the different pragmatic functions of *maʕleš*, an in-depth analysis of the concordance lines of each function was mandatory in order to accurately identify the collocational behavior within the different functions, if any.

*Figure 2. maʕleš* collocates in Concord
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Semantic Features of \textit{maʕleš}

Having searched for the origin and the root of the lexeme \textit{maʕleš} in both Arabic-Arabic dictionaries, such as in Ibn Manẓūr (1300), and Arabic-English dictionaries, such as in Hinds and Badawi (1986) and in Wehr and Cowan (1994), the only information encountered is that \textit{maʕleš} means: never mind, do not worry about it, sorry, or excuse me (Hinds & Badawi, 1986, p. 828).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{maʕleš.png}
\caption{Meanings of \textit{maʕleš}}
\end{figure}

Albeit this snippet of information available about the meaning of \textit{maʕleš}, there is a common belief that \textit{maʕleš} is an acronym that has been descended from the phrase ما عليه شيء, which means \textit{he is innocent}. A number of articles on some newspaper websites, two of which are http://www.alfathalyom.com/index.php/فنيون/شعر-وشعراء/4784-أصل-كلمة-تشغيل and https://lite.almasryalyoum.com/lists/135162, claim that this phrase was used by judges in the pre-Islamic era when finding out that the accused is innocent. It was used to announce his innocence.

4.2 Frequency of \textit{maʕleš} in the Corpus

The total number of occurrences of \textit{maʕleš} in the corpus is 274, two of which have been disqualified from analysis because the utterances in which they occurred were metatalk about \textit{maʕleš},
not an actual use of it. The remaining 272 instances of *maalš* have been examined and codified within Searle’s categories of illocutionary forces (performative acts), in order to answer the first research question, distinguishing between the different pragmatic functions of *maalš*. Based on this categorization, the second research question is answered, determining the syntactic behavior of *maalš* in the different categories of speech acts in which it is used. Any potential correlation between the syntactic behavior of *maalš* and the pragmatic roles it performs in discourse (the third research question) is, in turn, carefully discerned. Finally, its collocational behavior is pinpointed (the fourth research question).

**4.3 Pragmatic Functions and Syntactic and Collocational Behaviors of *maalš***

![Figure 4. Distribution of *maalš* within Searle’s Speech Act Categories](image)

Figure 4 exhibits the illocutionary acts within which the DM *maalš* has been used in the data of the present study. As can be seen, *maalš* has been most frequent in the category of expressives (44%, 119 occurrences), which is slightly less than half of its usage in the data. Such findings may
THE DISCOURSE MARKER maʕleš

be ascribed to the fact that the performative acts of expressives, such as apologizing and sympathizing, are often tagged along with the speaker’s emotions and attitudes toward the addressee and the propositional content of the utterance, which seems that maʕleš marks most. Its use within the category of directives is ranked second (24%, 65 occurrences). This is nearly one quarter of its occurrences in the data. One possible explanation of this is that the illocutions of directives, such as demanding, requesting, and advising, are usually accompanied by a sort of mitigation so as to soften the impact of their force on the addressee, which can be apparently flagged by the use of maʕleš. The two categories of assertives and commissives show a very close amount of use of maʕleš in the data (16%, 45 occurrences) and (16%, 43 occurrences) consecutively, both together appearing in almost one third of the data.

However, the use of maʕleš within the performative acts of declaratives has shown zero occurrences. As has been remarked earlier, the illocutionary acts of declaratives are typified by an immediate change in the world, such as in declaring war, awarding, and appointing, which cannot apparently be marked by the use of maʕleš. Such a fact could be attributed to the level of formality of maʕleš. While the use of maʕleš is exclusive to ECA, the acts of declaratives in Arabic are executed in highly formal settings, employing the formal variety of the language. Hence, it is extremely unlikely that maʕleš be utilized within the bounds of such performative acts of declaratives.

4.3.1 maʕleš within illocutions of expressives. The expressives class of performatives stands for the speech acts through which the addressee expresses his or her attitudes, feelings, and intentions toward the addressee and/or the propositional content of the utterance. This category of illocutions is the one in which maʕleš has been used most (44%) in the data of this study. The
analysis shows that, in this category, maʕleš is assigned three pragmatic meanings: ‘sorry,’ as a way of indicating apology, ‘sorry for someone or one’s self,’ marking the feeling of sympathy for someone or one’s self because of a bad thing that has happened to them or due to a bad situation they are in, and ‘do not worry about it,’ in a sense that the speaker is telling the hearer that everything is going to be just fine.

Figure 5. Distribution of maʕleš within Illocutions of Expressives

Figure 5 displays that maʕleš indexes three illocutionary forces within the speech acts of expressives: apologizing, sympathizing, and paying tribute.

4.3.1.1 maʕleš marking apologizing and sympathizing. Whereas apologizing is a performative act that features a negative-politeness device used by the speaker in order to address the face needs of the hearer when a type of offense is caused, endeavoring to make amends for a situation (Brown & Levinson, 1987), sympathizing is a speech act that serves as a positive-politeness technique that is intended for achieving solidarity and that portrays a friendly, positive image of
THE DISCOURSE MARKER  

the speaker and makes the addressee feel good (R. Lakoff, 1973). Apologizing (56%, 67 tokens) is the most frequent act of expressives that is marked by the use of  

is the most persistent in the data, compared to all other acts that have occurred. Supporting these findings is that it has also outnumbered the three entire categories of directives (65 tokens), commissives (43 tokens), and assertives (45 tokens). This suggests that the apologizing force of  

is its primary use. On the other hand, the performative force of  

comes in the second rank, both within the expressives acts and in the whole data, which also implies that the recruitment of  

to flag sympathizing is one of its other fundamental usages. Accounting for 96%, the utilization of  

seems to be prominent in this category of speech acts and in the entire data. This could be strongly tied to the principles of politeness and their crucial role in sustaining successful communication.

Apologizing.

مراه أحمد: معلش والله ما شفتكيش وأنا داخلة.

Ahmed’s wife:  

Ahmed’s wife: Sorry, I swear I didn’t see you while I was entering.

In this scene, a lady is apologizing to her female neighbor for not greeting her, as she did not recognize her presence while entering a place.  

here marks the illocutionary act of apologizing via communicating reluctance to impinge upon the addressee’s negative face; that is to say, the lady expresses that she did not mean to hurt the feelings of her neighbor.
When mašleš signals apologizing as an act of expressives, it shows a tendency to be a clause-initial marker (61%, 41 tokens), opening an opportunity for the addressee to give justification for what he or she has done or for what has taken place. Nonetheless, it has still occurred both as a clause-final (13 tokens) and as a clause-medial marker (9 tokens), too.

In four concordances, mašleš has appeared as a standalone marker.

Furthermore, in indexing apologizing, mašleš shows a preference for collocating with the phrase ʔana ʔāsef, for a singular masculine subject, or ʔana ʔasfa, for a singular feminine subject, which literally means I am sorry, indicating apologizing. This collocation is found in 20 extracts of mašleš in this subcategory. Additionally, it is noteworthy that this collocate has
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

occurred both before and after *maʕleš*. This coalition between *maʕleš* and ṭāsef/ʔasfa may be evidence of the speaker’s attempt to admit his or her harmful effect on the hearer or to beg forgiveness, in order to blunt the damaging feeling that he or she is encountering (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Karima: *maʕleš ṭana ṭasfa yaʕni saḥḥētek men-ennōm*

Karima: *Sorry* for waking you up.

Interestingly, in flagging the apologizing act, *maʕleš* seems to collocate with another discourse marker, namely بقى *baʔa*. In the utterances of this collocation, *baʔa* has succeeded *maʕleš*. As has been highlighted in Chapter Two, *baʔa* is one of the DMs studied by Ismail (2015). According to him, one of its pragmatic functions on the interpersonal-management level is to mark politeness, in that it mitigates the sharpness of its host utterance, that is, serving a “face-saving, attenuator function” (p. 57). This kind of collocation of two DMs indicating politeness is interesting because it could be a possible outcome of a strong face-threatening situation in which the speaker needs to stress his or her act of apologizing so as to dispose of a very embarrassing or unpleasant situation. Still, this collocate needs further investigation due to the small number of examples (9 times) in which it has appeared.

Amr: *maʕleš baʔa yōmi maʔlūb ʕašān bashar fe-ʔššōgūl*

Amr: *Sorry, my day has become upside down because I have been working late.*
In this scene, a man is apologizing to his elderly male neighbor for being very late for a meeting they have planned to hold. It seems that the man was deeply embarrassed to be late.

_Sympathizing._

Tareq’s colleague: _mašleš ya țāri? rabbena-ya`addi-l?ayyām di Sala ḫēr_

Tareq’s colleague: Sorry for you, Tareq, may these days pass peacefully.

In this scene, a man’s female colleague shows sympathy for him due to some troubles he has been going through.

One of the important findings as to the use of _mašleš_ to signal the sympathizing act is that it displays a kind of propensity to be repeated by the speaker (18 examples). One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the speaker seeks to demonstrate his or her solidarity with the addressee in the bad situation encountered, in order to make him or her feel good, which is the third politeness rule argued by Lakoff (1973). The repetition of _mašleš_ may intensify its positive effect on the hearer.

In some utterances, _mašleš_ has been sometimes repeated three or four times by the speaker.

_Hend:_ _mašleš ya māma mašleš mašleš ḥehdi ḥehdi_

Hend: I am sorry [for what happened], mom, calm down calm down.

Another finding that has emerged from the data is that _mašleš_ tends to collocate with the term of endearment _ya ḥabebti_ (addressing a female) or with _ya ḥabībi_ (addressing a male), meaning _my darling_. This has happened in 14 examples. This collocate supports the
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

Illocution of sympathizing indicated by *maʕleš* here. Since this is an expression that demonstrates intimacy between the interactants, it helps strengthen the feeling of sympathy and, in turn, leads to achieving solidarity. This collocate has occurred after *maʕleš*, not before it, in most of the utterances, and the phenomenon of the repetition of *maʕleš* has been still present here; *maʕleš* was duplicated after the collocation in many sentences.

Lamya: ُتَتَابِعِيْتِيْي *maʕleš*

Lamya: I am sorry for you, my darling, I am sorry for you.

Occasionally, the proper name or the term of address of the hearer has replaced the term address of endearment mentioned above (12 examples). This draws the attention to the fact that the vocative particle ُتَابِعِيْتِيْي *ya* is a frequent collocate in this category (26 instances), and also in the whole data (occurring 65 times right after *maʕleš*).

Heba: *maʕleš* يا ماما ُتَتَابِعِيْتِيْي تَذَفْيُهِيْي

Heba: Do not worry about it, mom, do not be upset.

With respect to the clause position of *maʕleš* within the sympathizing act class, it has been revealed from the data that *maʕleš* tends to be a clause-initial device (28 instances), as can be seen in the examples above. However, it has still occurred as both a clause-medial and clause-final marker in some examples.

As for the tone of voice of the speaker when saying *maʕleš* to mark both apologizing and sympathizing, the intonation has always been a rising one.
4.3.1.2 *mašleš* marking paying tribute. In regard to the illocution of *paying tribute* (4%, 5 tokens) expressed by the use of *mašleš* within expressives, it appears that it is not very common, although it is one of the negative-politeness strategies that communicate the speaker’s want not to impinge on the hearer, by showing awareness of his or her impingement (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The employment of *mašleš* to express this act has been geared toward attenuating the admission made by the speaker that he or she has placed a burden on the hearer in a specific situation. This view is evidenced in the use of the verb *yëteb*, which means *to tire somebody out or to put a burden on somebody*, as a collocate preceding or succeeding *mašleš* (4 examples out of 5). When the situation has come to its end, the verb is used in its past form. If the situation has been still in progress, the verb is used in its imperfect form. Further, *mašleš* has occurred as a clause-medial and clause-final marker when expressing this act.

ليلي: يا ريت لو سمحتك ماعليك.

Lamya: *ya rēt law samaht mašleš batšebak*

Lamya: Yes, please. I am sorry for placing this burden on you.

كريمة: متشكره أوي تعبتك معايا ماعليك.

Karima: *motašakkerà ?wi tašabtek mašoyà* *mašleš*

Karima: Thank you very much. I am sorry that I placed this burden on you.

The use of *mašleš* in the two examples above communicates the speakers’ respect or admiration for the hearer for what they are doing or did for them. It is interesting to note that, in the discourse prior to *mašleš*, the word *motašakkerà* (for a singular feminine subject), meaning *thank you*, has appeared three times (out of five). As a native speaker of ECA, I have an
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

intuitive feeling that it might be a frequent collocate with *maʕleš* when indicating paying tribute. This, however, needs further research in a bigger corpus.

Concerning the position of *maʕleš* in the clause, it has appeared both as a clause-medial and clause-final marker. It is also worth mentioning that uttering *maʕleš* within this subcategory has been with a falling intonation.

**4.3.2 *maʕleš* within illocutions of directives.** The speech acts of directives are attempts made by the addressee to have the addressee perform a certain action, such as asking, requesting, demanding, etc. The use of *maʕleš* within these illocutionary forces has rated second in the data (65 tokens). In this category, *maʕleš* has shown some kind of variation as to the illocutionary acts across which it has been used and in which it has acted as a politeness device marking the mitigating of the different performative acts of directives.

Because the performative utterances of directives are varyingly power-loaded and, as a result, are face-threatening acts to the addressee, they need to be lightened by virtue of the adoption of conventionally polite strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1973). If directives are used in a blunt manner, then they may breach the communicative goals in conversation. For this reason, the calling of directives for *maʕleš* to serve as a mitigation marker is a recurring phenomenon, based on the data of the present study.

According to Lakoff’s model of politeness, in order for the speaker to ensure the pragmatic correctness and the acceptability of his or her utterance, he or she should avoid imposing on the addressee and should give them the opportunity to opt out. The use of a politeness particle, such as *maʕleš*, to soften the force of directives is then expected from the speakers who adhere to the rules of politeness.
Within this category, the analysis reveals that *maʕleš* is assigned the following pragmatic meanings: *please* or *excuse me,* as a way of politely asking someone to do something or asking for something, and *sorry,* as a polite way of asking someone to repeat something that have not been heard or understood properly and as a way of forbidding someone from doing something.

![Figure 6. Distribution of maʕleš within Illocutions of Directives](image)

*Figure 6. Distribution of maʕleš within Illocutions of Directives*

Figure 6 manifests that *maʕleš* has been used to mark the mitigation of eight different performative acts of directives, the most frequent of which is requesting (61%, 40 tokens), slightly less than two thirds of its usages within this class of speech acts. The other illocutionary acts of directives (imploring, asking, directing, advising, suggesting, insisting, and forbidding) which have been alleviated by *maʕleš* demonstrate slight differences in their amount of distribution in the data, with the directing act being ranked second (9%, 6 tokens) and the forbidding act existing least in the data (2%, only one token).
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

4.3.2.1 *maʕleš mitigating requesting*. The use of *maʕleš* as an attenuator for the requesting act could be due to the probability that speakers naturally begin their acts of requesting with a softener so that they do not threaten the hearer’s negative face by their coercion. They use the attenuation device to minimize the imposition on the addressees and give them an opportunity to choose whether or not to fulfill the requesting act (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Doaa: *maʕleš ya māma sebīni-lwaḥdi-šwayya*

Doaa: Please, mom, leave me alone for a little while.

In this scene, a daughter is asking her mother to leave her alone for a while because she was upset about a bad incident that affected her. *maʕleš* functions here as a performative hedge, diminishing (or attenuating) the illocutionary force of the requesting act (Wilamová, 2005). As can be seen in this concordance extracted from the corpus, the sentence type in which *maʕleš* has appeared is the imperative. This is rather expected since the imperative-sentence type is one of the syntactic constructions assigned the conveyance of requests in language. In fact, half of the examples in which *maʕleš* has been used to mitigate the requesting act are in the imperative (20 sentences). However, an in-depth analysis of the concordance lines, where *maʕleš* has performed as a marker alleviating requesting, illustrates that both the declarative and the interrogative sentence types have been employed to express the performative of requesting.

Youssef: *howwa maʕleš momken-adaḥṭan barra*

Youssef: Please, can I smoke outdoors?
As can be noted in the aforementioned utterance, when *maʕleš* is used within an interrogative yes/no sentence, the modal *momken*, which means *could, would, or can*, has been always collocated with *maʕleš*. One reason for such a usage is that *momken* might be further supporting the politeness strategy marked by *maʕleš*.

Doaa: *maʕleš howwa hamza ṣāyez bass yetṣawwar maṣa ḥadretak*

Dooa: Please (excuse me), Hamza just wants to take a photo with you.

In the declarative sentence above, a lady was asking a celebrity for taking a photo with a child with her. Empirical evidence from the corpus shows a correlation between the use of *maʕleš* in declarative sentences, as a mitigation marker for the requesting speech act, and the use of the active participle *Ṣāyez* (for a singular masculine subject) or *Ṣayza* (for a singular feminine subject), which means *to want or would like*. The use of this stative active participle here may be ascribed to the need to a certain lexical item that is capable of communicating the act of requesting in a declarative manner, which can be met by the use of *Ṣāyez/Ṣayza*. The example below emphasizes this finding where *maʕleš* collocates with this particular active participle item. However, further research is needed because of the limited number of examples involving the use of this particular active participle.

Aly: *maʕleš wennabi ḍana ṣāyez ḍasūfek keda*

Aly: Please, I would like to see you like this.
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

Moreover, there is evidence from the corpus to hypothesize that *maʕleš* collocates with other discourse markers. As it has shown a tendency to collocate with the DM *baʔa* when signifying the apologizing speech act, it has also collocated with the DM طب *ṭab*. As has been mentioned in the literature, *ṭab* is one of three DMs analyzed by Ismail (2015). As maintained by Ismail, one of the pragmatic tasks of *ṭab* on the coherence level is its role in turn taking, signaling second or third moves, which is the case when it collocates with *maʕleš* here. The extracts from the data show that *maʕleš* always immediately follows *ṭab* in the utterance.

ٍسَمِيرَة: طَبْ مَعَلِش فَضْيِ ليْ نَفْسِكْ خَمسٍ دَقَائِقِ.

Samira: *ṭab maʕleš faddēli nafsak {textualization} ḥamas daʔaye?*

Samira: Please, free yourself up for five minutes.

Regarding the clause position of *maʕleš* within the requesting act class, the data has demonstrated that *maʕleš* has occurred in all positions, as a clause-initial, clause-medial, and clause-final marker. The concordances above have shown *maʕleš* in both clause-initial and clause-medial positions. The extract below shows *maʕleš* in clause-final position.

ٍمِيَادَا: رد عَنْدَكِيْش كَدَه كِبَيَاة لِبْنِ مَعَلِشِ؟

Mayada: *ma-ʕandekīš keda kobbāyet-laban maʕleš*

Mayada: Do you not have a glass of milk, please?

One of the significant findings as to the use of *maʕleš* in this category is that when the addressee uses a paralanguage technique, such as a facial expression, to express obvious hesitation or reluctance to do what the speaker wants from him or her, the speaker has always used *maʕleš*.
again after a very short pause. In this type of structure, maʕleš has appeared at least twice, as can be seen in the instance below.

Karima: maʕleš momken ḥadretek todḥoli-lo ʔenti ʕašān fi-maʃākel maʕleš maʕleš

Karima: Could you please get in [his room and check on him] because he has been encountering some issues? Please, please.

4.3.2.2 maʕleš mitigating imploring. The reason behind placing this kind of acts in a separate category, although it shares the syntactic characteristics of the category of the requesting acts, is that maʕleš is used here with a descending intonation, unlike the ascending intonation used with the requesting acts. In addition, the chunk ʕašān ḥaṭri, meaning for my sake, which stresses the imploring notion, is sometimes used with maʕleš in this subclass of acts. The proposition of the request used by the speaker introduces the utterance, and the collocation between maʕleš and ʕašān ḥaṭri occurs later in the discourse. This is due to the fact that the listener shows a sign of not willing to obey the request or clearly states his or her reluctance.

Tareq: Noha, momken tenzeli-šwayya
Noha: ʔanzellak fēn ʔanzellak delwaʔti
Tareq: maʕleš ya Noha ʕašān ḥaṭri

Tareq: Noha, could you please get down for a little while? I am downstairs.
Noha: Where?! Now?!
Tareq: Please, Noha, for my sake.
4.3.2.3 *maʕleš mitigating asking*. In this type of performatives, *maʕleš* is used both as a clause-initial and a clause-final politeness marker (or performative hedge), reducing the directness of the question so as to make it more acceptable to the hearer.

Samira: *maʕāk* Samira Karam
Amr: ʔahlan, mīn ḥadretek *maʕleš*

Samira: This is Samira Karam.
Amr: Hello! Excuse me, who are you?

In ECA, in some situations, this kind of usage of *maʕleš* may mark speaker’s anger or discomfort toward the proposition or the addressee. In this case, the speaker’s facial expression and tone of voice show this clearly. The situation is different here, however. In this scene, the conversation was over the phone. A lady called a man who has not met her before. When she introduced herself to him as Samira Karam, which is her name, he did not recognize her. Thus, he was wondering who she was. The man’s tone of voice was normal, and his facial expression did not show any anger.

4.3.2.4 *maʕleš mitigating directing, insisting, suggesting, and advising*. In these four categories of performatives of directives, the syntactic features of the host utterance of *maʕleš* are identical. All sentences take an imperative structure where *maʕleš* may occur as either a clause-initial or a clause-final marker. The situation in which *maʕleš* is used is responsible for its classification. In three of these four categories (directing, suggesting, and advising), *maʕleš* has been uttered with a falling intonation. However, it is uttered with a rising intonation in the act of insisting. Even though this would appear to violate the attenuation function of *maʕleš*, it is still
justifiable. The listener usually shows strong rejection of an offer or a request; consequently, the speaker’s tone of voice rises in order to express his or her insistence.

**mašleš mitigating directing.** In the directing acts, the speaker usually guides the addressee through a process of a certain action.

Karima: *yalla kfāya tamarìn-elʔedēn weštaʔal tamarìn-erreglēn mašleš mašleš howwa-ddok-tōr-elli ?allī keda*

Karima: Please please, let’s stop the hand exercise and start exercising your legs. This is what the doctor told me.

**mašleš mitigating insisting.** When mašleš is employed to reduce the seriousness of an insisting speech performative, it could be used by the speaker as a technique of insistence, after the addressee refuses to respond to an offer or a request.

Nermin: *la? la? balāš laban*
Lamya: *la? ġalaτ ?eššāy-essāda ʕa-ṣṣobh keda ġalaτ ġalaτ*
Nermin: *ma-bahebbūš ya ṭanτ*
Lamya: **mašleš mašleš**

Nermin: No no, without milk.
Lamya: No, that is wrong. Black tea in the morning is not good for you.
Nermin: I do not like it, aunt.
Lamya: Please please [take the tea with milk].

As can be seen in the aforementioned scene, a girl does not want to have milk in her morning tea. She explicitly states that she does not like it, yet her aunt insists that she takes the tea with milk.
milk. In this situation, maʕleš is uttered with a very rising intonation. The repetition of maʕleš here strengthens the notion of the insisting act.

**maʕleš mitigating suggesting.**

لَمْ يَشْقِي: الشقة دي يوم ما يضيعها الدم هتجيب كام يعني؟ مية ألف جنيه؟ و هيقاسمنا فيها الراجل . . . ، بصراحة بقي

Lamya: ئِإِسْحَا؟ا دَيْ يُوم مَا يُذِرَابْحَا دَدَم هَتَجِيْب كَأْم يَا؟ْنِى مِيْت ئَلْف إِغْنِهِ وَهَيْقَاسْمْنَا فِيْهَا الْرَّاجِل . . . ، بِصَرَاحةَ بْقِي

Heba: للها، طب معلش شو في الأول هيعرضوا كام على كل شقة.

Lamya: ṭaḥ maʕleš šūf-I?awwel hayʕeʃeːdo kām ṣala kol ša??a

Lamya: How much will this apartment cost at its highest price?! 100,000 L.E.?! And the owner will share the money with us. Frankly, it will be a big loss. At least, we benefit a bit from it.

Heba: Please [wait and] see first how much they will give [as a compensation] for each apartment.

**maʕleš mitigating advising.**

فوؤاد: شايفة يا طنط شايفة بتتعاملتي إياي! وسابتني ومشيت.

Lamya: ṭaḥ maʕleš ṣūm wa rahatsız yalla ʂalɛ̀hà ṣūm ṣesmaʃ kalâmi ṣūm yalla-tharrak

Fou’ad: ṣayfa ya tænt ṣayfa betṣamelnî-zzay wesabtnî-wmeʃyet

Lamya: maʕleš ṣūm wa rahatsız yalla ʂalɛ̀hà ṣūm ṣesmaʃ kalâmi ṣūm yalla-tharrak

Fou’ad: See, aunt, how she is treating me. She left me [while we were talking].

Lamya: Please, go make it up with her. Listen to me. Come on! Move.

**4.3.2.5 maʕleš mitigating forbidding.** Analyses of the data have revealed only one example of maʕleš marking this function. This would not help to discover how it behaves in such a use.

Nevertheless, a few findings of maʕleš in this subcategory can still be spotted. First, it is uttered with a very ascending intonation. Second, it is used by a superior (mother) to forbid an inferior (her child) from doing something. This may explain the rising intonation of maʕleš. Although the
relationship between interlocutors is not a variable in the present study, it assists in understanding this use of *maʕleš*.

Additionally, *maʕleš*, in mitigating the forbidding act, has occurred at the end of a negative structure, after the mother has clarified to her child why she has not allowed him to drink water. Still, further research is necessary so as to know more about how *maʕleš* syntactically behaves within this pragmatic function.

Yasin: *hašrab mayya*
Noha: *la? mafiš mayya ṣelbāṣ ḥalāṣ ṣarrab yīgi wemafiš wa?t teʕmel bebbi ṣabl ma tenzel- elbāṣ *maʕleš ḥana ṣasfa*

Yasin: I will drink water.
Noha: No, you cannot drink water. The bus is about to come, and you will not have time to pee before getting in it, sorry!
4.3.3 *maʕleš* within illocutions of commissives. As has been explained in the literature, the speech acts of commissives represent the speaker’s commitment to carry out an action.

![Figure 7. Distribution of *maʕleš* within Illocutions of Commissives](image)

Figure 7 illustrates that *maʕleš* has marked four different illocutionary forces within commissives. Within this category of speech acts, the use of *maʕleš* to alleviate the performative act of refusing has shown enormous occurrence, occupying nearly three quarters (31 tokens) of the illocutions of commissives. Such findings may be due to the fact that people show a strong tendency to mitigate their blunt refusals so that they do not upset their interlocutors. The speech act of refusing is very threatening to the negative face of the hearer, so it needs to be hedged by a politeness marker in order to minimize the sharpness of the utterance (Fraser, 2010; Wilamová, 2005). By doing so, the speaker shows a friendly manner toward the addressee and abides by the third principle of politeness in the model proposed by Lakoff (1973).
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Furthermore, the performative act of declaring intention has come second in this category (23%, 10 tokens). Both agreeing and disagreeing speech acts seem to be much less frequent than refusing and declaring intention.

Within this category, maʕleš bears the following pragmatic meanings: ‘sorry’ or ‘excuse me,’ as a way of politely refusing an offer or a request, as a way of disagreeing with someone, or as a polite technique of declaring something the addressee may not like or may become upset because of it.

4.3.3.1 maʕleš mitigating refusing.

Lamya: ṭetfaddali ya ḥabebti
Hala: laʔ maʕleš ya ṭanṭ ḥabebti-ana ʕandi-mtahanat

Lamya: Come in, my dear.
Hala: Sorry, aunt, I cannot. [I have to leave] because I have some exams.

In the instance above, a lady is offering her son’s colleague to get in the house, but the girl politely refuses. As can be seen, the girl provides a reason for why she cannot get in the house. In-depth tests to the concordances containing the refusing performative act show that this kind of practice, justifying the refusal, made by the addressee is very likely to occur after using maʕleš. This technique seems to be used strategically in order to be politer when performing such a negative-face threatening act.

Two findings have emerged from the data as to the use of maʕleš to soften the refusing speech act. The first finding is that a number of the utterances have involved the use of a negative particle (11 examples). Second, maʕleš has shown a propensity to collocate with َلا, meaning no
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

(11 examples). This is of course expected in a statement of refusal which usually begins with *no*.

In all occurrences of this collocation, *maʕleš* has always succeeded *laʔ*.

Doaa: *maʕleš* ya ʔaŋan ma-boḥoṭṭeš mēkab

Doaa: Sorry, aunt, I do not wear makeup.

As the extract above shows, the imperfect verb used is negated. The example beneath illustrates the use of *laʔ*, introducing the utterance and followed by *maʕleš*.

Noha: *laʔ* maʕleš ʔana mestaʕga

Lamya: *ma toʃʃodi ʔenti waʃfa lē ʔeʃrabi ḥaga*  
Noha: *laʔ* *maʕleš* ʔana mestaghela

Lamya: Why are you standing? Sit and drink something.  
Noha: No, sorry, [I cannot.] I am in a hurry.

With respect to the clause position of *maʕleš* in this class of performatives, it has appeared in the three positions: clause-initial, clause-medial, and clause-final. The examples above have illustrated its initial and medial positions. The concordance below demonstrates its clause-final position.

Heba: *ṭab ma-twadah-li delwaʔti*  
Tareq: *meʃ ʕaref-atkallem fi ḥaga zayy di hena mafleš*

Heba: Please, explain it to me now.  
Tareq: Sorry, I cannot talk about something like that here.
Finally, it is worthy of mention that \textit{maʕleš} has been said with a rising intonation across this category of speech acts.

\textbf{4.3.3.2 \textit{maʕleš mitigating declaring intention}.} A good question to answer here is why a speaker would need to mitigate a statement that expresses what he or she is going to do. The answer is that the speaker does so because what he or she is planning to do may be embarrassing for him or her in the situation or may disappoint or surprise the addressee, leading to threatening his or her negative face. Hence, in order for the speaker to minimize the impingement whether on themselves or on the addressee, he or she takes the demands of the negative face into account via the use of this politeness marker (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Mostly, in this class of acts, \textit{maʕleš} has occurred as a clause-initial device (7 examples). One possible explanation for this finding is that the speaker, when declaring his or her intention that may disappoint or upset the addressee, he or she wants to prepare him or her for what is going to happen and to soften the hardness of the utterance on the hearer as much as possible.

\textit{Nermin:} \textit{maʕleš} \textit{ʔana hastaʔen ?aʔar daʔayeʔ?}
\textit{Heba:} \textit{rayḥa fēn}

\textit{Nermin:} Excuse me, I need to leave for ten minutes.
\textit{Heba:} Where are you going?

In the scene above, two girls were taking a private lesson with a tutor. In such a situation, it is not expected that one leaves before the lesson is over. However, suddenly, one of the two girls excused herself to leave only for ten minutes, because she did not like the teacher’s method. This was both embarrassing for her and upsetting to her friend.
Regarding its syntactic behavior, one of the finding as to the use of *maʕleš* in this category is that its host utterance has often witnessed the use of a verb in the future tense (7 examples out of 10). This is likely because when the speaker declares his or her intention, he or she mentions something that will still take place in the future. This can be noted in the example mentioned above and also in the concordance line below.

Mai: *sori ya gamâṣa maʕleš haṭṭarr-amši*

Mai: Sorry, guys. Excuse me, I have to leave.

**4.3.3.3 maʕleš mitigating disagreeing.** Because the disagreeing and the refusing speech acts are somewhat related, both indexing rejection to the content of the utterance, it seems that the grammatical features of *maʕleš* and its host utterance are similar to those in the refusing act. For example, it is uttered with an ascending intonation. However, because this function has occurred only in one concordance, further research is needed in order to discover more about its syntactic behavior.

**4.3.3.4 maʕleš marking agreeing.** Indeed, this is a very interesting use of *maʕleš* in this category, because this kind of use would seem to contravene the main function that *maʕleš* carries.
out here, mitigating acts of commissives. However, in marking agreeing, *maʕleš* is utilized in a chunk that does not nearly encounter any change in its structure.

As seen in the extract above, the chunk within which *maʕleš* is used is إن كان كده معلش which means ‘*if so, then it is okay.*’ This chunk is frequent in ECA in situations where one of the interactants is upset or surprised by what an interlocutor is doing or going to do. When the interlocutor provides a justification or a good reason for the upsetting or the surprising act, the speaker uses this chunk admitting his or her understanding of the situation. The only lexical item that may change in this chunk is the conditional particle إن *en*. It might be replaced with إذا *ʔeza* or لو *law*, yet the meaning and the construction of the chunk remain as they are.
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

### 4.3.4 *maʕleš* within illocutions of assertives

The performative utterances of assertives are concerned with telling or informing people how things are. These illocutions commit the speaker to the truth of the propositional content.

![Figure 8. Distribution of *maʕleš* within Illocutions of Assertives](image)

Figure 8 displays that *maʕleš* has occurred only in two categories of the performative acts of assertives: informing and asserting. The informing act is very frequent, accounting for almost two thirds of the use of *maʕleš* in this class (30 tokens). The use of *maʕleš* to mark the asserting speech act has ranked second, featuring nearly one third of its occurrence within this category (15 tokens).

In this category of speech acts, *maʕleš* is assigned two meanings: ‘sorry’ or ‘excuse me,’ as a way of introducing or asserting information that may be disappointing or unpleasant to the addressee. In this way, *maʕleš* acts as a downgrader hedge within the ‘be pessimistic’ strategy of politeness in which the speaker tries to redress the addressee’s negative face by expecting that
he or she might not be happy about the information presented or assured (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Wilamová, 2005).

4.3.4.1 *maʕleš mitigating informing*. In this category, the speaker often acquaints the addressee with disappointing or surprising information that he or she is not involved in or not responsible for its consequences.

One would claim that the use of *maʕleš* here can be classified as an apologizing speech act. Even though this may look possible; still, the act of apologizing is meant to be for something that is done by the speaker himself or herself. In the scene above, the situation involves a doorman who is just giving upsetting information to a lady, attenuating the impingement on her by the use of *maʕleš*. The doorman is not apologizing for something he has committed. The example below supports this view.

In the extract above, a man was calling from abroad to speak with his father, but the housekeeper told him that she found him asleep. Of course, this is not her mistake; it is not something...
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

she did to apologize for doing it. Rather, this is disappointing or unpleasant information for the son who is calling from another country to check on his father, but he could not speak with him. Thus, even if *maʕleš* is translated as *sorry* in this class of performatives, it is not meant for apologizing for making a mistake, but it denotes ‘sorry for this bad information I am telling you.’

Concerning the clause position of *maʕleš* within this category, it has shown a tendency to be a clause-initial device (27 examples out of 30). This could be due to the speaker’s willingness to mitigate the bad information he or she is presenting. By using *maʕleš* at the beginning of the utterance, the speaker may be trying to prepare the hearer for the bad news.

Two collocates have been found with *maʕleš* in this category. The first collocate is the vocative particle ⟨ ya (8 examples). It has always occurred after *maʕleš* when the speaker uses the address term of the addressee, as can be seen in the example above.

Another collocate with *maʕleš* is أصل *ʔašl* (7 examples), which is used to explain or justify the bad or surprising information introduced. This collocate has always followed *maʕleš* in the discourse.

Layla: ʔella ma fi haga-mnatta?a weʃʃ-elbett
Lamya: *maʕleš* ʔašla gayya men-eʃʃoğl ʕala hena ʕala ʔuł

Layla: There is nothing [clothes] that helps the girl look beautiful.
Lamya: Sorry, this is because she just came straight from work to here [home].

**4.3.4.2 *maʕleš* mitigating asserting.** When *maʕleš* attenuates an asserting permissive, it is aimed at softening the seriousness or the unpleasantness of a fact or information that is already shared between the interlocutors.
In the scene above, a man was asking his female friend about the reason why doctors are keeping his mother in the hospital for a long time, although she seems to be better. In fact, this was not a real question that needs a definitive answer, because it is likely that the answer is a common ground between them. This is confirmed in the lady’s answer by using the phrase مأنتعرف، meaning you know that . . . , opening the door to assert a shared-knowledge fact whose impingement is decreased by the use of مسلش.

Similar to the class of the informing act، مسلش is also usually used here as a clause-initial marker (12 examples out of 15). The example below illustrates the clause-initial position of مسلش.

In this scene, Lamya went to her neighbor, the general, to offer her condolences for the loss of his wife. When she entered the general’s apartment, Karima, the housekeeper, told her that
he was in his room. Lamya already knows that the general has lost his wife. In such a situation, it is expected that she knows how sad he is because of his loss. Since Karima and Lamya are neighbors, Karima knows that Lamya is aware of the general’s sadness. Thus, when she used maʕleš, she was trying to soften her asserting of the sad news that is already shared between her and her neighbor, Lamya.

It goes without saying that, within this class of speech acts, both informing and asserting sentences have been in the declarative. This is highly expected in this category of speech acts since the speaker either states or affirms information.

4.4 Correlation Between maʕleš’ Functions and Its Syntactic Behavior

The findings of this study provide evidence that there is a significant correlation between the pragmatic functions marked by the use of maʕleš and its syntactic behavior. Such a correlation can be accounted for on two levels: position in the clause and sentence type.

4.4.1 Interaction between maʕleš’ functions and its clause position. Empirical evidence from the corpus of the present study has shown that there is a positive correlation between the functions of maʕleš and its position in the clause. This can be observed in many functions. For example, maʕleš has acted generally as a clause-initial device in marking the apologizing speech act (61%, 41 examples out of 67), perhaps providing an opportunity for the hearer to justify what he or she has done or what has happened.

When indicating the sympathizing act, maʕleš has also mostly occurred as a clause-initial marker (60%, 28 examples out of 47), which lends support to the fact that maʕleš has a great probability to introduce the utterance when performing an act of expressives (apologizing and sympathizing acts comprise 96% of this category).
Just as in apologizing and sympathizing acts, *maʕleš* has acted as a clause-initial marker when mitigating informing (90%, 27 instances out of 30), asserting (80%, 12 instances out of 15), and declaring intention (70%, 7 examples out of 10). These findings may be ascribed to the likelihood that speakers prefer to begin the discourse comprising unpleasant or upsetting information or news associated with these speech acts with a mitigation device in order to decrease the impingement impact of the content of these acts upon hearers.

When mitigating most of the acts of directives, namely requesting, asking, directing, insisting, suggesting, and advising acts, *maʕleš* has demonstrated more flexibility, occurring both as a clause-initial and clause-final marker. Likewise, when mitigating the asserting act, *maʕleš* has been used as both a clause-initial and clause-final marker. This could be due to the nature of the asserting acts which is affirming information of common ground between interactants, which might not always require having an initial politeness marker.

Overall, it seems that *maʕleš* occurs as a clause-initial marker more than it does as a clause-medial or a clause-final marker. Analyses of the data have revealed that whereas *maʕleš* has been varyingly utilized as a clause-initial marker within all of the four categories of illocutions within which it has occurred (58%, 158 tokens), it has occurred both as a clause-medial and clause-final device in the rest of the utterances (42%, 114 tokens). These results agree with the findings of other studies that DMs in many languages tend to introduce the utterance (Fisiak, 1990; Fraser, 1990; Jucker & Ziv, 1998). These findings further emphasize its role in discourse as a politeness marker, recruited by speakers to mitigate a variety of speech acts. It seems that if mitigation is addressed at the beginning of discourse, it may have a stronger and a positive effect on saving the addressee’s negative face and on weakening the impingement on him or her.
4.4.2 Interaction between *maʕleš*’s functions and sentence type. In mitigating the speech acts of directives, a reasonable number of the sentences in which *maʕleš* has occurred have been in the imperative (55%, 36 instances out of 65), which is naturally expected in a class comprising performative acts like: requesting, advising, insisting, etc. This is evident in the subclass of requesting, appearing in 20 sentences. This is 50% of the requesting act. Still, declarative and interrogative sentences have also been used with *maʕleš* to mark requesting, both together comprising the other 20 sentences.

Regarding the commissives category of illocutions, when *maʕleš* has attenuated the refusing act, a number of sentences have occurred in the negative (35%, 11 examples out of 31). This is logical since one of the potential responses, when the addressee refuses an offer or a request, is to clearly state that he or she cannot accept or is not willing to do an action, which requires a sentence in the negative.

In the category of the speech acts of assertives, all sentences have been in the declarative. This is expected with such performatives that feature either introducing or asserting information.

4.5 Correlation Between *maʕleš*’s Functions and Its Collocational Behavior

The collocational behavior of *maʕleš* has shown an affinity with its functions. As has been alluded to earlier, *maʕleš*, when carrying out particular pragmatic functions, has shown a degree of inclination to collocate with certain words or phrases. To exemplify, in flagging the apologizing act, *maʕleš* has shown a tendency to collocate with ʔana ʔāsef/ʔana ʔasfa, which literally means *I am sorry*, as a way of apologizing. This collocation would appear to further support this function of *maʕleš*. Another collocation that is observed with *maʕleš* when marking apologizing is the DM baʔa. As maintained by Ismail (2015), baʔa can indicate politeness. In this case, it only appears
as a clause-medial marker, which is the case when collocating with *maʕleš* since it always succeeds it. Such a collocation that is composed of two politeness DMs may be a result of an intense face-threatening situation where the speaker needs to underscore his or her apology.

When signifying the performative of sympathizing, *maʕleš* has tended to collocate with an endearment term of address, namely *ya ḥabebti/yəya ḫabībi*, meaning *my dear*. The use of this endearment term of address expresses the speaker’s intimacy and solidarity with the addressee, supporting, in turn, the sense of sympathy marked by *maʕleš*.

Further, there is a collocate that has co-occurred with *maʕleš* when marking the performative of paying tribute: the verb *taʕab/yeteʕeb*, meaning *to tire somebody out*. This kind of collocation reflects the nature of this function marked by *maʕleš*, which is the speaker’s attenuation of admitting putting a burden on the hearer.

Moreover, when acting within the performatives of directives, *maʕleš* has also collocated with particular lexical items that have helped convey the act of requesting when it is not mirrored by the use of the imperative. When mitigating the requesting act in a declarative sentence type, *maʕleš* has collocated with the active participle *ʕāyez/ ʕayza*, meaning *to want*, which is able to communicate the concept of request. In addition, when an interrogative sentence is used, *maʕleš* has shown to collocate with the modal *momken*, meaning *would, could, etc*. This would seem to further stress the politeness technique marked by *maʕleš*, since this modal is used in English to signal polite requests.

*maʕleš* has shown a preference to collocate with another DM in the data, *ṭab*, when marking the requesting performative. *ṭab*, according to Ismail (2015), plays a role in turn-taking, mainly in second and third moves, and *maʕleš* has always immediately succeeded this DM in the data.
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

When mitigating imploring, *maʕleš* has sometimes collocated with the chunk *ʕašān ḥaṭri*, meaning *for my sake*. This chunk further emphasizes the function of imploring that is marked by the use of *maʕleš*.

In softening the strength of the refusal speech act, *maʕleš* has collocated with *ləʔ*, meaning *no*, which is expected in a statement of refusal which usually begins with *no*. Additionally, when mitigating the performative of informing, *maʕleš* has collocated with *ʔaṣl*, explaining the upsetting or the annoying information introduced, which may lead to further softening the impingement of the utterance content.

To sum up, although the findings detailed above suggest that the pragmatic functions of *maʕleš* significantly correlate both with its syntactic and with its collocational behavior, the statistics in this study should be considered with caution due to the limited number of examples analyzed. There have been even occasions where no statistics were introduced because it would not be significant to mention them. Therefore, all assumptions made in this thesis need further research on other corpora.
5.1 Overview of the Study

Within Speech Act and Politeness theories and based on a corpus-based, qualitative analysis, this thesis has given an account of the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *maʕleš* in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. It has also investigated both the syntactic and collocational behaviors of *maʕleš* and their correlation with its pragmatic functions. The data of the study is comprised of a corpus of a contemporary Egyptian series that mirrors various characters who use everyday conversations and who represent different social classes, ages, and historical backgrounds, as well as diverse educational levels. Empirical evidence from the data has shown that *maʕleš* is a multifunctional hedge which attenuates the strength of the utterance and minimizes its impingement upon the addressee. It acts as a politeness marker, fulfilling a number of pragmatic functions within four of the five categories of speech acts proposed by Searle (1976).

In the performatives of expressives, *maʕleš* has marked the illocutions of apologizing, sympathizing, and paying attribute. In the category of directives, a variation in the illocutions attenuated by *maʕleš* has been observed. It has marked the mitigation of requesting, asking, imploring, directing, advising, suggesting, insisting, and forbidding. Within the acts of commissives, *maʕleš* has been used to soften the strength of refusing, disagreeing, and declaring intention, as well as marking agreeing, yet when used in a particular chunk. Finally, within the performatives of assertives, *maʕleš* has tended to mitigate the acts of informing and asserting.

Furthermore, further analyses have confirmed that there is a high correlation between the pragmatic functions accomplished by *maʕleš* and both its clause position and sentence type, in
THE DISCOURSE MARKER *maʕleš*

addition to its collocational behavior, suggesting that the illocution force marked or attenuated by *maʕleš* is responsible for assigning it certain syntactic and collocational features.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications of the Study

As has been illustrated in the literature and in the results of the present study, discourse markers play a major role in discourse and interpersonal management, by signaling a wide variety of pragmatic functions. Notwithstanding this important fact, DMs have not yet attracted sufficient attention in the AFL classroom. This is attributed to their inability to fit into a single word class and to be assigned a definitive meaning. They fall into different categories in the lexical inventory: adverbials, interjections, coordinate conjunctions, etc. They can even be chunks or words that are unclassifiable, just as the DM inspected in this paper. Moreover, as has been evidenced, DMs tend to have different syntactic and collocational behavioral, depending on their different function. Even their intonation varies from one function to another. Thus, the picture is not that simple. Learning DMs necessitates learning the linguistic features of their host utterances in order to be able both to use and comprehend them. For this reason, they should be presented in class as a separate word category. AFL learners should learn what a DM is and what functions it carries out in everyday conversation. One would argue that this may seem complicated and difficult to handle at the elementary level, but a gradual process would make it possible and effective. Taking *maʕleš* as a point of departure, learners at the novice level could be presented with its most common pragmatic functions and their other linguistic features. When learners show progress in their proficiency level, more functions of *maʕleš* with their associated linguistic features could be pointed out. Not only would this process help learners produce *maʕleš*, but also it will enhance their capacity of understanding them when communicating with native speakers.
Further, enhancing the pragmatic competence of AFL learners is usually neglected in the AFL classroom. Teachers prefer to focus on domains like syntax and morphology rather than the pragmatics of the language. Since DMs are pragmatically-loaded and are very frequent in everyday interactions, and since AFL learners take part in encounters with native speakers, they should be addressed as early as possible in the classroom in order not to cause an intercultural gap between both parties. Taking into consideration the nature of маʕлеš as a multimodal vocabulary item and its multifunctionality as a politeness discourse marker, omitting it from discourse produced by AFL learners may portray a false picture about them, leaving native speakers with a negative impression that learners are being impolite by threatening their negative face.

From a different perspective, taking a look at the materials produced for AFL learners uncovers the fact that there is a lack of introducing discourse markers and highlighting their various functions in the discourse. Since the present study has taken one step further toward presenting and understanding the linguistic properties and the pragmatic values of DMs, by investigating one of the most frequent DMs in ECA, it could help material designers and developers build up a picture of how to systematically implement and introduce DMs to AFL learners.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

5.3.1 Limitations of corpus-based studies. Apparently, the most challenging limitation of studies conducted on a corpus is its representative. Even though corpora are composed sometimes of millions of words, they represent only the specific kind of language they are collected from; that is, they are still not representative of the language variety itself. As a result of this fact, the findings of corpus-based studies should be considered with caution as they cannot be usually
generalized to the whole language. Nonetheless, the findings of this study should not be undermined because it adopts a purposeful sampling paradigm, not a representative one.

Another disadvantage could be the difficulty to examine large amounts of corpus data. This may be very time-consuming. Thus, the researcher, instead, looks at a random selection of the concordance lines available. Still, this is not the case in this study because all concordances extracted by the corpus software have been studied.

5.3.2 Limitations of film and drama language. In spite of the significance of film and drama language highlighted in Chapter Three above, it is still believed that it cannot be representative of authentic spoken language. Authentic spoken language is defined as spoken texts produced by native speakers in genuine communicative encounters, which is not the case in movie language. Studies claim that movie language lack many features of the spontaneous oral language. It has fewer repetitions and interruptions and fewer DMs than what is found in authentic language. However, the comparisons made between scripts and transcriptions of movies and series disprove this hypothesis. In fact, as illustrated in the literature, many studies have shown that there are striking similarities between authentic oral language and the transcriptions of films and series. This is because, unlike scripts that are usually invented by one person and are comprised of artificial situations, transcriptions involve natural language. When performed on screen, actors and actresses always naturally modify the original script, producing genuine language by creating real communicative situations and living them. As a consequence, they add realistic linguistic features to written scripts. As has been alluded to in the Methodology Chapter, this study has used transcriptions rather than the script of the series.
Another potential limitation of this study is the use of only one series to conduct the analyses. Depending on two or more series, or even including some movies in the data, would have drawn a bigger, more detailed picture about the use of the DM under investigation in ECA. However, because this series is composed of two parts with 71 episodes, it has been believed to be sufficient as a purposeful sample.

5.4 Further-Research Suggestions

First, this study has contributed to calling more attention to the importance of the study of discourse markers so as to reveal their different functions and various linguistic feature and, correspondingly, to help teachers of AFL include them in their syllabi. Therefore, it is highly suggested that further research be done on other DMs in ECA in order to shed more light on the essential role of this category of vocabulary items in maintaining and enhancing successful communication. Second, this study could be replicated to investigate and explore other variables that may have an influence on the use and the functions of maʃleʃ, such as gender, age, and social class. Finally, future research could use other corpora to replicate the study diachronically in order to trace any potential linguistic change that may be undergone by maʃleʃ.
THE DISCOURSE MARKER maʕleš

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## APPENDIX

### Concordances of *maʕleš* in the corpus

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*Note: The table above shows concordances of the discourse marker *maʕleš* in a corpus.*