

Exploring Pragmatic Markers in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Mohsin Hamid's Narrative Techniques

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Abstract

In the present research, pragmatic markers are examined in the context of Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, focusing on the narrative sequence and character identity construction. The linguistic and cultural roles of pragmatic markers, such as hedges and discourse markers, in the text are studied. Using a qualitative method supported by a corpus, the study classifies markers according to Fraser's typology. It places their use in the context of Bhabha's notion of the "third space" and hybridity. The corpus analysis shows that words like "and," "however," and "think" enhance the story by expressing the protagonist's emotional problems, cultural hybridity, and diasporic identity. Hedges stress reflection and ambiguity, whereas discourse markers offer coherence and indicate changes. This study shows that pragmatic markers are language tools that promote cohesiveness and serve as a vehicle for expressing cultural and emotional dimensions, offering insights into the complexities of diasporic literature. Furthermore, the findings advance corpus linguistics by showing how systematic corpus-based research may uncover trends in diasporic literature.

Keywords: Pragmatic markers, hedges, Discourse markers, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, hybridity

Introduction

Pragmatic markers are linguistic tools that convey information about a speaker's attitude, structure discourse, and regulate turn-taking. These markers, which include hedges, fillers, and discourse markers, are vital in sociolinguistic studies for their role in conveying meaning beyond the Aijmer literal content (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2011). The study of pragmatic markers in literary texts, especially multicultural themes, offers insights into how language is used to navigate diverse cultural perspectives and identities. A significant example is *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, a novel that explores the complexities of acculturation and identity through the dialogues of its characters. Set against the backdrop of post-9/11 tensions, the novel's narrative delves into the experiences of Changez, a Pakistani man, as he recounts his life to an American stranger in Lahore. The dialogues between the two characters, marked by pragmatic features, reveal underlying emotional and cultural tensions and highlight the interplay of their differing perspectives on identity, belonging, and the concept of the "Other" (Rubio-Fernandez, 2021; Piciucco, 2020).

This study explores how pragmatic markers in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* contribute to developing the characters' emotional and cultural selves. By examining these markers, the study aims to demonstrate how language reflects individual subjectivities, facilitates communication and positions characters within broader social and cultural contexts. Pragmatic markers, as used in the novel, thus provide a lens through which the cultural and emotional intricacies of the diaspora experience can be understood (Piciucco, 2020; Hartnell, 2013).

Problem Statement

There has been a growing interest in the discourse pragmatics studies of how such markers work within the more significant contemporary works of literature that deal with identity, culture, and migration. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a novel that provides a realistic portrayal of diaspora people. However, the ways pragmatic markers are used in character building, dialogue, and ideas regarding cultural transpositions have not been researched in depth.

While there is a theoretical understanding of pragmatic markers such as hedging and discourse markers in extant literature, no research has been conducted to offer a practical understanding of the concept from a literary perspective. Therefore, the researcher should

analyze how these markers are employed by different characters and in different scenes of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and what generalized cultural perceptions and social relations of the diaspora they signify. However, this paper aims to fill these gaps by adopting a qualitative corpus-assisted approach to analyzing the novel's kind, use, and contextual distribution of pragmatic markers. This study seeks to contribute toward understanding the role and function of pragmatic markers for language and identity by looking at how interpersonal communication, narrativity, and cultural meaning are constructed in a world where culture and globalization take center stage.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the types of pragmatic markers used in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.
2. To analyze how the pragmatic markers in the novel reflect cultural and social dynamics related to the diaspora experience.

Research Questions

1. What types of pragmatic markers are presented in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*?
2. In what ways do the pragmatic markers used in the narrative reflect cultural attitudes and themes relevant to the diaspora experience?

Literature Review

Examining pragmatic markers has emerged as a vital area of inquiry within sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. Pragmatic markers, defined as linguistic expressions that organize discourse and convey contextual meaning, are essential for understanding the subtleties of communication. These markers encompass various forms, including hedges, fillers, and discourse markers, each serving distinct functions in shaping interactions and conveying speakers' attitudes (Adjina & Khawalda, 2024). The theoretical foundations of this study are primarily grounded in Fraser's pragmatic marker theory, which categorizes these markers into distinct types based on their functions and contextual applications. Fraser (1996) posits that pragmatic markers can be classified into two main categories: discourse markers, which help structure conversation, and hedges, which express uncertainty or mitigate the force of statements. This classification offers a robust framework for analyzing how pragmatic markers operate within narratives, particularly in cultural and social dynamics (Rubio-Fernandez, 2021).

Discourse Markers

Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg (2011) posited that discourse markers refer to a critical feature of spoken and written language, devices to bring structure into talk, and indicate shifts in focus. These markers enable the structuring of the discourse event and inform the listener or reader about the speaker's intentions, feelings, and relations of the parts in the occurrence. Discourse markers are those that, at several times, cannot inform the content of a specific proposition in each sentence but are nonetheless necessary as they help in creating continuity and ensuring fluency during discourse and, as such, ease the understanding of the intended message by the audience (Fraser, 1990). Moreover, these markers keep social relations working during conversations; they may send politeness or allow time for reflection or reply. Therefore, discourse markers play an essential role in controlling interaction and promptly guarantee the comprehensibility of communication from its social perspective. According to Fraser (2010), discourse markers can be categorized as inferential Markers, which state a relation between two ideas by showing how one idea leads to the other. Examples include, of course, thus, that, for this reason. The second type is temporal Markers, which are the unique signification of a temporal relationship, i.e., next, therefore, simultaneously, soon, before, in the meantime, then. The third type is elaborate Markers, which means adding more information, whether in a method, activity, or product, to provide sufficient information or reword an idea more effectively. For Example: and, however, in addition, or rather, furthermore. The fourth type is contrastive markers, which are used where there is opposition or contrast. Examples include, however, but on the other hand, instead, however.

Additionally, Labov and Fanshel (1977) referenced discourse markers as a linguistic phenomenon early. They wrote this: "As a discourse marker, well refers backward to some topic that is already shared knowledge among participants. When well is the first element in a discourse or a topic, this reference is necessarily to an unstated topic of joint concern" (p.156).

Hedges

On the other hand, hedges are forms of words that mitigate the strength in the force of a statement and/or express pro-epistemological or politeness. These markers are preferred when speaking when someone is unsure or does not want to go too aggressively with the

information stated. Thus, it does not go deep into controversy. Hedges allow the speaker to soften the degree of the statement left in a conversation and can be associated with politeness or moderation of the speaker's confidence in the thoughts being expressed (Fraser, 1988). It means words and phrases such as: in my opinion, perhaps, kind of, and so on. Thus, employed with these expressions, the speaker softens the statement to let the addressee know that the speaker is ready to listen to the other side or to consider the opposite opinion. These markers help guide the listener or reader through the structure of the discourse by providing clues about the speaker's intentions, emotional tone, and the relationship between different parts of the conversation (Fraser, 1996).

Fraser (2010) offers these hedges: Impersonal pronouns (one), introductory sentences (believe), modal adverbs (practically, possibly, and apparently), modal adjectives (likely, unlikely, and possible), modal nouns (suggestion or potential), modal verbs (should, would, and could), epistemic verbs (think and believe), negation (didn't...?), reversal tag (isn't it?), Parenthetical construction (believe), if clause (if true,...), conditional subordinators (provided that, so long as), a conditional phrase that implies authorization (if I may say so), conditional phrase conveying doubt regarding the extralinguistic knowledge necessary for an accurate understanding of the utterance (if I'm correct), etc.

According to Nikula (1997), “hedges are linguistic devices by which speakers lessen the force of what they state to make their utterances more acceptable to the hearers” (p.188). Moreover, Hyland (1998) believes that hedges are specific lexical units used to express the author's relativized willingness to the truth of the statements and not present them as the truth. According to Hyland (2005), hedges are particularly useful in preparing for possible challenges/objections from the reader. They enable the writer to indicate how he or she feels about the accuracy of an assertion while presenting assertions with due regard for other opinions. Using hedges to control the reaction of the interfering source, Salager-Meyer (1994) equates hedges with ‘intentional vagueness’ and ‘tentativeness.’ The more likely the addressee will accept the statement, the less likely one is to gain disapproval.

Use of Pragmatic Markers in Shaping Interactions

In literature, the use of pragmatic markers serves not only as a communicative tool but also as a reflection of characters' identities and cultural contexts. The role of pragmatic markers in shaping character interactions is particularly significant in narratives exploring

identity, migration, and cultural negotiation themes. Studies have shown that pragmatic markers in multilingual and multicultural settings can indicate cultural affiliation and social positioning (Fraser, 2009). For example, specific hedging phrases signal a character's attempts to navigate cultural sensitivities or assert their identity in a diverse setting (Traugott, 1995).

The Reluctant Fundamentalist exemplifies these dynamics as it delves into the experiences of Changez, a Pakistani man reflecting on his life in America. Through the lens of pragmatic markers, this study aims to analyze how Hamid's narrative employs these linguistic devices to illustrate the complexities of cross-cultural communication and the impact of the diaspora experience on identity formation. The interplay between hedges and discourse markers in the dialogues not only reveals the characters' emotional states but also underscores the broader socio-political implications of their interactions (Ononye, 2024). In the context of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the analysis of pragmatic markers is expected to reveal how language functions as a vehicle for expressing cultural attitudes, negotiating identity, and reflecting the complexities of the immigrant experience in a post-9/11 world.

Pragmatic Markers in Sociolinguistics and Literary Studies

In this case, pragmatic markers provide extra meaning to what is being said. They assist in expressing the speaker's intentions and regulating verbal communication and people's interaction. Several studies have been carried out on different pragmatic markers employed in different settings and how they have influenced spoken and written language. A study by Eragamreddy (2023) examines how such markers enrich what the speaker is saying verbally. She categorizes pragmatic markers into four main types: essential markers, commentary markers, shared markers, and discourse markers. Every type has its purpose; it offers extra abstract details or helps the listener know how to read the message in the context of prior discourse. It also emphasizes the multidimensional potential of pragmatic markers to build finer-screwed communication and to express politeness, uncertainty, and stress.

Similarly, Volkova (2017) explains practical stylistic means, specifically to pragmatic markers in dialogical discourse. She concentrates on such signals that stress contrasts and refers to them as signs of illocutionary acts. Volkova (2017) underscores their role in indirectness. These markers assist in controlling the flow of the conversation, as well as assist the speakers in getting their message across without having to say all of it overtly. This is

especially important in dialogues because the speaker has to change the topic or adjust how he or she communicates based on the listener's response. That is why the practical value of the study is derived from the analysis of pragmatic markers in dialogical contexts – the most significant importance of these markers lies in the ability they give speakers to manage the organization of spoken interaction and its interpretive environment.

Additionally, Ament et al. (2019) focused on the spread of pragmatic markers in the actual and speakers' speech of NS and EFL learners. However, the present study in the framework of EMI revealed that EFL learners overuse specific categories of PMs for opening and closing the discourse, which may cause the learner's speech to be very difficult. However, the markers used by native speakers enabled them to advance arguments and adjust the content of their messages to provide a more logical flow of the conversation. This implies that as much as EMI contexts enhance EFL learners' pragmatic accomplishment of specific markers, namely, the pragmatic markers that support causality and sequence, other pragmatic markers, specifically the ones for elaboration and reformulation, could take more time for learners to master.

In the monologue, pragmatic users of pragmatic markers, particularly in public speaking, were evident from Han's (2011) cross-sectional study on using pragmatic markers in public speeches. This paper also shows that agglutinative and other higher-order pragmatic markers used in elaborative and contrastive contexts enhance the organization of speech, clarification, and the representation of relations between the items of the discussed matter. These markers enable the audience to recognize the Local and the Global within a speech and straightforwardly follow the speaker. Han's (2011) findings emphasized pragmatic markers as playing a pivotal role in commanding interpretation, which is a pointer to how the audience can always understand the structure of the discourse and the relationship between distinct sections of the speech. Moreover, Muhaimi et al. (2018) explored using core modalities as pragmatic markers in literary text. This work indicated that besides modality, these modal verbs, including "can," "could," and "may," are used in communicating politeness, negotiation, and positive assertion. In literary texts, these markers represent characters' rationality and awareness: they enrich the processes of characters' communication. The paper also explains the methodology for teaching these markers in language education and stresses the importance of such markers in comprehending literature and actual communication.

Research Gap

Despite extensive scholarship on pragmatic markers in sociolinguistics and literary studies, a critical gap remains in examining their role in diasporic literature through a corpus-based lens, particularly in narratives exploring cultural hybridity and identity negotiation. While recent studies, such as Adjina and Khawalda's (2024) socio-pragmatic analysis of Algerian Arabic discourse markers and Ononye's (2024) exploration of engagement markers in conflict texts, have advanced understanding of pragmatic functions in specific contexts, they do not address how these markers operate in literary works like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to articulate postcolonial identity struggles.

Similarly, Eragamreddy's (2023) semantic classification of pragmatic markers and Ament et al.'s (2019) investigation of markers in EMI learners focus on functional typologies rather than their cultural-literary significance. Recent corpus-based studies, such as Han's (2011) analysis of public speeches and Muhaimi et al.'s (2018) work on modal verbs in literature, emphasize structural roles but lack integration with postcolonial frameworks like Bhabha's Third Space. This disconnect underscores the need for research that bridges corpus linguistics, pragmatic theory, and postcolonial literary analysis to unravel how markers like hedges and contrastive discourse devices encode diasporic ambivalence and hybridity in narratives. The current study fills this void by combining Fraser's typology with Bhabha's hybridity theory, offering a novel methodology to decode the interplay of language, culture, and identity in Hamid's work.

Methodology

Research Design

This research employed a corpus-assisted qualitative approach to identify and analyze the pragmatic markers used in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid. In this analysis, the concern was classifying the pragmatic markers used in the text and their context usage and culture. In this paper, Fraser's (1996) typology of pragmatic markers was used as the theoretical foundation for a systematic classification and analysis of pragmatic markers prevalent in the novel. This qualitative approach helped capture the interaction between language, culture, characterization, and other features.

Theoretical Framework

Corpus linguistics combines with theoretical linguistic methods throughout this research to examine *The Reluctant Fundamentalist's* pragmatic markers in detail. Using corpus linguistics as a methodology enables researchers to perform computer-assisted empirical investigations of language usage from large datasets. The authors combine qualitative assessment with quantitative methods to evaluate pragmatic markers in the narrative context and their frequency and functional roles in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The researcher uses Fraser's (1996) pragmatic marker typology, which divides markers into discourse markers and hedges and elaborative elements into functional discourse categories. The Third Space framework developed by Bhabha (1994) helps to understand how pragmatic markers work to present identity negotiation and cultural hybridity themes within the text. Both linguistic and cultural aspects of pragmatic markers receive extensive analysis through the framework integration.

The hybridity theory displaces colonial binaries, such as colonizer/colonized or East/West, by identifying a third space, which is a cultural border (Easthope, 1998). This third space facilitates negotiation, resistance, and transformation to come up with a different existence of the identification that counters the dominance of one cultural attitude (Bhabha, 1994). Instead, hybridity undermines colonial discourse by claiming that the cultural subject is constantly becoming through cultural intercourse rather than steeped in his/her cultural essence (Hollinshead, 1998).

Using concepts of hybridity and the third space (Bhabha, 1994) in reading *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, the reader can appreciate how Hamid articulates the challenges and social politics of the diaspora. Consequently, Changez's protagonist may have a hybridity predicament of an oriental subject in the occidental sphere in contemporary post-9/11 America (Mizutani, 2009). The novel is an example of a third space, given that Changez liberates himself from the first and second spaces yet absorbs some and denies others completely as he embraces his Eastern origin. This framework helps understand how hedges and discourse markers work within the text as resources for identity and for committing or enacting power relations. Through analyzing these linguistic features concerning the concept of Third Space, the investigation reveals how language functions in this space to subvert Orientalist images and construct new syncretic forms of identity.

Sample

The texts to be analyzed in the present study are set as the corpus of Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which includes 43,000 words and was chosen due to the availability of full text and due to its elaborate narrative and thematic focus on identity and diaspora experience. Thus, the pragmatic and semiotic organization of dialogues and the fact that the novel is a monologue with a clear dramatic structure provided an excellent starting point for analyzing how pragmatic markers work and are deployed in dialogues and monologues. All pragmatic markers, hedges, and discourse markers in the textbook received analysis for complete monitoring. A cleaning process removed front matter and other nonessential material from the full text of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid to emphasize the narrative core content.

Corpus Tools and Their Functions

The research required two essential computational tools to perform systematic corpus-based analysis: AntConc and Sketch Engine. AntConc is a widely used free program for analyzing text data through corpus processing functions (Anthony, 2022). AntConc enabled the generation of frequency lists to identify prevalent pragmatic markers in the text. The tool aided both concordance analysis to retrieve examples of "think" with its contextual usage and provided frequency lists to track specific markers within the text. With its collocation analysis capabilities, AntConc revealed pragmatic markers' functional roles as they appeared between different characters.

Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014) offers powerful features that enable users to perform sophisticated linguistic examinations. The tool generated word sketches with extensive syntactic and lexical information about selected pragmatic markers. The tool helped compute keyness values and concordances and show both word sketches and statistically significant words distinct in the corpus from Standard English corpora. The POS tagging system categorized textual markers when differentiating between discourse markers like "that" and relative pronouns "that."

Data Collection

In actual data collection, the first step was to go through the novel repeatedly in search of pragmatic markers. These were then classified based on Fraser's (1996)

classification of markers into essential markers, commentary markers, discourse markers, and pragmatic idioms. The focus was on the position of the specific words in the text, their density, and their context with the other linguistic features. This categorization served as a basis for a more detailed analysis of the status of the markers within the given narrative. The analysis includes observations on the role of pragmatic markers used to express the character's emotional state, cultural status, and relational context. This exploration seeks to find out how language serves as a medium in grappling with culture and emotions in the cultural text.

Validity and Reliability of the Research

Validation and reliability were maintained through careful analytical methods, which will be adopted continuously. The evaluation was based on Fraser's framework, so the data analysis is consistent. The implication patterns of markers were checked cross-passage to establish consistency and used to draw generalizations. Furthermore, data from the present study was complemented by findings from previous studies on pragmatic markers and diasporic literature to support interpretations and conceptualizations.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves synthesizing the results to present how different markers interact and maneuver at the despairing cultural register that informs the tales. The findings were then discussed within identity, culture clash, and assimilation aspects, pointing to the pragmatic use of markers in the novel. This synthesis offers an integrated approach to analyzing how language captures and constructs the story's characters' experiences and interactions.

Ethical Considerations

Since this study uses only a text already in the public domain, there was little need to address ethical concerns. Accurate citations were used when using the original work and the secondary sources. This methodology was designed to include a strict, systematic analytical component alongside theoretical foundations to promote an intense and rich investigation of the use of Pragmatic markers in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study provides valuable data about the use of hedges and discourse markers, the study has some restrictions on certain important aspects. Thus, it uses the framework by Fraser (2010), which is relatively comprehensive but does not include other views on hedging and discourse markers that could have enriched the findings. Moreover, the study filtered the analysis within Fraser's taxonomy to include only the most frequently recurring markers and hedges. At the same time, the existence of less frequent but semantically and pragmatically relevant items could have given a more comprehensive picture of their use. Experimental limitations also emerged from the dependence on Sketch Engine as a data analysis tool since it mainly operates with Part of Speech and Collocations, and checks may need interpretation to align with Fraser's classifications. One of these limitations became quite apparent during the analysis of hedges and markers, specifically when distinguishing between exemplars that include expressions with multiple words and markers that crosscut the categorical distinction between lexical and grammatical aspects of a language. Moreover, the study did not go beyond the counts of the number of occurrences and parts of speech of the identified features.

In contrast, the qualitative and communicative-contextual analysis of those linguistic features in specific rhetorical environments would have added more value. There is also the possibility that markers and hedges found less frequently in the selected corpus could be significant in content-specific contexts. These shortcomings imply that future studies should take time and employ multiple paradigms and orientations, use a working corpus covering a wide range of contexts, and embrace tools capable of both qualitative and contextual analysis to explain hedges and markers and their effects fully.

Findings and Analysis

Frequency List

Below is the table created based on the frequency data provided.

Table 1

Frequency List

Rank	Type	Frequency
1	I	1793
2	The	1656
3	To	1310
4	Of	1226
5	And	1113
6	A	976
7	In	834
8	Was	752
9	That	649
10	My	622
11	You	564
12	It	521
13	Me	405
13	She	405
15	Had	398
16	Not	385
17	For	384
18	Her	377
19	As	371
20	But	361
21	With	329
22	On	298
23	We	278
24	At	263
25	He	257
26	Have	228
27	Said	224
28	This	218
29	Is	216
30	S	215
31	Were	209
32	Our	208
33	Be	203
33	So	203
35	By	190
36	Would	186
37	From	183
38	An	177

39	One	169
40	Your	166
41	What	164
42	Are	140
43	When	139
44	They	135
45	Did	132
45	Erica	132
47	Been	127
48	His	124
49	Do	121
50	No	120
51	Could	111
52	All	107
53	Like	103
53	Which	103
55	Time	97
56	Or	95
56	Us	95
58	Myself	93
59	Out	90
59	Then	90
61	There	89
62	Perhaps	83
63	Their	82
64	How	81
64	Will	81
66	More	79
67	If	77
68	About	75

Frequency of Discourse Markers

Through the frequency list, it is found that, from the discourse markers that have been noted, inferential markers, including *thus* and *that* are given, and while *"that"* is used 649 times to link information and lead the development of the narrative, they are few. Temporal markers are defined as *"then,"* which occurred 90 times, and *"before,"* which occurred 56 times, and were used to coordinate the sequencing of events within the text. Elaborative markers such as *"and,"* which appears 1,113 times, and *"but,"* which appears 361 times,

emphasize the novel's use of expansion and contrast in conversation and narration. Furthermore, contrastive markers like "however" and "instead," less explicitly articulated in the frequency list, are critical to the text's relational dynamics of opposition.

Frequency of Hedges

The following hedges were noted: modal verbs, such as “could” (111) and “would” (186), which indicate uncertainty or possibility in the protagonist’s thoughts and conversations. Speculative modal adverbs such as ‘perhaps,’ used 83 times, and epistemic verbs ‘think’ and possible contextual ‘believe,’ which occur 55 and 55 respectively, reveal the character depth and self-reflective nature of the character. Dependent structures, while not listed separately, are identified with the help of “if,” which is used 77 times and signals hypothetical or assessing conditions. These markers are so recurrent that they stress their importance in rendering the story more coherent, nuanced, and culturally significant.

Hedges

Concordances of “Think”

Figure 1

Concordances of “Think”

longer than mine, who has stopped to stand beside them?	You	think he will scold them for the inappropriateness of
of you." "What do you think of," I asked, "when	you	think of me?" "I think it isn't good
me to respond, so I said, "But what is it	you	think of that causes you to become so upset?" "
beseechingly. "I understand, madam," I said. "I will do whatever	you	think best for her." "Thank you," she said. Then
dark thoughts, sometimes. And I think of you." "What do	you	think of," I asked, "when you think of me?" "
recall its taste. But your expression, sir, tells me that	you	think something is amiss. Did this conversation really happen,
courses that I have until now escaped suspension. And lest	you	think that I am one of those instructors, in
one to his office. "So," he asked me, "how do	you	think you did?" "Fairly well," I replied. He laughed. "
think some pretty dark thoughts, sometimes. And I think of	you."	What do you think of," I asked, "when you
someone with more experience. But I'm offering it to	you.	What do you think?" "Thank you, sir," I muttered.
yet... No, I ought to pause here, for I think	you	will find rather unpalatable what I intend to say
identifying what mattered most in a business case. I hope	you	will not think me immodest when I say that
ordered on our behalf, he said, "I have been observing	you,	and I think it is no exaggeration to say,
me anything you need to know—think Twenty Questions—and	you	can do your calculations with that pencil and paper.

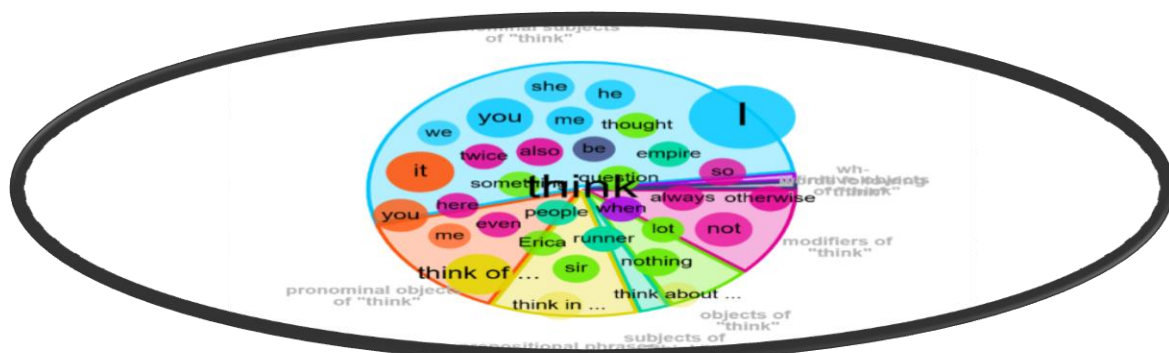
In this context, "think" is used as a hedge to express uncertainty in contemplation or an intentionally persuasive mode. In concordance, 'What do you think of me?' or Think if that causes you to become upset?" indicate situations of contemplation or doubt. This usage shows the ambivalent nature of Changez's story, vacillating between a quiet transgression

asserting self and a struggle for identity, especially when dealing with white characters. Moreover, challenges to cultural stereotyping are in statements such as "I will not think me immodest when I say that." The speaker strives to be unobtrusive while being self-promoting, trying to tread the thin line of propriety set by society. Using the pragmatic marker, 'think' also echoed Changez's conflict between his Pakistani roots and his time in America. Hedging affects the way of thinking of the character and gives evidence of the presence of a double life in a character (Fraser, 1999). For example, "What comes into your mind when you hear the name Nicholas?" strongly indicates a desire to unravel how others see him, especially in a diasporic and identity loss framework.

Additionally, through pragmatic markers like "think," the text opens a "third space" where conflicting cultural values are debated and redefined. This space allows characters like Changez to assert their agency while challenging Western perceptions. Lines like *"You will not think me immodest when I say that"* demonstrate an effort to claim authority and resist Orientalist stereotypes. These concordance lines' hedging and tentative language (e.g., *"I think best for her"*) also reflect resistance to fixed interpretations or binaries. Changez occupies a liminal space where his thoughts and actions are not easily categorized, challenging the Western urge to define and control. Throughout his dialogue, the protagonist embeds the hedging word "think" into expressions such as *"I think you will find Lahore much changed"* to introduce uncertainties and a polite tone. Linguistic ambiguity is like the Third Space theory (Bhabha, 1994) because it demonstrates cultural hybridity and the evolution of identity. Changez shows an uncertain attitude towards his past and future because he uses modal verbs "could" and "would" multiple times to point out the diasporic struggle between belonging and alienation.

Figure 2

Sketches of "Think"



In the sketches, the given verb "think" was accompanied by prepositions such as "think of," "think about," "think in," and others, which indicate cognitive processes that stem from the zone of the uncertainty of negotiation. This is in accord with hedges in discourse in which speakers communicate an uncertain or conditional opinion rather than a definitive one. The characters in Hamid's works, mid-century often hybridized between two cultures and two histories, use "think" to indicate their place in the "third space"—the median ground between the alien world of the past and the unknown world of the future, between a self and another. In such cases, Hamid's use of "think" highlights hesitation and uncertainty. By using "think" in such ways, Hamid invites the reader into this liminal space of reflection, ambiguity, and negotiation. Rather than stating or asserting, the act of thinking mirrors the diasporic condition—constantly shifting, questioning, and reconfiguring one's sense of self and place in the world.

Concordances of *Believe*

Figure 3

Concordances of "Believe"



Figure 3 depicts that "believe" constantly works as a hedge, communicating doubt, uncertainty, and subjectivity. "I did not believe him," "I wanted to believe," and "I flattered myself to believe" are examples of the protagonist's internal struggle, indicating his ambivalence about his environment, relationships, and personal views. The recurrent use of "believe" softens the affirmations, indicating a reluctance to commit entirely to the realities or views provided. This is prevalent in diaspora tales, where people traverse contradictory

identities and cultural experiences. Furthermore, statements such as "Believe me" act as pragmatic markers, emphasizing a request for trust or understanding, and are frequently employed in persuasion or to change the listener's perceptions. The protagonist's emotional and cultural displacement, a feature of the diasporic situation where certainty is frequently elusive and personal and cultural identities constantly change, is reflected in this pattern of hedging and seeking affirmation.

Concordance of "Likely"

Figure 4

Concordances of "Likely"

/s><s>Documenting her effect on her habitat, a naturalist would	likely	have compared her to a lioness: strong, sleek, and invariably sun
I suspect not: those girls seem comfortable in this area and are	likely	to come here often, while he looks out of place.</s><s>Moreover
protectiveness that prevented my attempting to kiss Erica; equally	likely	, it was the shyness and awe that accompany first love.</s><s>In
t would be of ever-greater importance to humanity and would be	likely	, therefore, to provide me with ever-increasing returns.</s><s>I a
assessment by experts of the military balance in the region and	likely	scenarios for battle, and the negative impact the standoff was alr
make her lose her balance."</s><s>The nurse suggested I was	likely	to find Erica at the end of a path that wound through the wooded
which the prudent secrete their possessions so that they are less	likely	to be discovered by thieves.</s><s>I myself employed no such p
d a walking stick, and he ambled at a pace so slow that it would	likely	have been illegal for him to cross at an intersection in New York.<
ven if I were, there is no reason why this incident would be more	likely	to be false than any of the others I have related to you.</s><s>Co
ed my waking hours in those days after her disappearance, and	likely	also permeated my dreams; they were in that period my only form
d.</s><s>I can usually tell, for example, who in a crowd is most	likely	to provoke violence, or who among my peers is most likely to con
most likely to provoke violence, or who among my peers is most	likely	to complain to the dean that I need to be put in my place before n

The above figure shows that, in various situations, the modal adjective "likely," which has concordance outcomes, is used to convey likelihood and uncertainty. Both human conduct and more general circumstances are described using the phrase. For example, "likely have compared her to a lioness," which compares a person's forceful presence, and "likely scenarios for battle," which refers to possible military results. The use of the word 'likely' in the description of behaviors like 'likely to provoke violence' or 'likely to be discovered by thieves' reinforces that fluctuating and bounded construction of hybrids where the character is as likely to have one set of social scripts to follow a second of another depending on the facet chosen for identification. Even such phrases as 'one is likely to get Erica at the end of a path' seek to create stability and familiarity in a world created by constant mobility and diaspora – the search for a stable, desacralized identity.

Discourse Markers (Inferential Marker)

Concordances of “that”

Figure 5

Concordances of “that”

elegant, artful, haunting novella – a deceptively simple narrative	that	is in fact deeply ambiguous' Observer 'Terrific' New Statesman 'C
istan) 'The tone is spot-on... a thoughtful and sophisticated novel	that	has the courage to wear its political conviction on its sleeve' Time
metry to the flow of events, as well as a sensuousness and finish	that	might belong to some other form of art: music, perhaps...</s><s>
rm of art: music, perhaps...</s><s>The result is a cool equipoise	that	is not possible in "real life"... but no less moving or true for having
nited States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition	that	it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired ou
ublisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than	that	in which it is published and without a similar condition including th
'rightened by my beard: I am a lover of America.</s><s>I noticed	that	you were looking for something; more than looking, in fact you se
he people of our northwest frontier.</s><s>Nor was it your dress	that	gave you away; a European tourist could as easily have purchas
ationalities tend to look alike.</s><s>Instead, it was your bearing	that	allowed me to identify you, and I do not mean that as an insult, fo
s your bearing that allowed me to identify you, and I do not mean	that	as an insult, for I see your face has hardened, but merely as an o
may be aware, after a courtesan immured for loving a prince—and	that	is the quest for the perfect cup of tea.</s><s>Have I guessed cor
quality of its tea, I assure you, is unparalleled.</s><s>You prefer	that	seat, with your back so close to the wall?</s><s>Very well, altho

The software results show that "that" as an inferential discourse marker appears 649 times and has a frequency of 12,905.92 per million tokens (1.3%). Its frequent use in the text functions as a grammatical tool for connecting phrases and expanding on details, frequently acting as a conjunction or relative pronoun. "That" is essential for connecting the narrator's past and present, showing the fluidity of identity across borders. Statements like "I spent four and a half years in your country" or "I worked in New York, and before that attended college in New Jersey," demonstrate how "that" connects experiences in distinct cultural settings. Furthermore, "that" frequently includes contrasting components, reflecting hybridity by fusing various cultural references, as demonstrated by metaphors such as "I was a perfect breast, if you will—tan, succulent, seemingly defiant of gravity." As a result, "that" binds concepts together and personifies the complex character of diasporic identity by fusing many facets of cultural and individual experience.

Concordances of “than” (Temporal Marker)

Figure 6

Concordances of “than”

the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other	than	that in which it is published and without a similar condition includi
ica.	than	looking, in fact you seemed to be on a mission, and since I am bc
ked around me at the Gothic buildings—younger, I later learned,	than	many of the mosques of this city, but made through acid treatmer
it, the non-Americans among us tended on average to do better	than	the Americans, and in my case I reached my senior year without i
longer play varsity soccer, I could once again run a mile in less	than	six minutes.
inally, after some time had passed—it could not have been more	than	a minute, but it felt longer—he said, “Tell me something.
there a point to all this?”	than	I intended, my voice rising and taking on an edge.
he had, after all, seen through me in a few minutes more clearly	than	had many people who had known me for years.
In any traditional, class-conscious society, declines more slowly	than	wealth.
—In fact, no sooner had we set sail on our ferry to the islands	than	did a young man—a tooth dangling on a string of leather in front o
cons of your country, she belonged more to the camp of Paltrow	than	to that of Spears.
Or are you watching that man, the one with the beard far longer	than	mine, who has stopped to stand beside them?

This figure shows that "than" occurs 63 times among temporal markers, with a frequency of 1,252.81 per million tokens (0.13%). Like "that," "than" is a comparative word commonly used to create links and contrasts between various ideas, concepts, and experiences. A sense of duality or tension between one's native culture and the new setting is frequently reflected in "than" to emphasize the comparison of various cultural realities and identities. Phrases such as "you belonged more to the camp of Paltrow than to that of Spears" are examples of cultural comparisons that highlight the topic of cultural identity blending or opposition, a significant element in hybrid narratives. Furthermore, the word "than" is employed in phrases like "less than an inch" and "more than a moment," highlighting the subtleties and complexity of identity creation in a diasporic setting. Utilizing these analogies, "than" expresses the conflict and merging of various cultural strata, mirroring the hybridity intrinsic to the diasporic encounter.

Concordances of “and” (Elaborative Marker)

Figure 7

Concordances of “and”

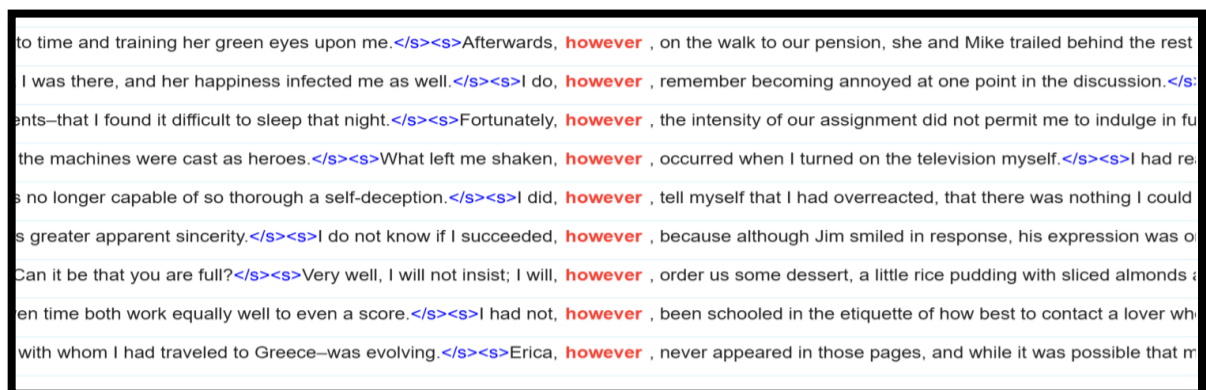
lor of your skin; we have a range of complexions in this country,	and	yours occurs often among the people of our northwest frontier.
sily have purchased in Des Moines your suit, with its single vent,	and	your button-down shirt.
d your button-down shirt.	and	your expansive chest— the chest, I would say, of a man who bench
— the chest, I would say, of a man who bench-presses regularly,	and	maxes out well above two-twenty-five—are typical of a certain typ
typical of a certain type of American; but then again, sportsmen	and	soldiers of all nationalities tend to look alike.
—Instead, it was your bearing that allowed me to identify you,	and	I do not mean that as an insult, for I see your face has hardened,
u may be aware, after a courtesan immured for loving a prince—	and	that is the quest for the perfect cup of tea.
are no better upholstered, its wooden tables are equally rough,	and	it is, like the others, open to the sky.
bes blow, makes these warm afternoons more pleasant.	and	will you not remove your jacket?
not typical of Americans, at least not in my experience.	and	my experience is substantial: I spent four and a half years in your
perience.	and	a half years in your country.
rs in your country.	and	before that attended college in New Jersey.
any of the mosques of this city, but made through acid treatment	and	ingenious stonemasonry to look older— and thought, This is a dre

The concordance analysis of "and" as an elaborative marker shows that its central themes center on identity, nationality, and the narrator's experiences associating different cultural contexts between Pakistan and America. The concordance analysis also reveals the narrator's perceptive attitude towards physical appearance and behavior as well as history in the light of the phrase 'I will know an American through physical features and his conduct and the time he has spent in the USA where he studied at Princeton.' The words "typical of a certain type of American" and "my life was a film in which I was the star" demonstrate the narrator's inner speeches regarding his nationality and life in America. The comparison of cultural expectations to one's own experience creates a complex topic, merging issues of identity and acceptance, both in society and in another culture. At the same time, it is important to note that the contrast, such as the American educational system and Pakistani social relations, differ between the two cultures. As a result, the narrator's identity is constructed.

Concordances of "however" (Contrastive Marker)

Figure 8

Concordance of "however"



The above picture illustrates how "however" introduces or contrasts changes in the narrator's experiences, ideas, or situation. From an excellent dinner” she listened intently when I spoke, smiling from time to time”—to an awkward scenario on the walk—” she and Mike trailed behind the rest of us,” line 1 indicates a change in tone, emphasizing an emotional shift. Like this, "however" highlights the narrator's emotional complexity in lines 2 and 3 by introducing a contrast between the initially pleasant mood ("Erica seemed happy that I was there") and a time of annoyance or insomnia ("I do, however, remember becoming annoyed at one point").

In lines 4 and 5, "however" draws attention to surprising or unsettling realizations, such as the impact of the Terminator film—"What left me shaken, however, occurred when I turned on the television myself"—and the narrator's struggle to come to terms with the intensity of world events—"I did, however, tell myself that I had overreacted." It further emphasizes moments of reflection and self-deception, as seen in line 5. In line 6, "however" underscores a subtle contrast between the narrator's attempt at sincerity—"I said, this time with what I hoped was greater apparent sincerity"—and the uncertainty of its success—"I do not know if I succeeded, however."

Theoretically, the concept of the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994) applies here, as the frequent shifts marked by "however" demonstrate the protagonist's negotiation of hybrid identity. Changez oscillates between Pakistani and American perspectives, using contrastive markers to express his ambivalence. This reflects that identity is fluid and constructed through discursive acts, aligning with postcolonial discourse analysis.

Fraser's (1996) typology of pragmatic markers supports this analysis by categorizing "however" as a contrastive discourse marker. Fraser posits that such marker's structure discourse and guide the reader's interpretation of contrasting ideas. In Changez's narrative, "however," does not merely indicate opposition; it also signals moments of self-reflection, resistance, and internal conflict, reinforcing the novel's broader themes of identity crisis and cultural hybridity. In line 7, "however" signals a change in direction from discussing the situation to ordering dessert—"I will, however, order us some dessert, a little rice pudding with sliced almonds." Lines 8 and 9 demonstrate "however" as a pivot that introduces new concerns, such as the narrator's lack of knowledge on how to approach a delicate situation—"I had not, however, been schooled in the etiquette"—or the unexpected absence of a character in a story—"Erica, however, never appeared in those pages."

Throughout the text, "however" effectively marks moments of contrast or introduces complexity in the narrator's thoughts and experiences. The marker "however" appears in Changez's narrative to indicate contrasting elements in his worldview because he "had, however, ceased to be so eager to please." This linguistic feature exemplifies his shifting stance between submission and defiance, aligning with broader theoretical discussions on language as a vehicle for cultural negotiation.

Discussion

This research proves that pragmatic markers serve crucially in forming narrative structure and character evolution in *"The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* by validating both Fraser's (1996) typology and the notion of the "Third Space" (Bhabha, 1994). The protagonist's internal conflicts become visible through multiple hedges in the text, symbolizing cultural identity development and intercultural identity management. Hedging strategies speakers demonstrate to show ambiguity help express social graces, which diasporic literature emphasizes due to its characters' bicultural identity challenges (Fraser, 2010). A comparison with Hyland's (1998) notion that hedges help academic writers stay cautious in making claims reveals how literature uses hedges to let characters flex their words within complex social situations.

The discourse markers "and," "however," "that," and "then" function to create coherence and establish contrast and emphasize ideas while following Fraser's (1996) classification method. Cultural discourse markers play a structural role because of their high-frequency occurrence with and (1,113) and their essential function in argument change. The contrastive marker, however, shows how the protagonist moves between two cultures according to the "Third Space" concept, which allows people to build identity using language (Bhabha, 1994). Hamid's employment of discourse markers conforms to Han's (2011) study, which demonstrated that public speakers use these markers to engage audiences in argumentation (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2011).

Research findings confirmed Fraser's spoken discourse framework can apply to literary narratives, especially in diasporic works, by assessing the study results against prior academic work. According to Ononye (2024), markers of engagement form identity structures in political dialogues, yet they appear identically in Hamid's narrative with their effect on Changez's personal expression and cultural stance. Pragmatic markers in dialogical situations show indirect and polite communication behavior. This matches Changez's verbal approach when he uses hedges to make his statements less forceful and manage power differences while speaking with the unnamed American character (Volkova, 2017).

The study applies corpus linguistic methodology to research pragmatic markers in literature while making a notable quantitative contribution to corpus linguistics research about textual pragmatic functions. Instead of showing EFL students overusing pragmatic markers, Ament et al. (2019) identified in their study that this research demonstrates how

Hamid intentionally deploys these markers inside *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to develop its thematic elements. Hedges alongside discourse markers prove that these linguistic structures serve as "intentional vagueness," according to Salager-Meyer (1994), for sophisticated textual expression. Salager-Meyer focuses on hedges to reduce face-threatening situations, but this study shows their additional function in literary discourse for character psychological development.

The study confirms that markers perform as instruments that help communities negotiate meaning and framework identity alongside narrative cohesion development. By implementing the Third Space theory (Bhabha, 1994) together with Fraser's (1996) typology, this examination reveals an advanced comprehension of linguistic elements that enable hybridity, uncertainty, and social positioning in diasporic literature. Future research must explore pragmatic markers in various literary genres to check if the identified results apply to literature beyond postcolonial fiction.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze pragmatic markers in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to understand their functions in the novel's linguistic and thematic aspects. The findings reveal that pragmatic markers connect ideas, signal shifts in discourse, and emphasize the protagonist's diaspora experience. The discourse markers "and," "that," and "however" provide coherence and highlight transitions in thought, reflecting the protagonist's personal and cultural negotiations. Temporal markers such as "then" structure the narrative's chronology, situating events in a culturally and emotionally charged timeline.

This study reveals many uses of hedges such as "think," "believe," and "likely" to point out that the protagonist's uncertainty and inwardness mirror the conflict of his duality. Altogether, these markers enliven the story by presenting such aspects as multiculturalism and displacement. Through analysis of the text, the author shows that pragmatic markers are not only connectors that inform pragmatic meanings but are also indicators of culture and emotions in diaspora literature.

The novel prominently features discourse markers and hedges. However, discourse markers such as "and," "that" enhance the flow of dialogue and narration. Temporal markers like "then" structure the protagonist's reflections and memories, establishing a narrative timeline. Hedges like "think," "believe," and "likely" were found to emphasize uncertainty

and introspection, mirroring the protagonist's internal conflict and his attempt to reconcile his dual identities. These markers collectively enrich the narrative by portraying themes of cultural hybridity, resistance to stereotypes, and the quest for belonging. The study demonstrates that pragmatic markers serve as linguistic tools for cohesion and as vehicles for cultural and emotional expression within diasporic literature.

Besides, the narrative's use of pragmatic markers reveals scenarios of cultural and identity maps of the individual. Discourse markers indicate opposition between the Oriental and Occidental, while hedges indicate doubt and a diaspora community's life condition. Time indicators place the story into a context of cultural change and show the main character's transformation. Through these markers, the narrative articulates themes of belonging, resistance to stereotypes, and the complexities of diasporic identity.

This research proves that pragmatic markers significantly affect how *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* develops narrative structures and thematic content. The protagonist uses frequent hedges, including "think" and "believe," to show his uncertainty and politeness, and his need for introspection, which define his identity process. Through discourse markers such as "however," the narrative shows how the protagonist Changez experiences a shift in his worldview and adjustments in his diasporic situation. The concept of the Third Space theory demonstrates that language represents both cultural change and mixed cultural traditions (Bhabha, 1994). Through various pragmatic markers, the protagonist demonstrates his movement between certainty and doubt, representing fundamental diasporic experiences of separation and disconnection. Fraser's typology finds expanded relevance in literary texts because its markers show their importance to character growth while maintaining storyline coherence.

The results from this study highlight why corpus-assisted approaches should remain essential tools when researchers work on literature or language. Predictive software AntConc and Sketch Engine enabled researchers to conduct quantitative linguistic analysis that standard qualitative research methods cannot achieve. The research demonstrates that corpus methods improve literary discourse analysis by creating a standardized framework that can be applied to evaluate text features in different literary works. This research provides valuable knowledge for language education because it impacts teaching methods for discourse analysis and pragmatics. Students gain better sensitivity to linguistic subtleties and discourse organization by comprehending pragmatic marker usage in literature. The study successfully

uses digital tools to merge corpus linguistics with theoretical models, creating an improved method to examine narrative techniques while connecting linguistic analysis to literary interpretation.

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