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Pragmatic Markers in British English

Fundamental to oral fluency, pragmatic markers facilitate the flow of spontaneous, interactional and social conversation. Variously termed 'hedges', 'fumbles' and 'conversational greasers' in earlier academic studies, this book explores the meaning, function and role of *well*, *I mean*, *just*, *sort of*, *like* and *you know* in British English. Adopting a sociolinguistic and historical perspective, Beeching investigates how these six commonly occurring pragmatic markers are used and the ways in which their current meanings and functions have evolved. Informed by empirical data from a wide range of contemporary and historical sources, including a small corpus of spoken English collected in 2011–14, the British National Corpus and the Old Bailey Corpus, *Pragmatic Markers in British English* contributes to debates about language variation and change, incrementation in adolescence and grammaticalisation and pragmaticalisation. The volume makes fascinating reading for researchers and students in linguistics and English, as well as non-specialists intrigued by this speech phenomenon.

KATE BEECHING is Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at UWE, Bristol, and Director of the Bristol Centre for Linguistics.

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Pragmatic Markers in British English

Meaning in Social Interaction

Kate Beeching

University of the West of England, Bristol

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978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

Contents

List of figures *page* vii
List of tables viii
Acknowledgements xiii
List of abbreviations xv
Transcription conventions xvi

1 'Well I mean I just sort of like you know . . .' 1
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 What are pragmatic markers? Terms, categories and functions 3
1.3 Pragmatic markers and their functions in conversation 4
1.4 Polysemous, multifunctional and open to interpretation 6
1.5 Sociolinguistic aspects of pragmatic markers 10
1.6 The historical development of pragmatic markers 18

2 Corpus approaches, choice of markers and methodology 27
2.1 Corpus approaches and data investigated 27
2.2 Synchronic corpora 28
2.3 Choice of markers 31
2.4 Commonly occurring markers, D-values and collocations 32
2.5 Exploring attitudes to pragmatic markers 38
2.6 Methodologies for exploring discourse variation and change 41
2.7 Previous historical studies and diachronic corpora 45
2.8 Overview of the methodology 49

3 Well 51
3.1 Introduction 51
3.2 Functions in social interaction 52
3.3 Sociolinguistic features 60
3.4 Historical semantic change 70
3.5 Conclusion 74

4 Just 76
4.1 Introduction 76
4.2 Functions 76
4.3 Sociolinguistics 83
4.4 Historical semantic change 93
4.5 Conclusion 96

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

5 You know 97
5.1 Introduction 97
5.2 Functions 98
5.3 Sociolinguistic features 106
5.4 Historical semantic change 116
5.5 Conclusion 124

6 Like 126
6.1 Introduction 126
6.2 Functions 127
6.3 Sociolinguistics 136
6.4 Historical semantic change 152
6.5 Conclusion 154

7 Sort of 156
7.1 Introduction 156
7.2 Functions 156
7.3 Sociolinguistics 160
7.4 Historical semantic change 174
7.5 Conclusion 182

8 I mean 183
8.1 Introduction 183
8.2 Functions 183
8.3 Sociolinguistic features 190
8.4 Historical semantic change 203
8.5 Conclusion 208

9 Conclusion 210
9.1 Introduction 210
9.2 Pragmatic markers and social interaction 210
9.3 Macro sociolinguistic features 214
9.4 Situational variation 222
9.5 Historical semantic change 223
9.6 The impact of social interaction on meaning: politeness-induced semantic change 228

Appendix A 230
Appendix B 231
Appendix C 234
References 236
Index 252

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

Figures

2.1 Rates of occurrences of *Like*, *Just*, *Well*, *You know*, *I mean* and *Sort of* per 10,000 words in the corpora selected for detailed study as part of the pilot *page* 37
4.1 Mean scores for the younger (student) subjects and the older (choir/book group) subjects 93
5.1 A synchronic/diachronic map of the polysemy of *you know* 124
9.1 Increasing with age: *Well*, *You know*, *I mean* 219
9.2 Incrementation: *Just*, Like and *Sort of* 219
9.3 Average attitudinal scores on 'polite', 'educated' and 'friendly' (PEF) for the six markers 221

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

Tables

1.1	Labels used to designate forms like *well*, *just*, *you know*, *sort of*, *like* and *I mean*	*page* 3
1.2	Gender differences in the use of hedges (Coates 2013: 48)	12
1.3	Layering of indexicality (adapted from Johnstone 2010: 32)	16
1.4	Figure–Ground shift (reproduced from Waltereit 2006: 68)	21
1.5	Verb-form reanalysis (reproduced from Waltereit 2006: 69)	21
2.1	Raw frequencies of occurrence of pragmatic marker forms in the spoken corpora	34
2.2	Frequently occurring pragmatic markers with high cluster rates in the spoken corpora	35
2.3	Commonly occurring clusters in the spoken corpora in descending order of frequency	36
3.1	Raw numbers and rates of occurrence of *well* in different genres in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data	57
3.2	The functions of *well* in 100 representative occurrences per sub-genre contained in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data	59
3.3	The distributional frequency of *well* in the BNC according to social class	60
3.4	The distributional frequency of *well* in the BNC according to gender	61
3.5	The distributional frequency of *well* in the BNC according to age	61
3.6	Rates of occurrence of *well* in different genres in the British National Corpus	64
3.7	Average scores for *well* on the Likert scales, with modes in brackets	69
3.8	Older and younger respondents' average scores for *well*	70
4.1	The distribution of the meaning of *just* in informal conversation in LLC (reproduced Aijmer 2002: 157) + my recategorisation indicated in the column on the right	80

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

4.2 Rates of *just* usage in the BNC Sampler and UWE Role-play Corpus 80
4.3 The functions of *just* in 100 representative occurrences per sub-genre contained in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 81
4.4 The distributional frequency of *just* in the BNC according to social class 83
4.5 The distributional frequency of *just* in the BNC according to gender 85
4.6 The distributional frequency of *just* in the BNC according to age 85
4.7 The distributional frequency of *just* in the 15–24-year-old age group according to gender 85
4.8 Rates of occurrence of *just* in 15–24-year-old females, as a function of social class 86
4.9 Distributional frequency of *just* across different spoken genres 88
4.10 Average scores for *just* on the Likert scales, with modes in brackets 90
4.11 'Mode': Frequency of scores for 'just-direct' 91
4.12 'Mode': Frequency of scores for 'just-friendly' 91
5.1 Raw numbers and rates of occurrences of *you know* in different genres in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 104
5.2 The functions of *you know* in 100 representative occurrences per sub-genre contained in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 105
5.3 The distributional frequency of *you know* in the BNC according to social class 107
5.4 The distributional frequency of *you know* in the BNC according to gender 108
5.5 The distributional frequency of *you know* in the BNC according to age 109
5.6 Distributional frequency of *you know* in different genres in the British National Corpus 110
5.7 Average attitudinal scores for *you know* on the Likert scales, with modes in brackets 114
5.8 Average attitudinal scores for *you know* in younger and older respondents 115
5.9 Figure-Ground shift (modelled on Waltereit 2006: 68) 122
5.10 Verb-form reanalysis: *y'know* (modelled on Waltereit 2006: 69) 122
6.1 Raw numbers and rates of occurrence of *like* in different genres in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 134

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

6.2 The functions of *like* in 100 representative occurrences per sub-genre contained in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 135
6.3 The distributional frequency of *like* in the BNC according to social class 138
6.4 The distributional frequency of forms and functions of *like* in 50 randomly selected examples, according to class 139
6.5 The distributional frequency of *like* in the BNC according to gender 140
6.6 The distributional frequency of *like* in the BNC according to age 141
6.7 The distributional frequency of *like* in the 15–24-year-old age-group according to gender 141
6.8 Rates of occurrence of *like* in 15–24-year-old females, as a function of social class 143
6.9 Rates of occurrence of *like* in 15–24-year-old males, as a function of social class 143
6.10 Distributional frequency of *like* across different genres 144
6.11 Distributional frequency of *like* in the spoken context-governed texts in the BNC 145
6.12 Kelly (2005) Likert scale for matched-guise test on *like* 149
6.13 Average scores for *like* on the Likert scales, with modes in brackets 151
6.14 Average scores for *like* on the Likert scales, divided by age-group, unrounded scores in brackets 151
7.1 Raw numbers and rates of occurrence of *sort of* in different genres in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 160
7.2 The functions of *sort of* in 100 representative occurrences per sub-genre contained in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 161
7.3 The distributional frequency of *sort of* in the BNC according to social class 162
7.4 The distributional frequency of *sort of* in the BNC according to gender 163
7.5 The distributional frequency of *sort of* in the BNC according to age 166
7.6 Distributional frequency of *sort of* across different spoken genres 168
7.7 Average scores for *sort of* on the Likert scales, with modes in brackets 171
7.8 Comparison of attitudes to *sort of* in the younger and older age-groups 172

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

7.9 Rates of *sort of* and *kind of* in the BNC, COCA and UWE Role-play Corpus 172
7.10 Relative frequencies of *sort(s) of* from 1150-PDE (drawn from Brems and Davidse 2010: 193) 177
7.11 Relative frequency of *sort of* in the Old Bailey data (1675–1913) 179
8.1 Raw numbers and rates of occurrence of *I mean* in different genres in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 189
8.2 The functions of *I mean* in 100^3 representative occurrences per sub-genre contained in the BNC Sampler + UWE Role-play data 191
8.3 The distributional frequency of *I mean* in the BNC according to social class 192
8.4 The distributional frequency of *know what I mean* in the BNC according to social class 193
8.5 The distributional frequency of *I mean* in the BNC according to gender 193
8.6 The distributional frequency of *know what I mean* in the BNC according to gender 196
8.7 The distributional frequency of *I mean* in the BNC according to age 198
8.8 The distributional frequency of *know what I mean* in the BNC according to age 198
8.9 Distributional frequency of *I mean* across different spoken genres 199
8.10 Average scores for *I mean* on the Likert scales, with modes in brackets 202
8.11 Comparison of attitudes to *I mean* in the younger and older age-groups 203
8.12 Rates of occurrence of *I mean* per 10,000 words in the Giessen OBC (1720–1913) 205
8.13 Meanings and functions of the 82 occurrences of *I mean* in the Giessen OBC (1870–1879) 207
9.1 The functions of the six markers, in relation to conversational factors 211
9.2 D-values for the six markers in the BNC Sampler and UWE Role-play Corpus 212
9.3 D-values for six markers in the UWE Role-play Corpus, as a function of gender 213
9.4 Rates of occurrence of *well*, *just*, *you know*, *like*, *sort of* and *I mean* in the BNC, according to social class 215

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

9.5 Rates of occurrence of *well*, *just*, *you know*, *like*, *sort of* and *I mean* in the BNC, according to gender 217
9.6 Rates of occurrence of *well*, *just*, *you know*, *like*, *sort of* and *I mean* in the BNC, according to age 218
9.7 Form-function reanalysis (after Waltereit 2006: 69) 226

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03276-7 - Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction
Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

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2011 corpus of UWE Role-plays. I would also like to express my gratitude to the undergraduate students at UWE who agreed to have their voices recorded and to fill in attitudinal questionnaires, and to my Book Group and Bath Cantata Group, who also agreed to fill in questionnaires on their attitudes to the markers. Without them, the book would not have been possible.

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Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

Abbreviations

AB	BNC social class category: refers to top or middle management, administrative or professional classes
BNC	British National Corpus
C1	BNC social class category: refers to junior management, supervisory or clerical workers
C2	BNC social class category: refers to skilled manual workers
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
COLT	Corpus of London Teenage Language
DE	BNC social class category: refers to semi-skilled or unskilled workers
EModE	Early Modern English
FTA	Face-Threatening Act (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987)
GCI	Generalised Conversational Implicature
ICE-GB	The British component of the International Corpus of English
IITSC	Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change (Traugott and Dasher 2002)
LLC	London-Lund Corpus
M1	Meaning 1
M2	Meaning 2
ME	Middle English
OBC	Old Bailey Corpus
OE	Old English
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PCI	Particularised Conversational Implicature
PEF	Average score for 'Polite', 'Educated' and 'Friendly' on the attitudinal questionnaires

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Kate Beeching
Frontmatter
More information

Transcription conventions

Transcription conventions in the UWE Role-play data (adapted from Coates (ed.) 1998; Cameron 2001)

/	a slash indicates the end of a tone group or chunk of talk in the middle of a turn.
[. . .]	square brackets are used to indicate overlapping speech (where speakers talk simultaneously).
=	an equals sign is used to indicate latching (where there is no gap or pause between speakers' turns and one speaker's utterance 'latches' directly onto the previous speaker's utterance).
(.)	a full-stop in round brackets indicates a short pause.
fantASTic	capital letters refer to words/syllables uttered with emphasis.
summer?	a question mark indicates the end of a chunk of talk which is being analysed as a question.
XXX	is used to anonymise any names used in the text.
((I mean))	double round brackets indicate that there is doubt about the accuracy of the transcription.
((xxxxx))	double round brackets enclosing several 'x's indicate untranscribable material.
<gonna>	single angled brackets after the word show that it is pronounced in a particular way, for example, 'going to <goin' to>' or 'going to <gonna>'; 'birthday <birfday>' 'kind of <kinda>'.
<<laughter>>	double angled brackets are used to give extralinguistic material such as laughter, groaning or yawning.

Symbols used in discourse transcriptions drawn from the ICE-GB Corpus (Aijmer 2013: front matter)

<,>	short pause
..	short pause
<,,>	long pause
. . .	long pause

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Frontmatter
More information

=	lengthening
<.>. . .</.>	incomplete words
<0>. . .</0>	untranscribed text
[]	speech overlap
<X . . . X>	uncertain hearing
(H)	inhalation
%	glottal stop
(TSK)	type of vocal noise

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