

Method in madness? The jungle of English pragmatic and discourse markers

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Thursday 27 April

9:10 am

Room 217, Faculty of Arts (Main Building)

The investigation of the uses and functions of discourse and pragmatic markers, as well as of the processes through which they acquire (and sometimes lose) such functions over time has intensified in recent years, but this increase in the number of available studies has not solved some of the main questions connected to the nature and use of discourse markers. Quite on the contrary, the proliferation of studies carried out within different frameworks, and employing different terminology, has made it rather difficult to draw generalisations and see common aspects and trends.

The talk will examine some of these developments in the study of Discourse Markers in English, with a particular eye to their historical evolution over documents spanning from the Middle Ages to the present day. It will review some of the main theoretical frameworks in which this study has been carried out and will present data that seems to suggest common trends in the pragmatic exploitation of the potential of some such markers. The talk will also outline the concept of a research agenda that aims at overcoming part of the background questions outlined above.

