

The formal and functional variability of pragmatic markers in some types of English

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Pragmatic markers (e.g. *well, actually, I think*) do not have a fixed meaning but are flexible and context-bound elements. It will be suggested that they can be associated with a maximally rich meaning representation or 'meaning potential' representing the speaker's general knowledge of the meaning and use of a particular marker. Moreover inferencing and negotiation are important because they make it possible for the speaker to use pragmatic markers in novel ways. Pragmatic markers also need to be described with regard to the grammatical factors (e.g. position, collocation, sentence type) constraining their meaning and use. In the communication situation a particular meaning is picked out on the basis of the constellation of contextual factors. In my contribution special attention will be given to how the meanings of pragmatic markers can be stretched to accommodate the demands associated with different activity types and how their formal and functional flexibility are exploited in different types of English.