

The Relationship between the Usage of the Discourse Marker Cha and Speakers' Educational Background: A Discourse-Pragmatic Analysis

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to provide a discourse-pragmatic analysis of the functions of the Discourse Marker (DM) Cha when employed in Iraqi Arabic oral discourse. It also investigates if there is a relationship between the speaker's educational level and the use of the DM Cha with respect to its functions, type choices, and frequency of occurrence.

Methods: The sample consists of 460 excerpts retrieved from two conversational contexts: in-person conversations and informal phone calls. Brinton's (1996) framework has been applied in the analysis of the functions of the DM Cha at the textual and interpersonal levels of discourse. A chi-squared test has been utilized to find out to what extent well-educated informants and those with limited education are alike or different in terms of the functional use of this marker and its type-choices and whether the variation in frequency of the DM Cha is actually significant or can be attributed to chance.

Results: This paper shows that there are no statistically significant differences in terms of function. However, a statistically significant difference is in favor of informants with limited education concerning type-choices and frequency of occurrence. Generally, well-educated informants seem to be more sensitive to the use of this marker as a less prestigious marker. Undoubtedly, this is attributed to the impact of education that is almost linked to the standardization and urbanization processes.

Conclusions: The study recommends the need for further investigations to validate these results with reference to other DMs and social variables like age and social class.

Keywords: Oral discourse, discourse markers, education.

العلاقة بين المستوى التعليمي للمتحدث واستخدام أداة ربط الخطاب "چا": دراسة خطابية-براغماتية

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تحليل خطابي-براغماتي للوظائف التي تؤديها أداة ربط الخطاب (چا Cha) -عند توظيفها في اللهجة العربية العراقية المحكية. كما تهدف الدراسة إلى رصد العلاقة القائمة بين المستوى التعليمي للمتحدث واستخدام أداة ربط الخطاب (چا Cha) -من خلال بحث تأثير التعليم على وظائف الأداة المستخدمة، ونوعها، وعدد مرات استخدام هذه الأداة.

المنهجية: تتكون عينة الدراسة من 460 نص مستمدة من مصدرين رئيسيين، هما: المحادثات الواجهية والمكالمات الهاتفية غير الرسمية وقد استخدم الباحثان نظرية برنتون (1996) لتحليل وظائف أداة ربط الخطاب (چا Cha) -على المستويين النصي والتواصلي للخطاب. كما جرى تحليل البيانات إحصائياً باستخدام الاختبار الإحصائي مربع كاي (chi-squared test) للكشف عن أية فروقات معنوية في بين أداء المتحدثين ذوي التعليم الجيد وذوي التعليم المحدود فيما يتعلق بالوظائف المستخدمة ونوعها وفيما إذا كان الاختلاف في تكرار أداة ربط الخطاب (چا Cha) -ذا دلالة بالفعل أو محض مصادفة.

النتائج: يبين تحليل النتائج أن المتحدثين ذوي التعليم الجيد وذوي التعليم المحدود يستخدمون أداة ربط الخطاب (چا Cha) -في حديثهم لأداء الوظائف عينها. بينما يحتل المتحدثون ذوي التعليم المحدود الصدارة في اختيار نوع الوظائف وتكرار استخدام هذه الأداة. عموماً، يبدو المتحدثون ذوو التعليم الجيد أكثر وعياً بأن استخدام الأداة (چا Cha) -تدل على عدم الرقي الاجتماعي. ويعزى ذلك -دون شك - إلى تأثير التعليم على المتحدثين؛ حيث يرتبط التعليم بعملية التوحيد المعياري للغة والتحضر.

التوصيات: يوصي الباحثان بإجراء مزيد من الدراسات للتحقق من صحة هذه الاستنتاجات مع الإشارة إلى علامات خطابية ومتغيرات اجتماعية أخرى مثل العمر والطبقة الاجتماعية.

الكلمات الدالة: الخطاب الشفوي، أدوات ربط الخطاب، تعليم.



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1. Theoretical Background

The majority of early studies as well as current work in discourse analysis and pragmatics focus on oral discourse that functions as an indispensable channel of communication in human daily life. Arguably, to communicate orally, people profoundly need to construct a discourse. As such, people appear to jointly cooperate to create a discourse as a framework for information structure by means of which they negotiate and exchange their ideas, attitudes, emotions, beliefs and evaluations. The whole process of communication and creating a discourse between people becomes reciprocal and mutual. Among the widely used linguistic features of informal oral discourse that set it apart from the other formal spoken and written discourses are discourse markers (henceforth, DMs). Normally, in their conversational exchanges, interlocutors utilize a plethora of speech markers to tailor their ideas and facilitate the flow of their conversation. Accordingly, discourse markers as linguistic elements with "low degree of lexical specificity" and "a high degree of context- sensitivity" (Anderson, 2001: 40) come into existence to pragmatically perform their roles in oral discourse as coherence building and interactive devices.

In this study, discourse analysis and pragmatics as complementary disciplines undoubtedly come into play to illustrate to us how language is processed by participants in their discourse to express a variety of attitudes, beliefs, and emotions by means of DMs. By so doing, the former is taking the first step to sketch out a brief analysis of the way discourse markers are employed to contextually structure the ongoing talk. Simultaneously, the latter appears in a later stage to lead us to analyze DMs "in terms of actual uses of the language" (Al-Masri, 1999: 7). To put it the other way around, it certainly guides us to see the way interlocutors and context interplay to produce the contextual effect meant making use of DMs. Below this view, DMs allow us to get a better understanding of the way speakers structure their discourse, and support their argument in such a way that cognitively stimulates the recipient to reach the optimal interpretation of the message that is being conveyed and attained to the speaker's intention with minimum effort.

It can be argued that linguistic research on DMs has rapidly developed and received a wide recognition in academic fields in the late 1980s (e.g., Schiffirin 1987) whereby the study of DMs is well-documented as a "growth industry in linguistics" (Fraser, 1999: 931). Meanwhile, research on DMs has briskly broadened to serve as a "testing ground" (Bordería-Pons, 2008: 1354) for theorists within the disciplines of pragmatics and discourse analysis. This unquestionably indicates that only recently, attention is oriented to DMs as a field worthy of research in spoken discourse. Nowadays, the issue of DMs has become among the debatable issues wherein this field gains a lot of maturity through the existence of wealthy bulky books and smaller-scale studies. Inevitably, this can be forcefully attributed to the significance of DMs as highly polyfunctional, coherence-based and comprehension-facilitating operators.

According to pragmatic and contextualization cues, DMs seem to function mainly at two different levels: the textual and the interpersonal. Regarding the textual job, Brinton (1996:17) claims that DMs signify "a sequential relationship between the current basic message and the previous discourse". This obviously means that their role consists in connecting between the preceding and the following information, weaving it together into a meaningful organized discourse in such a way that explicates the speaker's intention and thus facilitating the hearer-interlocutor communication in spoken discourse. For instance, the use of the DM *After all* in such a sentence as 'you looked fatigued. *After all*, you were working all the day ' helps to establish coherence wherein the second clause as a premise is related to the former one as a conclusion. Below this view, the DM *After all* could manage to lead both the listener and the speaker to perceive the message expressed by the second clause as a premise in relation to the conclusion expressed by the first clause. Therefore, DMs are widely considered to be "the formal traces of enunciation [...] instructing the reader (hearer) about how the discourse was uttered" (Angermüller, 2014: 141).

From interpersonal perspective, DMs are certainly manipulated in oral discourse to truly signify the interactants' attitudinal stances, responses, or reactions (saving face, approval, disapproval, acknowledgement, agreement, disagreement, interest, lack of interest, regret, challenging, threatening, emphasis, politeness and tentativeness) towards the already existing assumption. In this respect, the use of the DM *Ok* can explain the case in point. For instance, a DM like *Ok* in a conversation like, *let's wait Ahmad for a while- Ok*, is utilized to confirm the hearer's agreement and readiness to conduct

the speaker's request. Accordingly, it enables us to construct a solidarity among interlocutors. Moreover, the interactive function of DMs can also be shown in the case of the DM *frankly* in such a sentence as, *frankly, you are unqualified for the job*. As an opinionated marker, the DM *frankly* has been employed to signal the speaker/hearer's underlying attitudes towards the topic under discussion. Interestingly enough, DMs are typically used by Iraqi people in their daily speech situations to fulfill a host of pragmatic functions. Remarkably, the DM *Cha* is one of the DMs that are widely used by Iraqi people in their oral discourse.

As a matter of fact, speech as a contextualizable activity does not exist in a vacuum. It does not come from an empty space. Rather, it can strongly affect and be affected by different social factors among which is the speaker's level of education. As such, this suggests that as an important aspect of oral discourse, the usage of DMs under the influence of such a social factor is also needed to be underscored. Consequently, we need to look here to fully understand how education as a social independent variable may powerfully affect the use of DMs, as an important aspect of language, in speech in terms of their types, functions, and the frequency of occurrence. Therefore, the current research study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the interpersonal and the textual functions of the DM *Cha* when it is employed in Iraqi Arabic oral discourse?
2. Do people of well-educated class differ from limited-educated people in their uses of the DM *Cha* in relation to functions, type-choice of functions and frequency of occurrence in Iraqi Arabic oral discourse? And how they differ?

2. Discourse Markers: Nature and Function

According to Trujillo Saez (2003, 4), the term 'DMs' is preferred to other terminologies available in the field as it is "neutral between the function of connection" and the "way of leading the hearer towards a certain interpretation". In fact, 'discourse markers' is a self-descriptive term. To be more precise, two components are in order here: discourse and makers. Discourse is a discourse as its name suggests. Discourses operate at the discoursal level rather than at the sentence level to "show connection between what is being said and the wider context", as Swan (1980: 1) contends. This can be aligned with Aijmir (2002:1) who certainly argues that "Discourse particles are placed ...at different places in the discourse and give important clues to how discourse is segmented and processed". The example below is adapted from Fraser (1999: 938) to illustrate the case in point, as follows:

He drove the truck through the parking lot and into the street. Then he almost cut me off, he ran a red light. *However*, these weren't his worst offences. He was driving without a license.

Explicitly, the interpretation of the basic message introduced by *however* is not only identified in relation to the segment that immediately preceded it; *he ran a red light*, but with reference to the different aspects of discourse that contribute to the development of the main topic.

As coherence-building markers, DMs certainly integrate discourse components linking up the upcoming proposition they introduce to the preceding wider context. Meanwhile, they are considered as markers since their propositional meaning is generally elucidated with respect to "what they indicate or mark rather than what they describe" (Blakemore, 2002:1). Now, let us look at the following two examples to investigate how the English DM *Yes* modifies its propositional meaning and see its function depending on what it signals in the context of its use and the speaker's intention.

1)

A: This activity is very boring.

B: *Yes*, I see.

2)

A: Don't do that again.

B: *Yes*, I will.

As it can be noticed, the usual case of the DM *Yes* has been used in the first case to definitely express the recipient's agreement indicating that the listener goes in line with what is proposed earlier. However, under the influence of context of use, the same marker has been utilized in the second case to adopt the adversary function of 'No' to convey the meaning

of negation and denial. It is worth mentioning that though they are used in written discourse, DMs are almost omnipresent in everyday oral discourse of informal situations (Brinton, 1996: 33-35).

3. The Defining Properties of Discourse Markers

The followings are among the unanimous characteristics that can critically provide a valid diagnostic test for membership:

1. Non-truth conditionality: DMs affect neither the truth nor the falsity of the discursive unit hosting them (Brinton, 1996: 35; Schourup, 1999:227).
2. Optionality: DMs are considered empty speech signs that are syntactically and semantically optional rather than mandatory items (Brinton, 1996: 33-35).
3. Initiality: Structurally, DMs are predominantly confined to a phrase/ sentence - initial position (Brinton, 1996: 33-35) though some of them can be situated in a phrase/ sentence medial position with a very few of them are placed a phrase/ sentence final position (Piurko, 2015:5).
4. Multifunctionality: Every DM has the potentiality to shift or multiply its role according to the position it engages in its context of use.
5. Phonological Independence: DMs are viewed as short linguistic devices whose pragmatic functions are closely correlated with the prosodic features accompanied their use (Redeker, 1991:11; Brinton, 2008:1).

4. The Study's Contribution to the Field of Linguistics

- i. Due to the lack of the online accessible corpus in Iraqi Arabic, the current study can be of great help as a part of Iraqi Arabic spoken language corpus.
- ii. Concerning its pedagogical value for curricula-designers, due to the lack of Iraqi DMs in the textbooks and dictionaries available recently, curricula-designers can include the results obtained in the curricula to highlight the pragmatic value of DMs in oral discourse and in an attempt to facilitate and improve their comprehension and use in English language, on the other hand.
- iii. Regarding the sociolinguistic and the anthropological domains, this study can be of valuable significance as it enables foreigners to have a better understanding of the norms of Arabic usage in Iraqi community
- iv. By providing some insights into education, as a social variable, in terms of uses and functional variation, this study further contributes to understanding of the sociolinguistic variation in the DMs usage.

5. The Discourse Marker under Scrutiny

Müller-Kessler (2003: 643, 645) acknowledges that this discourse particle dates back in its origin to the Mesopotamian Aramaic deictic particle 'ka'. It is worth noting that this marker functions as the predominant hallmark of the vernacular language used by Mesopotamian people who live in the southern part of Iraq in particular (Hassan, 2016: 47, 53). To put it more precisely, Ingham (2000: 128) certainly claims that this Mesopotamian marker seems to be the characteristic feature of the marshland citizen's dialect. She further elaborates by stating that this marker in particular has "no equivalent in Arabian dialects" (1982: 87). As opposed to Ingham's stance, it has been alleged by Holes (2001: 447) that the DM *Cha* shows an affinity to the discourse particle 'ka' (e.g., "ka-hiyya yāya", 'here she comes now') that is frequently employed in the Arabian Gulf spoken Arabic of the Bahraini as well as Kuwaiti people (Johnstone, 1967: 92).

In relation to its place of occurrence, the DM *Cha* preponderantly occupies sentence/ utterance initial position (Ingham, 1973: 550). As a discourse coherence, attitude and commentaries marker, the DM *Ch* is habitually used with no specific meaning in oral discourse, dialogues and daily interactions (Aijmer, 2002: 33). Regarding its polyfunctional task, it can be used to perform numerous pragmatic functions (Aijmer, 2002: 22) whereby its nuances of meaning and pragmatic functions alter according to the context in which it appears and the speaker's communicative intention. *Cha* can, for instance, be used to provide an explanation or a justification or to robustly support the already existing assumption (Aijmer, 2002: 36).

On the other hand, Ingham (1973: 550, 38) adds that speakers may use *Cha* in their speech to act as an attention getter, or to express emphasis as well as astonishment. The following examples illustrate the multifunctionality of *Cha* as a DM:

1. It is used as a hedging device to express an implied criticism when someone passes through a difficult situation

and finds him/ herself alone and helpless, as in:

جا وين؟ جا وين اهله؟

Cha (Come on!) Where? Our families, beloved?

2. It is employed to express disagreement/ objection as well as to ask for a pretext, as in:

جا ليش ما كليتلي عن المشكله! احاجيك!

Cha (Come on!) Why haven't you told me that? Tell me, I urge you!?

3. It is utilized as an interactive device to grab the listener's attention, as in:

وينج يا يمه؟ صار لي ساعه اصبح. جا يا يمه مشينه.

My dear, where have you been? I have been calling for you since an hour. Cha (My dear, hurry up!). We have already left.

4. It is used as an attention-getter to express affection, as in:

جا شعدي غيرك! يا بعد عيني يا يمه.

Cha (How dearly) I love you, mom. I can't live such a life without you, mom!

5. It is recruited to act as an attention-getter and as a mitigating device, as in:

الطالب: نسيت اكتب الواجب.

المدرس: جا لا تنسى!

Student: I forgot to do the homework.

Teacher: Cha 'But' don't forget (I urge you)!

Within this context, another characteristic of this DM has been brought to the fore which is 'optionality'. To put it differently, the sentence can be done without the DM *Cha* to express the imperative (I argue you to not forget) while the structure of the sentence remains tacit from semantic and syntactic perspectives. Nevertheless, as a mitigating device, the DM *Cha* has its pragmatic value in maintaining the listener's positive face wherein the illocutionary force of imperative was alleviated to be introduced as a request instead.

6. Education and Discourse

Arguably, the speaker's linguistic behavior is governed by a multitude of social parameters. In reality, discourse can be investigated with reference to extra influential social variables, such as the speaker's level of education among others like gender, age, region and religion. It is found that the speaker's level of education has for so long been diagnosed as among the effective factors that inevitably impact the speaker's linguistic choices in oral discourse. It is the case in the Arabic-speaking communities wherein diglossia comes to appear as a common phenomenon that led to linguistic variability and diversity (Abdel-Jawad, 1986a: 83). Undoubtedly, in any speech community, people generally are linguistically heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. In other words, people appear to have shared linguistic elements rather than shared linguistic behavior since "educated speakers exhibit certain linguistic habits and practices that are different from those who are not educated" as Haeri (1997: 234) claims.

Typically, well-educated individuals differ markedly from poorly educated ones in their cognitive abilities and hence, in their verbal expertise and communicative behavior. Every person has his/her own speech repertoire that guides him/ her to employ certain linguistic variants that functionally satisfy his/her communicative purposes in the different speech situations he/she engages in (Gumperz, 1972/1986: 20–21; Spolsky, 1998: 26). In this regard, the person's level of education is accounted among the pioneering factors that orient him/ her to approximate a specific linguistic form rather than another.

In an analytic study of Qatari women's speech, Khalaf's (1991) results of frequency reveal that the use of the Standard Arabic uvular plosive [q] by well-educated people in their speech outranks the use of the colloquial [g] that tends to be the characteristic feature of the speech produced by uneducated and people with limited education. In tandem with Khalaf's, Jabeur's (1987) study within the Tunisian context demonstrates that the Tunisian illiterate significantly use more diphthongs in their speech compared with the Tunisian educated speakers' discourse whereby the monophthongization of the vowels /ai/ and /au/ seems to be relatively distinct.

Clearly enough, as opposed to a minimum level of education, higher level of education provides people with an

opportunity to enhance their language as well as their critical thinking and social skills, shifting away from their prior objectives towards new prospective. Therefore, the speaker's linguistic and communicative competences are extremely shaped and adjusted by his/ her own education. This claim is robustly supported by Khalaf (2002: 48) who reiterates the strong connection between the speakers' level of education and their linguistic behavior, stating that "the higher the education level of the speakers, the more advanced the change is in their speech towards the innovative forms". In line with Khalaf, Converse (1972: 324) articulates his own conventional advice, pointing out that "The higher the education, the greater the 'good' values of the variable" whereby well- educated people are identified as more "attentive, knowledgeable, and participatory" than uneducated people or people with less education.

This suggests that an individual's social conduct can then be an automatic consequence of his/ her educational background. This line of reasoning is in conformity with Khalaf (2002: 42) who acknowledges that the level of education is "an indicator of the nature and extent of the speakers' social contacts". That is why educated people are more status- conscious in their use of linguistic variants than uneducated ones. Once again, this is among the major reasons that interpret their tendency to use the linguistic forms related to the highest variety in their own language (Abdel-Jawad, 1987: 360). Below this view, education acts as a driving force for the linguistic change and enhancement. In return, the speakers' linguistic behavior seems to be consistent with their level of education.

It is worthwhile to indicate that historically, there has been a great deal and much emphasis of research studies in literature that are replete with references to the education's impact on the speaker's selection of some linguistic variables. The speakers' level of education is found to be correlated with their choice of the linguistic forms employed in their speech (Khalaf, 2002: 2). Among the early considerable body of literature conducted in relation to this issue are (Schmidt 1974), (Abdel-Jawad 1981), (Holes 1987), (Jabeur 1987), as well as (Khalaf 1991), (Khtani 1992), and (Saeed 1993).

However, a closer look to the literature in point indicates that though many researchers have paused to consider what 'education' as a social variable is capturing, the research on 'education' is still limited and has its shortcomings. For her part, Khalaf (2002: 42) argues that as a terminology, 'education' is "unanalyzed [even] in terms of its denotations". In the sense that prior researchers seem to be inconsistent in their use of the term *per se*. While 'education' was restricted by some scholars to signal literate and illiterate people, it is "quantified to include lower, medium and higher levels of education" by others (*ibid*).

As far as the researcher's knowledge is concerned, level of education as a social variable received no attention from scholars in the available literature related to DMs neither locally nor globally. Consequently, the important question that needs to be addressed here within this context is whether or not an individual's educational background can impinge the use of DMs, as an aspect of language, in oral discourse in terms of their quality, quantity and pragmatic functions.

Accordingly, the current research study can only be considered as the first step to fill this literature gap and towards a more profound understanding of the key tents of the issue of concern. It mainly intends to show whether the individuals' level of education correlates with their communicative behavior in their use of the DMs under scrutiny when they engage in their daily argumentative discourse.

Interestingly enough, the typical levels of education in Iraq include sequentially the following: primary school (6 years), intermediate school (3 years of schooling after the primary level), women/ men teachers' institute (5 years of schooling after intermediate school to gain diploma degree) or secondary/ high school (3 years of schooling after intermediate school), technical institutes/ industrial, agricultural, medical (an additional 2 years after a secondary degree to gain diploma degree along the way), university level (an extra 4 years after secondary degree to gain bachelor degree), Master Degree (typically 2 to 3 years of schooling after the bachelor has been gained) and Doctorate degree represents the final level that varies between medical doctors and doctors of philosophy, and that is gained within about 4-5 years of study.

Regarding the current research study, 'level of education' as a social variable will be investigated in relation to two categories of people; viz, well- educated and poorly - educated. That is, subjects are categorized into two groups: well-educated people and poorly- educated people. The principle according to which the subjects of the study of concern are

identified as well- educated or poorly- educated is that people who have completed twelve years of schooling and above; normally with secondary, diploma, bachelor and higher degrees, are characterized as well- educated. By contrast, people who are not beyond this level of schooling are recognized as poorly -educated people; typically, with primary and intermediate levels of learning.

7. Literature Review

Based on a corpus elicited from Levantine, Clift and Helani (2010) accounted for the contexts within which 'inshallah' was utilized in spoken Syrian Arabic talk-in-interaction employing the conversation analysis as their framework of analysis. A considerable portion of the study was dedicated to highlight the significance of this discourse marker as a means of hope and topic transition.

As a versatile marker, the multifunctionality of Okay was investigated by Gaines (2011) as well. Based on institutional discourse, the data of this study was collected from a corpus of an informal police officers' interview. On the other hand, data analysis was conducted within the framework of Conversation analysis approach. The researcher enumerated numerous unexpected contrary functions Okay could cover depending on its position in conversational exchange. Analysis of data revealed that despite its frequent recruitment as a solidarity and management device, in other instances, Okay was utilized to signal defiance and to express the 'insistence' meaning.

Within an Arab context, a seminal contribution was made by Kanakri and Mohammad (2013a). The researchers exactly discussed the discourse marker (ʕadi) within the context of Jordanian spoken Arabic. Based on a corpus of 20 video-taped dyadic conversations with native speakers of the variety under scrutiny, the researchers signaled nine functions in relation to this marker; namely, consolation or mitigating, permission, disapproval, disappointment, contempt, courtesy, acceptance and indirect criticism or questioning.

However, Abdulkhaliq's (2014) study, questioned whether the lexical item 'yamawwad' had specific pragmatic functions to perform in the natural oral conversational context of Iraqi Arabic. To gain the answer, a study based on a corpus of dyadic conversations of informants who constituted the representative sample of the community under study was achieved. Seventeen varied functions were brought forth by the researcher in relation to this marker wherein it was utilized to mark the opening of a conversation, or to act as a marker of politeness, courtesy, request, warning, refusal, disappointment, hope and expectancy.

In another respect, Abdulkhaliq (2015) developed a study similar to that of Kanakri and Mohammad (2013a), but in more detail and with a focus more directly on the Iraqi Arabic oral discourse. Unlike Kanakri and Mohammad who enumerated only nine pragmatic functions with regard to (ʕadi) as a discourse marker, thirteen functions were brought to the fourth within the Iraqi Arabic context in Abdulkhaliq's analytic study. In the context under scrutiny, the lexical item (ʕadi) occurred phrase- initially and phrase- finally to give the pragmatic meaning of 'no worries, okay, how dare you? yeah, I hear you, or I've gone through the same thing myself' among others. However, it is worth mentioning that this cross-sectional study was based on data drawn from a corpus of recorded speech of the representative sample of the community in question. On the other hand, discourse analysis was employed as a theoretical framework to analyze the data obtained.

In a similar vein, a more comprehensive description of 'ya'ni' can be found in Abdulkhaliq's (2016) study that highlighted the pragmatic meanings and functions of this lexical item at hand as one among a host of discourse markers commonly employed in conversational Iraqi Arabic. The study was based on a corpus collected from an interview conversation with the native speakers of the speech variety under scrutiny. On the other hand, the study adopted conversation analysis as a theoretical framework. In the light of the reported results, it was revealed that this marker was pressed to service in discourse in order to fulfill numerous functions depending on the context in which it occurred, including such functions as agreement, soften criticism, direct statements, and modification and clarification of information besides intentions.

In a more recent study within the Iraqi Arabic context, Adai & Majeed (2020) have defined and delineated the contextual uses, distributional patterns and the pragmatic functions of the discourse markers 'dhile'e' and 'kabadi' that are extensively utilized recently by youths in social media. The results of the study reported that these pragmatic markers had numerous

functions to perform in Iraqi Arabic depending on the construction in which they occurred.

A closer look at the literature reveals that the discourse- pragmatic research of DMs in Iraqi Arabic has received scant attention wherein the studies conducted in the area do not exceed the limits of the four research studies mentioned: three of them conducted by the same author; Abdulkhaliq (2014, 2015, and 2016) and that is introduced by Adai & Majeed (2020). Then, this suggests that it is only lately spoken discourse, in particular, has been brought to the fourth as an area worthy of further investigation in itself. Accordingly, the need to achieve more research on DMs in Iraqi Arabic is deservedly justified here. Further, the study of variations in the use of DMs in relation to such a social variable as education is underlined by scarcity of studies in the context of Arabic studies in general and those of Iraqi Arabic in particular. So, the relation between DMs and education as one of the sociolinguistic variables that constitute a vital part of the communication context (De Aquino, 2003: 41) also needs to be underscored.

8. Research Methodology and Procedures

Corpus research methodology was adopted by the researcher to extract data that delineates the different contextual realizations of the DM *Cha*. Owing to the scarcity of an online accessible Iraqi Arabic corpus, the researcher compiled a specialized corpus as the data were assembled to examine a specific phenomenon in a particular context. The obtained data were made use of to investigate the discourse and pragmatic functions of the DM in question at the textual and interpersonal levels.

The rationale beyond the choice of this marker in particular can be ascribed to the fact that it is among the most commonly used markers recently in Iraqi Arabic spoken discourse, in addition to being highly polyfunctional. Moreover, to the researcher's knowledge, this DM has not been subject to previous research within the Iraqi Arabic context. Furthermore, the study also touched on the differences between people of different educational backgrounds in their uses of the DM at hand with reference to its functions- content, type- choice and number of occurrences. It is worth mentioning that the variety of Iraqi Arabic that is spoken in Basra was investigated as a case study. The methodology of the present study made use of quantitative method of analysis.

8.1 Sample of the Study

The present cross- sectional study was based on a corpus which comprised a recorded casual speech of 120 informants who constituted the representative sample of the community under scrutiny (Iraqi Arabic), and who are residents of Basra city center. With regards to the level of education variable, the informants were divided into 60 well-educated informants (30 men and 30 women) and 60 poorly-educated informants (30 men and 30 women).

The sample of well- educated informants constituted (15) postgraduate students who joined the Master and doctoral programs for the academic year 2020-2021. It also included (45 out of 82) third and fourth stage students. All the educated informants were students in the Department of English in the College of Arts at the University of Basra. Poorly- educated informants represented (60 out of 150) people. This group of informants was selected to include (farmers, electricians, clean- up agents, guards, drivers, carpenters and plumbers) who work in the College of Arts at the University of Basra.

Dealing with a small-scale study, the number of the sample seems to be the most suitable in such a case. This line of reasoning comes in conformity with Sankoff's (1980, cited in Bourgerie 1990: 50) idea which states that "complex communities' samples of more than about 150 individuals tend to be redundant, bringing increasing data- handling problems with diminishing analytical returns". It is worth saying that the informants are of different levels of literacy.

Generally speaking, either random sampling or judgment sampling is typically adopted when selecting the informants of any research study. Regarding this study, the investigator has resorted to the random pattern of selection whereby every person in the population is equally granted the chance to be chosen and sampled. Furthermore, a random sample has been adopted as it has the advantage of being simple (less complicated), unbiased and time saving. Under this view, random pattern stands in contrast to the judgment sample which tends to be more exhausting and time- consuming where the investigator has to choose the subjects who should be stratified within the criteria set in his/ her research study. Obviously, a judgment sample is less adequate than a random sample as far as this research study is concerned.

8.2 Data Collection Method

To achieve the research objectives, the researcher engaged the obtained data from a corpus of audio-recorded speech of two conversational contexts: face to face conversation and informal telephone conversations. Both cases involved the speech recordings of spontaneous conversations that took place among the informants and the university employees, their family members, close friends, neighbors, relatives and acquaintances in informal situations. For the sake of preserving the authenticity of the obtained data, informants were not told about the linguistic variables that are intended to be studied in their speech. In this regard, the informants were informed that the researcher asked for their help to get information about the Iraqi dialect, the main concern of the current research study. On the other hand, informants were given a form to write down personal information including the first name, age, level of education and place of residence.

The corpus was collected over a period of six months, beginning in February 2021 and ending in July 2021. About 51 hours, 20 minutes and 36 seconds of casual conversations were audio- recorded using Sony IC Recorder, ICD-BX140 recorder type. A free digital audio editor was also made use of as a device for editing the informants' recorded samples of speech. Remarkably, each conversation involved only two informants. Each informant was given the recorder for about two days and was asked to record his/ her conversations without the presence of the researcher. In terms of the phone conversations, the informants were asked to record their informal calls and then send them to the researcher as soon as the call is finished.

The time limit of each recording varied from one conversation to another depending on the nature of the topic discussed. The core topics of discussion were about everyday life concern covering issues related to the informants' occupations, lifestyles, social problems, COVID-19 and future plans, in addition to other issues of personal concerns. The places where data were collected included houses, colleges and public places. Interestingly, about 460 excerpts of speech were collected. To check their validity, the excerpts to be used to investigate the intended discourse- pragmatic functions were given to a panel of jurors; three professors who are native speakers of Iraqi Arabic and who instruct English in the Department of English at the University of Basra.

8.3 Brinton's Theoretical Framework

Brinton's (1996) two-fold categorical model of DM functions was employed in the current study to analyze and investigate the obtained data. However, the question that is being raised is why Brinton's model was preferred by the researcher to other useable models in the field of concern. Brinton's framework is deemed to be the most effective to account for DMs in oral discourse for two reasons. First, numerous scholars, such as Alami (2016), Zulfa (2016), Afrianto (2018) and Mahmoud et al., (2020) have proven Brinton's model as an effective theoretical framework when conducting their cross-cultural DM studies. Second, providing an in- depth discourse- pragmatic analysis of the functions of DM *Cha* in oral discourse at both the interpersonal and textual levels of discourse is the focus of the study under scrutiny. This necessitates applying a theoretical framework that equates pragmatics with discourse analysis in importance if the type of the analysis proposed is taken into consideration. In this concern, Brinton's (1996) model satisfies the need since it integrates the discourse analysis approach by adding the dimension of pragmatics. Accordingly, it can be applied to both interpersonal and textual levels of discourse.

Drawing on Brinton's (1996) theoretical framework, the functions of the DM *Cha* were categorized in terms of two classes: interpersonal and textual. Interpersonally, the DM *Cha* was related to such functions as attention-getting, mitigating, hedging and backchanneling, in addition to indicating agreement, disagreement and emphasis. At the textual level, the DM was suggested to establish sequence relations, to mark relations of relevance, to initiate and close discourse, to mark topic/ participant change, to signal fore/ background information, to introduce/ close a turn and to serve as verbal fillers.

8.4 Procedures of Data Analysis

As soon as the conversational recordings were accomplished, the analysis of the data was conducted by listening to the recorded conversational speech. Having segmented the collected corpus into sentences, the researcher began quantifying the tokens in which the selected group of *DMCha* occurred. Having traced, three related criteria for the description of discourse- marking tokens were established: functions, types and frequency of occurrence. Interestingly, tokens of DM *Cha*

were translated into English as translation "provides rich details about both source and the target items involved" (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg, 2004: 1797 cited in Mei, 2012: 45). The pragmatic functions of the DM under investigation and the type- choice beside frequency of occurrence were accounted for in relation to the speaker's level of education. That is, the speakers' level of education represented the pivotal independent variable in reference to which the speakers' usage of DM (the dependent variable) was examined.

The analysis drew on Brinton's (1996) model. Therefore, all the naturally occurring instances of the DM *Cha* in the recorded conversation were categorized with reference to two types of functions: interpersonal and textual. The interpersonal functions were concerned with the nature of the social exchanges and the roles assigned to speakers and hearers involve in a conversational speech situation. More specifically, they were subsumed under seven categories covering agreement, disagreement, emphasis, attention-grabbing, backchanneling, hedging/mitigating and tentativeness. The latter, however, accounted for the textual uses of DMs traced in the speaker's speech that were categorized into six types of functions including topic- shift marking, turn- taking marking, sequence/ relevance marking, opening/ closing a topic, verbal filling and fore/ background information indicating.

In the first stage of analysis, the patterns of usage of the DM were categorized according to their functional content into interpersonal and textual on the basis of Brinton's model and the functions the DM *Cha* manifested in the spoken Iraqi Arabic discourse. In the full- fledged analysis, the researcher proceeded from interpersonal to the textual description. Having categorized, the researcher then implemented the quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis is deemed useful in making a comparison between the two opposite sets of people of different educational backgrounds (well- educated/ poorly- educated) to find out to what extent they are alike or different in terms of their use of the DM at hand in relation to functions- content and their type- choice. Moreover, it also examines whether the variation in frequency of the DM usage is significant or is just related by chance.

Therefore, in the later stage, the DM functions were compared according to their content and then quantified manually by the researcher as well as compared according to their frequency of occurrence and type-choice. In the third stage of analysis, the researcher proceeded to compare between the performances of the two opposite sets of informants in terms of their use of the DM *Cha* itself. Particular statistical techniques were used, such as the Chi-square test which is seen especially significant in conducting comparison analysis in research studies (Hanafi and Puteh, 2017: 18).

The nonparametric Chi-square testing procedure was used in the current study to help the researcher "determine if what he/she observes in a distribution of frequencies would be what s/he would expect to occur by chance" (Salkind, 2007: 290). In tandem with the Chi-square testing procedure, ANOVA as a "hypothesis-testing procedure that is used to evaluate mean differences between two or more treatments or (proportions)" (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007: 389) was applied as well.

Specifically, Chi-square test (significance level) and ANOVA (probability value) were used to examine whether the difference between the two opposite groups of education in terms of DM usage is statistically significant or non- significant. Interestingly, the significance of the differences between performances of the two opposite groups of informants included was determined with reference to three critical statistical values: (0.01, 0.05, and 0.001). The difference was deemed significant when it was equal or less than any of the values given. By contrast, it was divulged as non-significant when it was found larger than the determined values. In relation to this, statistical tables were of great help in visualizing the study findings. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that all the scores involved in the study findings were reduced to percentages in an attempt to further clarify the picture of significant differences among groups under investigation.

9. Comparison of the DM *Cha* Usage with Respect to the Speaker's Educational Level

In this section, our data addresses the use of the DM *Cha* in relation to the speaker's level of education as a social variable that may affect the usage of the marker under scrutiny when employed in oral discourse in terms of its function, type or frequency of occurrence. Accordingly, a comparison is made between well-educated and poorly-educated informants' performances to examine whether or not the DM *Cha* is sensitive in its use to the speaker's educational background. Chi-square test is applied to the relevant tabulated data to statistically determine if there are any significant differences between

the two opposite sets of informants in terms of their use of the marker under scrutiny when employed in their discourse. The comparison is carried out in terms of three criteria; viz, function, type, and frequency of occurrence.

9.1 Functions

9.1.1 The pragmatic functions of the DM *Cha* at the interpersonal level of discourse

Table 1: Comparison of the functions of the DM *Cha* within interpersonal domain in terms of the speaker's educational level

Level Function	Well- educated	Ratio	Poorly- Educated	Ratio	Mean	Chi- Square	P-value
	Total		Total				
Attention-getting	1	2.4	41	97.6	1.98	38.095	0.000
Emphasis	1	2.6	37	97.4	1.97	1.000	0.000
Agreement	2	2.9	33	97.1	1.97	34.105	0.000
Disagreement	1	25.0	3	75.0	1.75	30.118	Non- Sign
Mitigating	1	20.0	4	0.0	1.80	1.800	Non- Sign
Hedging	1	4.2	23	95.8	1.96	20.167	0.000
Tentativeness	1	50	1	50	1.0	0.000	Non- Sign
Backchannel	1	9.1	10	90.9	1.91	7.364	0.007

The data that are presented in the table above suggest that statistically, the correlation between the DM *Cha* when functioning as an attentional cue and the speaker's level of education looks positive and highly significant. The Chi-square outcome (38.095) shows that the differences in the frequencies of the function at hand between the two opposite sets are significant in the case of poorly- educated participants (97.6) but not in the case of well-educated people (2.4). This result has been verified by the P-value which was lower than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$).

Shedding light on the pattern of variation concerning the pragmatic function of Emphasis, the Chi-square result (1.000) along with the estimated P-value ($P < 0.05$) explicate that the impact of the speaker's level of education is noticeably greater in the case of poorly- educated participants who had the higher percentage of use in terms of this function (97.4) than the case of the well-educated participants who got only (2.6). All the outputs presented earlier definitely denote the effectiveness of the statistical differences observed in the frequencies of the function at hand between the two opposite sets.

From the short review of the numerical data above, key findings emerge that significant statistical differences are found in the frequencies of the DM *Cha* when serving the function of Agreement as well. However, the Chi-square result (34.105) which produces a value less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) proves that these differences are statistically in favor of the poorly-educated informants who accounted for (97.1) as compared to their well-educated peers who had only (2.9).

Interestingly, the test for the frequencies of the DM *Cha* when signifying Disagreement finds no significant differences in the performance of the two opposite sets of informants. The F- ratio resulted by the Chi-square test (30.118) has validated this output though poorly- educated informants are shown to have the highest proportion of use with respect to this function (75.0) compared to well-educated informants who had (25.0). However, this statistically insignificant difference can be attributed to the estimated P-value which is more than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$).

Applying the Chi-square test to the data relevant to the pragmatic function of Hedging, the obtained result (1.800) also demonstrates the insignificance of the statistical differences observed in the frequencies of use of the DM *Cha* when employed by the two opposite groups of informants in their speech to serve the function in point. Poorly- educated informants are found to get a percentage score of (80.0) while that of the well-educated informants accounted for (20.0). Definitely, it is the estimated P-value which is more than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$) that results in this insignificant difference.

Another promising finding is that related to the pragmatic function of Mitigating. The result of the Chi-square test (20.167) reveals statistically significant differences in the frequencies of this function in the data analyzed. Nevertheless, the differences are significant in the case of the Poorly- educated informants who had (95.8) but not in the case of well-educated informants who get (4.2). The estimated P-value verifies the result obtained as it is at a level of ($P < 0.05$).

Together, the present findings also confirm the null significance of the differences related to the frequencies of the

pragmatic function of Tentativeness. The Poorly- educated informants and the well-educated informants are observed to be equal in their performance wherein they both had a percentage score of (1.50). The given premise is validated by Chi-square result which is (0.000).

A further novel finding is in terms of the pragmatic function of Backchanneling. The statistical significance of the differences in the frequencies observed with regards to this function is verified by the Poorly- educated informants who had the highest proportion of use (90.9) if compared with well-educated informants who got only (9.1). The F- ratio of the Chi-square test (7.364) which produces a P-value of ($P < 0.05$) proves the assumption given.

Table 2: Comparison of the sub-functions of the DM *Cha* within interpersonal domain in terms of the speaker's educational level.

Level Sub-function	Well- educated Total	Ratio	Poorly-Educated Total	Ratio	Mean	Chi- Square	P-value
Astonishment	1	2.4	41	97.6	1.98	38.095	0.000
Indignation	1	7.7	13	92.3	1.92	9.308	0.002
Affection	1	4.8	20	95.2	1.95	19.190	0.000
Mockery	1	12.5	7	87.5	1.88	4.500	Non- Sign

As shown in Table 2, the differences observed in the frequencies of the DM *Cha* with respect to its sub-functions are statistically significant at all levels except for the function related to the pragmatic function of Mockery. As far as the pragmatic function of Astonishment is concerned, drawn on the Chi-square outcome (38.095), it becomes quite clear that the estimated value produced ($P < 0.05$) is positive and statistically significant. Yet, the influence of the educational level is greater on the poorly- educated informants who got a percentage score of use of (97.6) rather than it is on the well-educated informants who had only (2.4).

From the results, it is also made clear that the difference between the frequencies of the DM *Cha* while signifying Indignation has been proved by the chi-square result (9.308) to be statistically significant with a P- value of ($P < 0.05$). Definitely, the significance is in favor the poorly- educated informant whose percentage score accounted for (92.3) in comparison with their well- educated peers who obtained only (7.7).

With respect to the pragmatic function of Affection, the estimated values are also shown to be positive and statistically significant. This result is echoed by the chi-square output (19.190) which in turn produced a P- value at a level of ($P < 0.05$). Once again, the realized significant difference is the output of the comparison conducted between the frequencies of occurrence of the function in point in poorly-educate informants' speech wherein they got the highest score of (95.2) and the speech of the well- educated informants who had only (4.8).

Pertaining to the pragmatic function of Mockery is the fact that the chi-square output (4.500) statistically attest the ineffectiveness of the differences observed in the poorly-educated and well- educated informants' percentage scores regarding this function though poorly-educated informants attain the highest percentage of use; that of (87.5) compared to well-educated informants who achieved (12.5). This result is also proved by the P-value obtained which is at a level of ($P > 0.01$).

By and large, people appear to have shared linguistic elements rather than shared linguistic behavior since "educated speakers exhibit certain linguistic habits and practices that are different from those who are [less or] not educated", as Haeri (1997: 234) contends. With respect to the DM *Cha* usage by well-educated women, the data tabulated reveal that none of the well-educated women uses this DM in her speech. This can be attributed to the fact that this DM is viewed by well-educated women as a stigmatized and a non-prestigious marker that is typically associated with the speech of people who are poorly- educated and who are of rural origin. This, however, goes in conformity with Ingham (2000: 128) who considers this marker as the characteristic of marshland people's speech. So, for well- educated women, the use of the DM

Cha brings about ridicule and stigma whenever employed in one's discourse. In this regard, the study coincides with Khalaf (2002: 48) who opines that "the higher the education level of the speakers, the more advanced the change is in their speech towards the innovative forms".

Since well-educated women are found to be more conscious of their social status and level of education, they try to avoid using this marker in their conversations as possible to approximate the linguistic behavior related to urban people. The results demonstrated have been verified by some previous studies of linguistic variation like Bakir's (1986 and 1987) studies that were conducted in Iraq in addition to Abd-el-Jawad's (1986b and 1987) research studies that were achieved in Jordan. Also, this finding goes in line with Spolsky (1998: 38) who is of the opinion that women of a higher level of education seems to be "more sensitive than men to the status norms of the language".

Consequently, none of the functions included in the corpus analyzed and related to this marker is observed in well-educated women's speech. By contrast, well-educated men appear to be less conservative than women in the use of this marker in their speech though it is used with a very low frequency.

Accordingly, the impact of education as a social variable on the DM *Cha* usage is remarkably evident whereby Poorly-educated informants appear to be less sensitive and are in the lead concerning the use of this marker in their conversations as reflected in their performance. This impact of the level of education on approximating a specific linguistic form rather than another has also been supported by previous studies like that of Khalaf's (1991) results wherein the use of the Standard Arabic uvular plosive [q] by well-educated people in their speech outranks the use of the colloquial [g] that tends to be the characteristic feature of the speech produced by uneducated and people with limited education. In tandem with Khalaf, Jabeur's (1987) study within the Tunisian context demonstrates that the Tunisian illiterate significantly use more diphthongs in their speech compared with the Tunisian educated speakers' discourse whereby the monophthongization of the vowels /ai/ and /au/ seems to be relatively distinct. Therefore, the result of the study, in this regard, goes in line with Converse (1972: 324) who articulates that "The higher the education, the greater the 'good' values of the variable" whereby well-educated people are identified as more "attentive, knowledgeable, and participatory" than uneducated people or people with less education.

As far as the impact of the speaker's level of education on the DM *Cha* usage in terms of its interpersonal functions, the analyzed data reveal that the influence is traced in terms of quantity rather than in terms of quality. Qualitatively, like other DMs, the DM *Cha* is revealed to fulfill "a phatic function in the discourse, underlying the interactive structure of the conversation" (Aijmer, 2002: 48). Specifically, the DM *Cha* is shown to be more concerned with "mutuality of context between speaker and hearer, saving hearer's face, drawing the hearer into the discourse and expressing empathy towards him/her" (Andersen, 2001:66).

In relation to education, the results of the study appears to contradict Haeri (1997: 234) who claims that "educated speakers exhibit certain linguistic habits and practices that are different from those who are not educated" as the DM *Cha* is found to convey the same informational content when employed in the poorly-educated informants' speech and well-educated informants' speech as well, as illustrated below:

For instance, this marker is recruited in a teacher's talk as an involvement marker to function as an attention-grabbing marker to catch his student's attention to perform a certain act. In the following example, the DM *Cha* is employed by one of the participants, who is an MA student in the department of English, and who at the same time works as a teacher at a secondary school, in his speech when talking to one of his students, as follows:

Example

الطالب: نسيت اكتب الواجب.

المدرّس: *چا*، لا تنسى

Student: I forgot to do the homework.

Teacher: *Cha* (but), don't forget (I urge you)!

This conversational exchange takes place between a teacher and his student when the student tells his teacher about his failure to complete the assignment he is required to do. It is worthy to mention that within this conversational context, *Cha*

comes to prove its polyfunctionality as a DM wherein it appears to fulfill three functions simultaneously represented by *emphasis*, *attention-getting* and *mitigating*. In the sense that **Cha** is mainly utilized by the teacher during his speech act for emphatic purposes and as an attention- getter to impart the message that the student must take further care, obviate forgetting and be committed to what has been requested to do.

Similarly, **Cha** is abundantly employed by poorly-educated informants in their speech to serve as an *attention – grabber* and a *mitigating* device and to locate emphasis on certain points in discourse, as illustrated in the following example:

Example

أورينج يا بيمه؟ صار لي ساعه اصبیح. چا يالله يا بيمه مشينه

My dear, where have you been? I have been calling for you since an hour. Cha (see, behold!) we have already left.

As an interactive marker and a message-oriented device, **Cha** accompanies the participant's speech while talking to her daughter whom she has been waiting for a while to orient her daughter's attention to the message intended to be highlighted; that is, to hint to urgency of the situation. Simply, she uses **Cha** to direct her daughter's attention to be ready as soon as possible since she had already left.

As a softening marker, **Cha** prefixes its producers' utterance in the two situations mentioned above to lessen the confrontational implication yielded by an imperative, giving it the form of a request instead. Simply, the pragmatic value of **Cha** as a mitigator cannot be belittled whereby the speaker's command is introduced as a request rather than as a threatening act; an act that "infringes on the hearer's need to maintain his /her self-esteem and be respected" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 65). So, the participant's speech is uttered in tandem with the DM **Cha** as a tag mitigator to alleviate the hardness of the declaring intention and the harsh illocutionary force of directive acts like orders (Heilser, 1996:297. In this respect, the DM **Cha** is "a verbal equivalent to a gentle hand on the shoulder", as Crystal (1988: 47) contends.

As "conversation requires a delicate balance between the satisfaction of one's own needs and the satisfaction of other's needs" (Schiffrin, 1987: 100), signaling agreement is viewed among the very basic contributions of the DM **Cha** in interpersonal domain. As an interpersonal marker and intimacy signal, **Cha** is employed in conversational exchanges to grease the relations and reduce social distance between the speaker and hearer. In the sense that, as a response marker, **Cha** initiates the recipient's turn to point to acceptance of a certain proposition introduced by the speaker, or to mark agreement to perform a specific speech act offered, requested or suggested by the speaker. It is worthy to mention that the DM **Cha** is found to be recruited in the well- educated men's speech to fulfill such a function, as in the following:

Example

أ: خالي احنه راح نروح چم يوم لبغداد وما راح نروح لببيت جدي , نأجر يعني فندق ونغعد بيه.

ب: چا خوش. انه هم اروح وبياكم.

Nephews: Uncle, we will go to Baghdad for some days, and we will not go to our grandfather's house. We will find a hotel to stay in.

Uncle: Cha khosh (great / fine). I'm going with you.

It stands to reason that in his conversational exchange with his nephews who suggest travelling to Baghdad and staying there for several days, the participant prefixes his turn with the DM **Cha** as a response marker carrying the core meaning of (great / fine) to index his agreement of the previous proposition, backing them up and suggesting to join them in their travel.

The naturally occurring instances also demonstrate that the DM **Cha** is appointed by poorly- educated informants in their speech to signal agreement and show that they go in line with the already existing assumption, as illustrated below:

Example

أ: خيه، خلّي نروح للسوگ بسرعه ونرجع من وكت حتى نلحگ نطبخ الغدا من وكت.

ب: چا خوش. توكلنا على الله.

A: Sister, let's go to the market quickly and come back as soon as possible so that we can cook lunch early.

B: Cha khosh (Ok). Let's go.

In a phone conversation, the participant is talking to her neighbor who suggests going to the market and coming back

as quickly as possible so as to prepare lunch early. The participant initiates her speaking turn with the DM *Cha* as a response marker to economize and signal consent, indicating that her assumption goes in line with the assumption held by the previous speaker. Obviously, the DM *Cha* is implanted in such situations to achieve consensus of interactants and, so, to reinforce the cooperative aspect and involvement. Concerning the co-occurrence of the DM *Cha* with DM (*khosh*) in such contexts, as illustrated by the informants, the DM *Cha* is concurrently used with (*khosh*) whenever used to index agreement.

Yet, quantitatively, the sociolinguistic variation has been proved to be very salient. That is, the majority of the statistical differences observed in the frequencies of the functions at hand are highly significant in the case of the poorly-educated informants but it is not the case of well-educated informants. In the sense that poorly-educated informants' percentage scores are rated higher than those of the well-educated informants with respect to the majority of the functions proposed. For instance, the frequencies of the DM *Cha* when functioning as an attention getter is found to be greater in the poorly-educated informants' conversations wherein they got an average of (97.6) when compared with that of well-educated informants who had only (2.4). The same results are observed with reference to the pragmatic functions of Emphasis, Agreement, Mitigating, Backchanneling and Astonishment among others. Viewed as a less prestigious marker, the low scores obtained by the well-educated informants when using the DM *Cha* could be because of education, which is linked to standardization and urbanization processes.

As shown in Table 2, the differences observed in the frequencies of the DM *Cha* with respect to its sub-functions are statistically significant at all levels except for the function related to the pragmatic function of Mockery. As far as the pragmatic function of Astonishment is concerned, drawn on the Chi-square outcome (38.095), it becomes quite clear that the estimated value produced ($P < 0.05$) is positive and statistically significant. Yet, the influence of the educational level is greater on the poorly-educated informants who got a percentage score of use of (97.6) rather than it is on the well-educated informants who had only (2.4).

From the results, it is also made clear that the difference between the frequencies of the DM *Cha* while signifying Indignation is proved by the chi-square result (9.308) to be statistically significant with a P-value of ($P < 0.05$). The significance is in favor the poorly-educated informant whose percentage score accounts for (92.3) in comparison with their well-educated peers who obtain only (7.7).

With respect to the pragmatic function of Affection, the estimated values are also shown to be positive and statistically significant. This result is echoed by the chi-square output (19.190) which in turn produces a P-value at a level of ($P < 0.05$). Once again, the significant difference realized is the output of the comparison conducted between the frequencies of occurrence of the function in point in poorly-educated informants' speech wherein they get the highest score of (95.2) and the speech of the well-educated informants who have only (4.8).

Pertaining to the pragmatic function of Mockery is the fact that the chi-square output (4.500) statistically attests the ineffectiveness of the differences observed in the poorly-educated and well-educated informants' percentage scores regarding this function though poorly-educated informants attain the highest percentage of use; that of (87.5) compared to well-educated informants who achieve (12.5). This result is also proved by the P-value obtained which is at a level of ($P > 0.01$).

With respect to the DM *Cha* usage by well-educated women, the data tabulated reveal that none of the well-educated women uses this DM in her speech. This can be attributed to the fact that this DM is viewed by well-educated women as a stigmatized and a non-prestigious marker that is typically associated with the speech of people who are poorly-educated and who are of rural origin. However, this goes in conformity with Ingham (2000:128) who considers this marker as the characteristic of marshland people's speech. So, for well-educated women, the use of the DM *Cha* definitely brings about ridicule and stigma whenever employed in one's discourse. In this concern, the study coincides with Khalaf (2002: 48) who opines that "the higher the education level of the speakers, the more advanced the change is in their speech towards the innovative forms".

Since well-educated women are found to be more conscious of their social status and level of education, they try to avoid using this marker in their conversations as possible in an attempt to approximate the linguistic behavior

related to urban people. The results demonstrated have been verified by some previous studies of linguistic variation like Bakir's (1986 and 1987) studies that were conducted in Iraq in addition to Abd-El-Jawad's (1986b and 1987) research studies that were achieved in Jordan. Also, this finding goes in line with Spolsky (1998: 38) who is of the opinion that women of a higher level of education seems to be "more sensitive than men to the status norms of the language".

Consequently, none of the functions included in the corpus analyzed and related to this marker is observed in well-educated women's speech. By contrast, well-educated men appeared to be less conservative than women in the use of this marker in their speech though it was used with a very low frequency. Accordingly, the impact of education as a social variable on the DM *Cha* usage is remarkably evident whereby Poorly- educated informants appeared to be less sensitive and are in the lead concerning the use of this marker in their conversations as reflected in their performance.

As far as the impact of the speaker's level of education on the DM *Cha* usage in terms of its interpersonal functions, the analyzed data revealed that the influence is traced in terms of quantity rather than in terms of quality. Qualitatively, the DM *Cha* was found to convey the same informational content when employed in the poorly-educated informants' speech and well-educated informants' speech as well.

However, quantitatively, the sociolinguistic variation has been proved to be very salient. That is, the majority of the statistical differences observed in the frequencies of the functions at hand are highly significant in the case of the poorly-educated informants but it is not the case of well-educated informants. In the sense that poorly-educated informants' percentage scores are rated higher than those of the well-educated informants with respect to the majority of the functions proposed. For instance, the frequencies of the DM *Cha* when functioning as an attention getter is found to be greater in the poorly-educated informants' conversations wherein they get an average of (97.6) when compared with that of well-educated informants who have only (2.4). The same results are observed with reference to the pragmatic functions of Emphasis, Agreement, Mitigating, Back channeling and Astonishment among others. Viewed as a less prestigious marker, the low scores obtained by the well-educated informants when using the DM *Cha* could be due to the effect of education which is linked to standardization and urbanization processes.

1.2 The Pragmatic Functions of the DM *Cha* within Textual Domain in Terms of the Speaker's Educational Level

Table 3: Comparison of the functions of the DM *Cha* within textual domain in terms of the speaker's educational level.

Level Function	Well- educated	Ratio	Poorly- Educated	Ratio	Mean	Chi- Square	P-value
	Total		Total				
Opening/closing a frame	1	8.3	11	91.7	1.92	8.333	0.04
Turn-taking	1	33.3	1	66.7	1.67	0.333	Non- Sign
Filler	1	3.3	29	96.7	1.97	26.133	0.000
Topic switch	1	50.0	1	50.0	1.50	0.000	Non- Sign
Information indicator	1	10.0	12	90.0	1.90	6.400	0.01
Sequence/ relevance marker	1	33.3	2	66.7	1.67	0.333	Non- Sign

Implementing the chi- square test to the data pertaining to the topic management function of opening/closing a frame produces a P-value that is at a level of ($P < 0.05$). Then, this suggests the significance of the differences between the frequencies of the DM *Cha* usage observed in the opposite group's performance regarding this function. Yet, the results show that the difference is significant in the case of poorly- educated informants who have (91.7) as compared to the well-educated informants who get only (8.3).

As far as the topic transition function of turn-taking is concerned, Table 3 exhibits that statistically, no

significant differences are realized in the frequencies of the DM *Cha* when employed by each of the two opposite groups in their discourse to serve the function at hand. While the percentage score obtained by the poorly- educated informants is (66.7), the percentage score of frequency of this function obtained by the well- educated informants is only (33.3).

Despite the remarkable difference explored in the performance of the two opposite sets, the chi- square outcome which is (0.333) disproves the statistical significance of the differences realized between the two opposite sets as the estimated P- value is at a level more than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$).

Nevertheless, the study findings disclose a noticeable differentiation in the two opposite sets' performance with regards to the pragmatic function of verbal Filling. Being viewed as a less- prestigious marker mainly related to people with a little education, the positive correlation between the use of the DM *Cha* in terms of this function and the speaker's educational background is discerned in the overall percentage score obtained by the poorly- educated informants as displayed in Table 3. In the sense that the poorly- educated informants are found to have the highest proportion of use (96.7) when compared with well- educated informants who have only (3.3). Then, this indicates that it is the poorly-educated informants who have the leading role in terms of the pragmatic function at hand. The effectiveness of the difference perceived between the two opposite sets is statistically verified by the chi-square result which is (26.133) and supported by the P- value which is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$).

In relation to the transition function of Topic switch, the results obtained are statistically proved by the chi- square test to be negative and insignificant. The chi- square outcome (0.000) exhibits a null difference in the frequencies of this function realized in the speech of each of the two opposite sets wherein both sets came up with a percentage score of (1.50). This can be ascribed to the fact that none of the naturally occurring instances is found to be related to the function at hand.

With reference to the pragmatic function of Information indicating and that of Asking for extra information as well, the analysis results shown in Table 3 implies that a considerable variation is realized in the frequencies of the functions at hand in the discourse of poorly- educated informants and well- educated informants' discourse. However, the chi-square outcome (6.400) implies that statistically, the difference between the percentage scores of the two opposite groups in terms of this function is in favor of the poorly- educated informants who get (90.0) when compared with well- educated informants who have only (10.0). Respectively, this premise is validated by the P- value which is at a level equal to 0.01.

Table 4: Comparison of the sub-functions of the DM *Cha* within textual domain in terms of the speaker's educational level

Level Sub-function	Well- educated	Ratio	Poorly- Educated	Ratio	Mean	Chi- Square	P-value
	Total		Total				
asking for extra information	1	10.0	12	90.0	1.90	6.400	0.01

As for the pragmatic function of marking Sequence/ relevance relations, the data tabulated indicates that a large amount of variation is observed between the poorly-educated informants' average (66.7) and that of the well-educated informants (33.3). The Chi-square outcome (0.333) along with the estimated value produced ($P > 0.01$) indicate that the differences in the frequencies observed between the two opposite sets of informants in terms of this function are statistically insignificant since the value obtained is larger than 0.01.

The key findings mentioned above emerge two facts of paramount importance. First, significant patterns of variation are statistically exhibited in the frequencies of the DM *Cha* when performing its textual functions in the poorly-educated and well- educated informants' speech. Second, as it is the case with the functions of interpersonal type, textual functions

are not an exception. That is, the influence of education on the DM **Cha** usage when serving its structural tasks is also, quantitative rather than qualitative. In other words, in terms of its structural jobs, both the opposite sets of informants are shown to use the DM **Cha** in their discourse to convey the same propositional content.

Qualitatively, akin to all other DMs when performing their textual job, the DM **Cha** is revealed to be recruited in the informants' speech to perform a "sequencing function of relating syntactic units and fitting them into a textual or discourse context" (Stubbs, 1983: 68). By doing so, the DM **Cha** guides to the spontaneity of discourse and the whole discourse comprehension.

For instance, among the novel functions included within the textual domain and that contribute to the fluidity of conversation is that of marking sequence or relevance relations. This function is succinctly elucidated by Fraser (1999: 22; 2006: 194) who postulates that DMs often occupy "S2 sentence-initial position in a S1-S2 combination... [to] signal a semantic relationship between the two sentences". Simply, when related to this function, **Cha** is typically oriented towards guiding the addressee towards tracing "how the different segments are ordered and related to each other" (Fung, 2003: 104). The naturally occurring instances obtained can illustrate the function in process.

Example

اسمع صوت استكائين. **چا** وين الجاي؟! *اسمع صوت استكائين. چا وين الجاي?! (So), May I have a cup of tea?!*

I am smelling tea. Cha (So), May I have a cup of tea?!

اجونا خطر. **چا** وين الجاي؟! *اجونا خطر. چا وين الجاي?! (So), tea is needed please.*

Guests are received. Cha (So), tea is needed please.

As a matter of fact, these conversational exchanges are typically uttered by both poorly- educated and well-educated informants, especially elderly ones whenever they have guests. That is, as soon as the speaker's guests arrive, he/ she asks others to bring tea as soon as possible. As a DM, **Cha** works at the ideational (informational) level of discourse structure to control the flow of conversational exchange among the participants involved in discourse, in the sense that as a structural marker, it is used to signal the discourse textuality and coherence.

Acting as a structural and cohesive device, **Cha** is positioned initially for configuring and organizing the idea structure so that it can be easily attended by recipients of information. Interestingly, within this context of use, **Cha** has the function of **So** wherein it is employed to constrain the direction of relevance between the two propositions involved in the ongoing talk. Hence, it is by virtue of **Cha** as a procedural means that a coherence relationship is established between the proposition introduced earlier in discourse and the upcoming act. That is, the message conveyed in the upcoming act (asking the other interlocutor to bring tea as soon as possible) is deemed coherent as a consequence with relevance to the premise expressed by the preceding utterance (hearing the clattering of tea cups/ the arrival of guest). Therefore, a sequential order is established between the two speech acts involved wherein the former utterance must precede the latter to reach the optimal interpretation intended with little cognitive. Put simply, it is by virtue of **Cha**, "X leads me to say Y". Then, "My evidence for X is Y" (Johnstone, 2002: 205).

It is worthy to mention that this sentence is sometimes uttered by Iraqi speakers to literally mean what is said. On the other hand, it may be used metaphorically to leave the utterance open to another interpretation that is related to sarcasm as a form of criticism. Within the sphere of this context, **Cha** is used as a connector to have the function of **but** to be forcefully contrastive in nature. Specifically, it echoes a sense of denial wherein one's words appear to be in flat contradiction with his/ her actions. As a proverb, this sentence is equivalently compatible with 'I hear banging, **Cha** (but) I don't see grinding'; a lot of noise for no use. That is, we may hear great banging/ clattering of tea cups (great number of pompous words), but no grinding / tea; no (effective or real actions) can ever be seen. It is a traditional proverb used to refer to a politician or a person with an administrative post who has all his power in his tongue; whose words are louder than his actions. Simply, it is meant to convey the message that we have heard your portentous words so far, but (**Cha**), we see nothing of your real actions up to now.

However, the same function is revealed to be served by the DM **Cha** when employed in the well-educated informants' speech, as shown below:

Example:

البارحه زرنه حافظ ببيتهم حيه مسوي عليه من اسبوعين.

*Yesterday night, we paid a visit to Hafidh's house **Cha** (because) he underwent a surgery two weeks ago.*

This conversation is exchanged between the participant who is a well-educated man who is a teacher and his colleague at work. The participant tells the latter about his visit to their friend who had a surgical operation two weeks ago. Taking the context of use as a parameter, **Cha** prefaces the participant's sentence to textually signify 'a sequential relationship between the current basic message and the previous discourse' (Fraser, 1990: 383). Specifically, within the context of this social situation, **Cha** is employed to fulfill the function of *because*. **Cha** is used as a sequential marker for delineating the reason beyond the behavior performed earlier, in addition to establishing coherence and textuality between the preceding and upcoming speech acts. That is, having the function of *because*, **Cha** triggers an inference that is based on the cognitive effect ensued by cause-and-effect logical relation, signaling its hosting utterance; **Cha** (because) he had a surgical operation since two weeks ago, as a cognitively plausible reason beyond the speech act done earlier; *visiting Hafez at their house*. As such, it narrows down the inferences expected, guiding the listener to recognize the earlier discourse unit, e.g., visiting Hafez's home, as a consequence.

Yet, the correlation between education and the DM **Cha** usage in terms of the textual functions is remarkable wherein poorly- educated informants are found to be in the vanguard in terms of the use of these functions. Once again, the low percentage of use of the marker at hand in the well- educated informants' speech can also be interpreted in terms of stigmatization and standardization.

9.2 Type

Table 5: Comparison of the DM **Cha between interpersonal and textual levels with respect to the level of education.**

Level	Well- educated		Poorly- educated		Total		Mean	Chi-square	P-value
Function	Frequency	Ratio	Frequency	Ratio	Frequency	Ratio			
Interpersonal	4	1.7	232	98.3	236	78.87	1.98	220.271	0.000
Textual	3	4.2	68	95.8	71	23.13	1.96	59.507	0.000
					307	100.0			

In order to check whether or not the speaker's level of education can even determine the type of the functions served by the DM **Cha** when employed by each of the two opposite sets of informants in their discourse, the chi- square test is applied to the data presented in Table 5 to explore the results. Arguably, the correlation between the speaker's level of education and the type- choice is remarkably discerned in the overall averages obtained by the two opposite sets of informants as displayed in Table 5. With respect to the pragmatic function of interpersonal type, the numerical data produced by the implementation of the chi- square test is proved to be significant.

Comparing the frequencies of occurrences of the functions of the interpersonal type in the speech of the two sets of informants, the chi- square result (220.271) along with the P-value produced ($P < 0.05$) indicate that the differences are statistically significant. Nevertheless, it is the poorly-educated informants who are proved the most efficient in the use of interpersonal type of functions in their discourse since they have the highest average of use; that is of (98.3) when compared with the well- educated informants who have only (1.7).

In a similar vein, the poorly- educated informants have the leading role in the use of the functions of the textual type too. They appear to be the most frequent users of the textual type functions wherein they attain (95.8) while the well- educated informants get only (4.2). The ratio produced by the chi- square test (59.507) and the P- value which is ($P < 0.05$) validate the assumption in point.

Inspired by the different patterns of variation observed above, it can be said that functions of interpersonal class seem to occupy the first rank in terms of the frequency of use in the poorly-educated informants' speech in general. In spite of the slight statistical variation between the two classes of functions, poorly-educated informants appear in favor of the

functions of the interpersonal class. Irrespective of the comparable averages of the functions of the two types at hand, the results indicate that poorly-educated informants use the functions of interpersonal type much more than those of the other class wherein functions of the interpersonal type are used for about (232) times while those of the textual type are used for about only (68) times.

This indicates that poorly-educated people are taking the lead with regard to the use of the functions of interpersonal type. Lack of efficient discourse- pragmatic competence in terms of the nuances of meaning, the contextual uses and structural tasks of the DM *Cha* could be one of the fundamental reasons that lie beyond the abundant use of this type of functions rather than the textual one. This assumption has been proved when the poorly- educated informants have been asked by the researcher to provide some information about the origin, meaning and the reasons that lie beyond the abundant use of this marker in their speech. The result highlights the fact that very little has been known about the marker at hand. However, nothing has been mentioned neither about its senses nor about its textual tasks. The other possible justification for such overuse is, however, ascribed to the fact that simply, the use of this DM is passed from one generation to another to constitute a part and parcel of their speech and to initiate their sentences typically as a prefix carrying only one meaning; that is of (my beloved). On the other hand, they consider the use of this marker as one of the symbols that reflect their local identity.

Then, this suggests that this marker is almost employed by poorly-educated informants in their speech fundamentally to act as an interactional device to express their emotions and attitudes and to strengthen their social bonds besides marking their active listenership. This assumption is supported by the high rates they obtain with regards to the pragmatic functions of Attention-getting (97.6), Emphasis (97.4), agreement (97.1), mitigating (95.8), backchanneling (90.9), Astonishment (97.6) and Affection (95.2). By and large, this line of reasoning brings to the fore the fact that the poorly-educated informants care more for the functions of interpersonal type as mechanisms of paramount importance that have their role in satisfying their communicative demands and voicing their metamessages.

On the other hand, having used as a part and parcel of their speech, the DM *Cha* is instinctively recruited by poorly-educated people to begin and close their conversations, to ask for or provide extra new information and for the sake of going on their speech without being interrupted by the other interlocutor. The given premise has been proved by their higher percentage scores in terms of the structural functions of filling clichés (96.7), Opening/ closing a frame (91.7), Information indicating (90.0) and asking for extra information (90.0). However, the afore-mentioned assumption is further backed up by the low mark they have with reference to the sequential/ relevance function (66.7) when compared to the higher scores of the functions mentioned earlier. This, in turn, emphasizes the little linguistic knowledge they have with respect to the structural uses of the marker at hand. So, it is crystal clear that the impact which education has on the DM *Cha* in terms of type-choice cannot be simply overlooked.

9.3 Frequency of Occurrence

Table 6: Comparison of the DM *Cha* in terms of the frequency of occurrence with respect to the level of education.

Level	Frequency	Ratio	Mean	Chi-square	P-value
Well- educated	7	2.3	1.98	279.638	0.000
Poorly- educated	300	97.7			
Total	307	100.0			

In this regard, the chi-square test is run to examine which of the two sets of informants has the top rank concerning the use of the DM *Cha* in their speech. Shedding more light on the pattern of variation shown in Table 6 elucidates that the chi-square output is (279.638). Besides, the P-value obtained is ($p < 0.001$). All the results mentioned reveal that the statistical difference is significant in the case of Poorly- educated informants who get (97.7) than it is the case of well-educated informants who have only (2.3). This means that Poorly- educated informants are identified as the most frequent users of the DM *Cha* when compared with their well-educated peers.

As shown in Table 6, out of (307), Well- educated informants use the DM *Cha* for only (7) times. As such, well-educated informants are found to lag behind their poorly-educated peers in the use of marker at hand. That is, poorly-educated informants sound to be less sensitive to the social consciousness of their status when compared to the well-educated informants. This means that education plays a significant role in determining the pattern of variation of the DM *Cha* in terms of frequency of use. In this respect, the study result goes in line with Khalaf's (1991) results of frequency wherein the use of the colloquial [g] that tends to be the characteristic feature of the speech produced by uneducated and people with limited education outranks the use of the Standard Arabic uvular plosive[q] that is usually utilized by well-educated people in their speech. All in all, it seems that the influence of education on the use the DM *Cha* in terms of type and frequency is more significant in the case of poorly- educated informants than it is the case of well- educated informants.

10. Conclusion

Due to the importance of DMs in “demarcating discourse coherence and their potential for indexing social relationships” (Bolden, 2008: 102), the current research study has been achieved to show which functions are related to the DM *Cha* when employed by Iraqis in their spoken discourse. On the other hand, it examines whether or not the usage of the DM *Cha* is sensitive to the speaker's level of education as regards its function, type and frequency of occurrence.

With respect to the pragmatic functions the DM *Cha* fulfills within the context of the Iraqi Arabic oral discourse, the study results reveal that a set of micro- level functions are found to be performed by the marker at hand with its interpersonal and textual categories in addition to the macro-functions proposed by Brinton (1996) in her model. In terms of its interpersonal class, the DM *Cha* is shown to serve four extra functions including Astonishment, Indignation, Affection and Mockery. However, an extra textual function is added to the list of the sub-functions suggested wherein DM *Cha* is employed to ask the addressee to provide extra information.

In relation to the impact the speaker's educational background exerts on the usage of the DM *Cha*, the results of the chi-square test exhibit that the speaker's level of education did significantly affect the sociolinguistic patterns of variation observed between the two opposite sets of informants in terms of the frequency of occurrence and the type-choice in particular. Put it differently, the difference in rating among the well-educated and poorly-educated informants indicates that the type-choice and the frequency of occurrence are remarkably determined by the speaker's educational level.

With respect to the frequency of occurrence, poorly- educated informants are revealed to be less sensitive to the use of the DM *Cha* in their speech. So, it is no wonder to be found in the vanguard regarding the DM usage as opposed to well-educated informants who are found to lag behind their peers in terms of the frequency of use. In terms of the type of functions used, the Poorly- educated informants are found to take the lead with regard to the use of the two classes of functions involved in the data analyzed. Yet, they are shown to use the functions of interpersonal type much more than the other class due to their insufficient pragmatic knowledge regarding the nuances of meaning and the structural tasks related to the marker at hand.

As for the impact of the speaker's level of education on the DM *Cha* in terms of function, the difference in the use of the functions observed between the two opposite groups are quantitative rather than qualitative. In the sense that the two opposite sets of informants are found to use the DM *Cha* in their conversations to convey the same propositional content even though the well-educated informants use the DM *Cha* in their speech with a very less frequency. However, the lack of difference in terms of informational content may due to the narrowness of the sample investigated.

However, well-educated informants are generally observed to be much more sensitive to the use of this linguistic variable which is viewed as being stigmatized and a less- prestigious marker. Definitely, this is due to the impact of education that is almost linked to the standardization and urbanization processes. By and large, people appear to have shared linguistic elements rather than shared linguistic behavior since “educated speakers exhibit certain linguistic habits and practices that are different from those who are [less or] not educated”, as Haeri (1997: 234) claims. So, it seems that as Khalaf (2002: 48) put it “ the higher the education level of the speakers, the more advanced the change is in their speech towards the innovative forms”.

11. Recommendations

1. Further investigations are recommended to validate the conclusions drawn from this study with reference to other DMs and social variables like age and social class.
2. Pedagogically speaking, teachers have to raise their students' awareness of the discourse- pragmatic significance of such linguistic items in their conversations and specifically, in their essay and composition writings.

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