A Relevance-Theoretical Account of Three Discourse Markers in North Hail Arabic

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Abstract
The current study addressed the discourse status and functions of three lexical items most frequently used in North Hail Arabic: *jamaar, maar* and *ʔal-muhim*. It applied Schourup (1999)'s characteristics of discourse markers: Connectivity, optionality, non-truth-conditionality, weak clause association, orality, initiality, optionality and multi-categoriality, so as to check whether these lexical items are actually discourse markers. In addition to confirming their status as discourse markers, the study used one of the main tenets of the Relevance Theory, effort-effect trade-off in order to figure out their actual cognitive functions in discourse building and structuring. It followed that these lexical items maximize the contextual effect of the speaker's utterance where they show up and minimise the processing effort needed form the part of the hearer to interact properly with the speaker.

Key words: Discourse markers; North Hail Arabic; The relevance theory; Effort-effect trade-off

INTRODUCTION

The recent developments of the contemporary linguistic theory have strongly argued for the underlying role of discourse in both producing and perceiving utterances (cf. Redeker, 1990; Schourup, 1999; Serratrice, 2005). Such an underlying role has been consolidated by further support made by cross-linguistic syntax attesting the existence of specific syntactic projections dedicated for discourse-triggered operations, including topicalization and focalization (Kiss, 1995; Rizzi, 1997). In line of this pursuit, addressing the discourse role in both utterance building and perception has considerably attracted dozens of research papers capitalizing on how discourse and utterance are robustly intertwined and correlated (e.g., Hajičová, 1993; Lambrecht, 1996; Prat-Sala & Branigan, 2002, Von Heusinger, 2002; Coulthard, 2014; Finegan, 2014).

As discourse-based elements, discourse markers (henceforth, DMs) have begun receiving much attention and scrutiny in world languages. In addition to their overarching role in discourse building and structuring, they have been assumed to ease or even determine utterance interpretation (Fraser, 1999). Furthermore, it has been suggested that DMs signal (i.e., occupy) certain syntactic positions which are allocated particularly for them (Schourup, 1999). Hence, DMs are key factors not only for their pragmatic and discourse importance, but also for the syntactic values they maintain (Hansen 1998; Fraser, 1998; Tagliamonte, 2005; Fraser, 2006, among many others). What is worth mentioning here is that DMs have been labelled differently due to the general perspective analysing them. As for pragmatics and discourse analysis, cue phrases (Knott & Dale, 1994), discourse operators (Redeker, 1990, 1991), discourse signalling devices (Polanyi & Scha, 1983), pragmatic connectives (Stubbs, 1983), pragmatic formatives (Fraser, 1987), and pragmatic markers (Schiffrin, 1987) are among the common labels (Fraser, 1999, p.932). However, as for syntax, they are most commonly termed as "discourse particles" (Roussou, 2000; Zimmermann, 2004).

Nonetheless, despite the recent tendency to tackling DMs and their role in discourse and sentence structure,

few studies have been conducted in Arabic and its dialects to study these elements (e.g., Al Kohlani, 2010; Jarrah & Bader, 2012; Hussein & Bukhari, 2008; Taha et al., 2014). Grossly speaking, such few studies looked at DMs using the recent linguistic approaches, including the Relevance Theory (RT) (cf. Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Carston & Uchida, 1998)[1]. They indicated the significance of investigating DMs in Arabic dialects so as to reach a comprehensive list of them and hence the ability to investigate them within various linguistic accounts and theories. On the other hand, no single study has been carried out in Najdi Arabic (henceforth, NA), of which NHA is a variety, even to name which words can be categorised as DMs. In the related literature, all work on NA has been mostly devoted to the core components of the grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantic) away from any attempt to figuring out the status of discourse-based elements (see Al-Sudais, 1976; Ingham 1994; Abuata & Al-Omari, 2015). However, Al-Shamari (2015) can be counted as a pioneering attempt introducing an account of the semantico-pragmatic behaviour of one single word, ʁedɪ, within NHA.

Reasoning along these lines, the current research is mainly intended to probe into the discourse-status of three lexical items which are thought to be discourse-sensitive: *jamaar*, *maar*, and *ʔal-muhim*. Following Schourup's (1999) characteristics of DMs: connectivity, optionality, non-truth-conditionality, weak clause association, orality, initiality, optionality and multi-categoriality, the current research argues for the assumption that these three lexical elements are actual discourse markers used by speakers when relying on the previous discourse they have just experienced. The study provides the discourse-related uses of these lexical elements as well as the reason for making speakers use them in their conversation. To this end, the main assumptions of the RT will be used.

The research is structured as follows. Section (2) provides a general overview of the three lexical items selected for as study data: *jamaar*, *maar*, and *ʔal-muhim.* Section (3) introduces Schourup (1999)'s characteristics of DMs in conjunction with their examination against *jamaar*, *maar*, and *ʔal-muhim*, arguing that th

ese lexical items are DMs whose main use is discourse-triggered. Section (4), in turn, works out these discourse markers within the effect-effort trade-off, on the basic tenets of the RT (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995), in order to lay down their function in discourse structuring. It assumes that these discourse markers are used by the

speaker ultimately in order to save both time and effort on part of the hearer. Section (5) concludes the research[2].

1. *JAMAAR, MAAR* AND *ʔAL-MUHIM*: DISCOURSE USES[3]

Prior to the examination of these three words under Schourup (1999)'s characteristics of DMs, the main discourse uses of these words are introduced. This section brings much evidence for the notion that these words have unique meanings which are only discourse-triggered. Put it differently, these words have no semantic import but instead deliver discourse meaning signalling specific pragmatic aspects such as the speaker's attitude towards his/her utterance. This being so, these words can be strongly classified as discourse elements whose main category is 'discourse markers' as will be spelled out in details in the next section.

1.1 *Jamaar*

Jamaar is used to signal the speaker's attitude against the event at hand. It is to a large extent a speaker-oriented word used when the speaker voices his/her concern about the result of one situation. For instance, when one action, event, situation, etc. ends up in a strange result (i.e., anomaly) the speaker did not predict, this word is used to introduce such a result. For instance, consider the following dialogue in (1):

(1)

A: rabatˤ ħalq ʔalħsˤan w raħ ʔaxð-uh li l-baetˤari

tied.I mouth the-horse and FUT take-him to the-veterinarian

"I tied the horse's mouth closed and will take him to the veterinarian."

B: ʃsˤar int tħib-uh w dayem tʔakl-uh bnafsak

What happened you love.you-him and always feed.you-him yourself

"What happened? You love him and always feed him yourself."

A: ʔaxir marrah madeat l-uh l-ʔakil b-yidi **jamar** yabi yʕidˤ-ni

Last time passed to-him the-food with-my hand **PRT** want bite-me

"Last time I passed him the food with my hand. He wanted to bite me."

B: ʁari:b! ma kan yubi ʔal-ʔakil
Strange! Neg be.PAST want the-food
"Strange! Didn't he (intend to) want the food?"

A: lil�asaf la kan yħawil yʕidʕ bus
Unfortunately be.PAST try bite only
"Unfortunately, he was trying to bite only."

Speaker (A) uses *jamaar* when mentioning the strange event happening to him when attempting to feed his horse as usual. On the basis of the dialogue in (1), it emerges that the speaker gets perplexed of the reaction of the horse. Instead of accepting the food the speaker tried to give, the horse attempted to bite the speaker's hand. This result of feeding the horse is counted as an apparent anomaly from the speaker's perspective. Speaker (A) told Speaker (B) about this confusing reaction of his horse, introducing the perplexed or confused result with *jamaar*. Accordingly, *jamaar* is used between two discourse segments of which the first one in sequence is the event, and the second one is the result which must be negative (i.e., bad) and surprising at the same time. Consider figure (1):
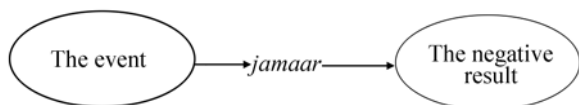
Figure 1
***Jamaar* as a Connector Between One Event and Its Negative Result**

Thus, *jamaar* is used here as a discourse-bound word signalling the speaker's own attitude towards the consequence of one action which the speaker is confused about. This relation can also be clear in the following dialogue.

(2)
A: kan li mauʕid maʕ Ali ʔala ʔal-xams bus ma dʒa
Was for-me appointment with Ali on the-fife but Neg came.3SG.M
"I had an appointment with Ali at fife, but he didn't show up."

A: intidʕar-uh nusʕ saʕah w ʔitisʕalt fi:-h bus ma rad
Waited.I-him half hour and called.I with-him but Neg responded.3SG.M
"I waited for him for half an hour and called him, but he didn't respond."

B: yimkin kan mari:dʕ aw mitwaridʕ
Maybe was.3SG.M sick or troubled.3SG.M
"Maybe he was sick or had troubles."

A: ʔal-ʕari:b itisʕal fi:-ni baʕdean **jamaar** kan msafer
The-stange called.he with-me later **jamaar** was travelled.PRTCPL.3SG.M

"The strange thing is that he called me later and that he was travelling."

Speaker (A) explains to speaker (B) a situation he had experienced in which he was going to attend a timely-specific meeting (i.e., at five O'clock) with his friend, who didn't show up or respond to the phone calls even after speaker's (A) waiting for half an hour afterwards.

It is clear that the usage of *jamaar* is consistent in situations containing unpredicted, unexpected results- it introduces such results in (2).

Accordingly, we can postulate that this word is a speaker-oriented lexical element showing his/her pejorative stand against the negatively strange result of one action the speaker happened to end up with a totally different result. Additionally, this pejorative use of the word *jamaar* is restricted to the strange results of the speaker does not forecast but rather to even any action rendering the speaker baffled or confused because matters around him/her do not work the normal case. In order to appreciate this point, consider the following dialogue when Speaker (A) is nervous because of having the keys that he keeps all-time an eye on were lost and of having his phone mobile which he needs on the spot was switched off.

(3)
A: ʔal-bariħ nimt b-funduq liʔan-i ma qidart ʔadxul ʔal-beat
Last night slept.I in-hotel because-I Neg could enter the-house
"Last night I slept in a hotel because I couldn't enter the house (locked out)."

B: leaʃ?
Why
Why?

A: wusalt li l-beat **jamar** l-miftaħ dʕayiʕ
Arrived.I to-the-house **PRT** the-key lost.PRT
"I arrived at the house, the key was lost."

B: leaʃ ma kalamt-ni?
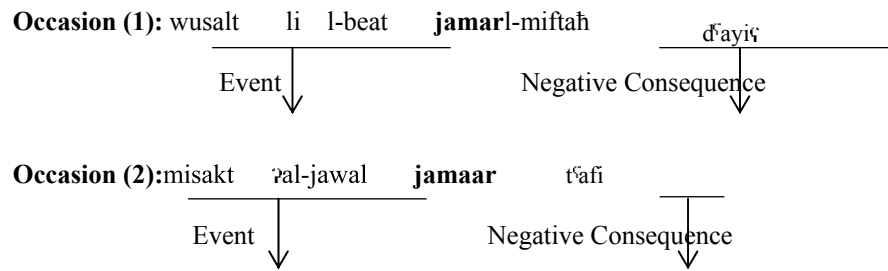Why Neg call.you-me
'Why didn't you call me?

A: misakt ʔal-jawal **jamaar** tʕafi
Held.I the-mobile **PRT** turned-off
'I held the mobile, it was off

B: wiʃ ha-l-ħadʕ!
What DEM-the-luck
"What a bad luck!"

Speaker (A) uses *jamaar* twice in conjunction with two events ending up in unexpected results the speaker is nervous about. Consider the schematic representations of both occasions in (4):

(4)

Occasion (1): wusalt   li   l-beat   **jamar**l-miftaħ   ḍˤayiˤ
_____|_____   _____|_____
            Event↓   Negative Consequence↓

Occasion (2):misakt   ʔal-jawal   **jamaar**   tˤafi   _____
_____|_____   _____|_____
            Event↓   Negative Consequence↓

Both occasions consist of one event and one following consequence which the speaker is nervous around. The speaker expresses this nervousness and perplexed attitude towards these consequences using *jamaar* which is discourse-triggered since it links two stretches of discourse whose second part renders the speaker confused about. Even if the hearer is not familiar with the previous discourse, he/she can conjecture that the speaker is nervous around the consequence of the action when using this word. Additionally, the speaker cannot use this particle at the beginning of his/her speech without prior discourse which functions as the event of the background of one action. Thus, it can be concluded that *jamaar* is a discourse element, a pejorative element, used by the speaker to signal his grudge against the consequent of one action which has already been finished.

On the other hand, *jamaar* is used to introduce the speculative corollaries of a specific result of one action to occur in the future. In order to spell out this latter assumption, we must emphasize that to yield this function of *jamaar,* this lexical item must be used in a sentence with future time reference. If it is used in a sentence with past time reference, its pejorative use can only be yielded and vice versa; if *jamaar* is used in a sentence with future time reference, no pejorative use is generated whatsoever.

When *jamaar* is used to introduce the speculative corollaries of a specific result of one action to occur in the future, the speaker is happy of such corollaries. What I refer here to be "a corollary" is the positive consequence of one result. For example, imagine that there is a competition of one rewarding job "a consecutive manager" to hold next week. There will definitely be many candidates who will compete with one another and then at the end of one candidate will be selected. Once this candidate is selected, he/she will be the consecutive manager. Being a consecutive manager is the main result of competition. In addition, who will be the consecutive manager will get benefitted from advantages of this post including, a car, a flat, a highly monthly salary, etc.. These advantages are in our definition the corollaries of the result of being "a consecutive manager". See the following figure:
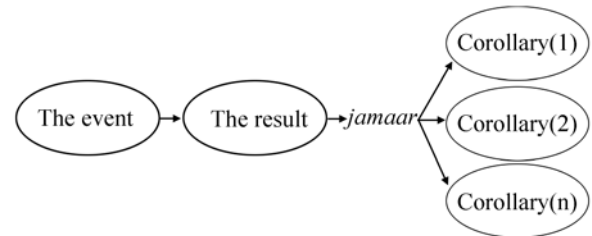
Figure 2
The Use of *Jamaar* in the Future

To the contrary to its use in the past as a connector between the event and the negative consequence, *jamaar* is used in the future as a connector between the result and its corollaries. In addition, the second difference is that the speaker in former use is nervous about the consequence whereas he/she is happy with the corollaries in the latter. Furthermore, the word 'speculative' is used because in normal situations these corollaries introduced by *jamaar* are mainly generated by the speaker in order to stress the significance of the result if obtained. Consider the dialogue in (5):

(5)
A: ʃloan mustawa-k ʔa-dirasi
How level-you the-academic
How is your level of academic achievements?'

B: tamam! Baqi ʔa-fatrah ʔa-l-ʔaxirah min ʔa-baħθ
Perfect! Remaining the-period the-final from research
"It is perfect. Still remaining the final period of research."

B: ʔabðil waqt w juhd ʔakθar ʔalħi:n
Pay time and efforts more more
"I pay more time and efforts now."

A: ʔistimir kiða ʕaʃan taxaraj jamar furasˤ ʔal-ʕamal ʔal-ʔistiqrar w raħah
Keep this In-order-to graduate **PRT** opportunities the-jobs the-settle in and rest
"Keep this habit in order to graduate…..where there are job opportunities, relax, etc.."

Speaker (A) encourages Speaker (B) to keep working hard and exert much effort in order to get graduated and

hence there will be more opportunities and relax which are speculative because when speaker (B) doesn't get graduated, he/she might not be employed or even relaxed. This can be schematically presented in Figure 3 as follows:
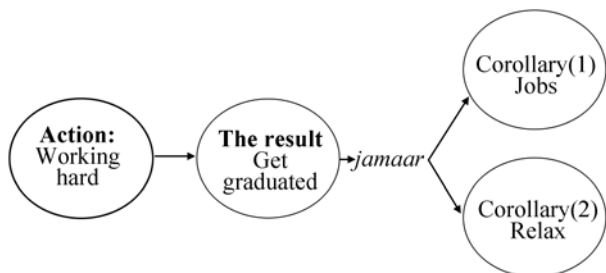
Figure 3
An Application of Use of *Jamaar* in the Future

Although *jamaar* in this use connects the result with their corollaries, it relies on the action without which there is no result, no corollaries. Thus, *jamaar* links some segments of previous discourse (action and the ensuing result) with segments of subsequent discourse (corollaries).

On the basis of the discussion above, it can be suggested that *jamaar* has two uses which are both discourse-related. These meanings are pejorative (when used in the past) and speculative (when used in the future). In the former use, this lexical item signals the negative speaker's attitudes towards the result or the consequence of one action the speaker is used to experience in conjunction with something positive. In the latter use, it signals the positive speaker's attitudes towards the corollaries of a result of one action.

1.2 *Maar*

This lexical word is highly frequent word in daily conversations in NHA. This frequency is in principle engendered by its many discourse-based meanings. First of all, this lexical item is used as a resultative marker. It introduces the part of the discourse which serves as a result of one action. It should be stressed that the result of this action must be logical. For instance, if there is one action happening. Then, there should be logical results of that action; *maar* comes along such logical results. *Maar* in this use is isomorphic to "then" in English conditionals. Consider the following dialogue in (6):

(6)
A: raħ aru:ħ li.spania li-dirasaħ w ʔabnaʔ-i maʕ-ae
FUT go.I to.Spain to-study and children-my with-me
'I will go to Spain to study, and my children will be with me.'

A: ʔal-dʒau sayeʔ luhu-m bard w hawa afakir atrik-hum
the-weather bad for-them cold and wind think.I leave-them
"The weather is bad for them; it is cold and windy. I'm thinking about leaving them at their home country."

B: la taqlaq raħ ytaʕawadoan ʕala ʔal-dʒau w yistansu:n maʕ-uk
Neg worry FUT adapt on the-weather and be.happy with-you
"Don't worry. They will adapt to the weather and will be happy being with you."

C: xið-hum maʕ-uk **maar** ytaʕalam-un luʁuh dʒadi:dah (bilmarah)
Take-them with-you **PRT** learn-they language new (anyway)
"Take them with you (at least/anyway/so as to…. As a result of….) they learn a new language."

Speaker (C) mentions that if Speaker (A) takes his kids with him to Spain where he will study, then they will definitely learn a new language. Within this use, *maar* is a marker demarcating the utterance with a logical result of previous discourse. However, this logic is built on the speaker's knowledge rather than the general knowledge. The speaker utilizes *maar* to inform the hearer that my statement is true as far as his (i.e., the speaker) knowledge is concerned. Thus, *maar* shows up in the sentences with a highly declarative content from the speaker's standpoint[4].

Moreover, *maar* can also be used as a concessive marker connecting two contradictory assumptions. In this use, the speaker is highly sceptical of the sentence containing *maar*. Consider the following dialogue:
(7)
A: ʔal-dʒulus ʔatˤaweel qatil ʔakθar min ʔatadxeen
The-siiting the-prolonged fatal more than the-smoking
"Prolonged sitting is more fatal than smoking."

B: mu muntˤiqi ʔal-ʔaqal ʔal-dʒulus ma ydamir ʔal-dʒ isim min ʔa-daxil
Neg logical. on-the-least the-sittting Neg destroy the-body from the-inside
"This is not logical. At least prolonged sitting doesn't destroy the body internally."

A: haði ħaqaʔiq w natayidʒ buħuθ
These facts and results research.PL
"These are facts and research findings."

B: mustaħiil. **maar** kirsi muri:ħ ysˤi:r ʔaxtˤar min ziqarah

<hr/>
[4] Stating this, some can argue that maar is an evidential marker since the speaker uses it in sentences where he/she is certain. However, it should be stressed that when using maar the speaker does not weigh up the propositional content of his/her utterance, but rather takes its credibility for granted without determining its evidentiality value (cf. Chafe & Nichols, 1991; Dendale & Tasmowski, 2001; Alhaisoni et al., 2012, *inter alia*)

Impossible **PRT** chair comfortable becomes more dangerous than cigarette

"Impossible! A comfortable chair becomes more dangerous than a cigarette!"

The most appropriate reading of Speaker's (B) last utterance containing *maar* is that 'although the chair is comfortable, it becomes more risky than smoking!'. However, this sentence should be accompanied with an ironical tone which signals that the speaker is highly derisive and sceptical of the utterance. This being so, it can be suggested that since *maar* signals the logically-derived results, it follows that *maar* is used as a pejorative concessive marker ironically.

Furthermore, *maar* is frequently used as 'but' in NHA, where the speaker uses it to introduce a proposition which contrasts with what has already been mentioned in the previous discourse. Consider the following dialogue:

(8)

A: Kint nawi: asafir li-siyaħah ha-sˤeaf w kint mxalisˤ kil wajibat-i

Was.I intending travel to-tourism this-summer and was finished all duties-my

"I was intending to travel around this summer, and I had already completed all my duties."

B: w leaʃ ma safart ila alħi:n

And why Neg travelled.you until now

"Then, why haven't you travelled till now?"

A: wadi: **maar** ma ʕaqdar ʔindi mawad idˤfiyah bi.sˤayf

Would-like.I **PRT** Neg can.I have.I modules additional in-summer

"I would like to do so, but I cannot. I have additional modules this summer."

The speaker wants to travel, but he cannot do so because there are other additional courses in the summer term, so he must remain. In conclusion, *maar* is mainly used in NHA to introduce utterances with results which are logically derived, with ironical readings, and with contrasting information to what has been mentioned in the early discourse. See the following figure:
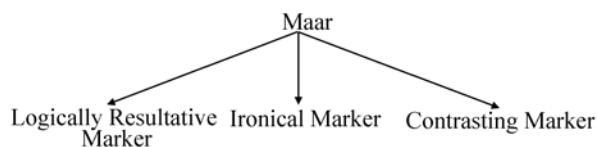
Figure 4
Discourse Functions of *Maar*

1.3 ʔal-Muhim

This lexical item has one single discourse function which is anti-digression. When the speaker kicks off one topic in order to highlight one specific point and the discussion goes too far afield, the speaker (or any interlocutor) uses this word so as to re-guide the ongoing discussion

of its right path. Thus, this lexical item does away the digression occurring while discussing the subject matter. Imagine that there is one person kicking off a dialogue with his friends in order to tell them about his wedding day and what he should do on that day. He starts talking with them about his wedding and what he prepares for that day, and his friends start interrupting him and talking about, say, their own experiences and diverting for the difficulties that they experience in preparing for their marriage. At this point, the discussion is derailed and much digression in as a result mustered. Here, the speaker can use this lexical item in order to make his friends re-address the wedding day and what he should do then. For concreteness, consider the following two dialogues where the speaker uses ʔal-muhim to drag the conversation to the main point on which it is built.

(9)

A: kint asu:q ʃimal w ħas ʕal ħadiθ ʃani:ʕ masafat amtar w fi:h

was drive.I north and happened accident horrible distance meters and there

isˤabat

casualties

"I was driving northwards and a horrible accident happened a few meters away and there were casualties."

B: dˤari:q sayiʔ

Road bad

"(Such) a bad road (to drive)."

C: fiʕlan dˤari:q bidu:n aktaf

Cetianly road without shoulders

"Certainly, the road is void of shoulders."

A: ʔal-muhim ma sˤar l-i ʃay w ma raħ asu:q-h abud

PRT Neg happened to-me thing and Neg FUT drive-it never

"…… , nothing happened to me and I will never drive on that road."

ʔal-muhim is used to place emphasis on the main point the speaker wants to mention that nothing happened to him and there is no way for him to re-use the road where he witnessed a crash.

(10)

A: ʔixtart mawdˤu:ʕ li-l-baħ baʕd tafki:r ʕami:q

Chose.I topic for-the-research after thinking deep

"I have chosen a topic for my research after deep thinking."

B: ʔa-tafki:r ʔa-ʕami:q ɣaliban yʃatit aʔ-tarki:z w yaxið waqt

The-thinking the-deep often distract the-concentration and take time

"Deep thinking often distracts the concentration and takes time."

C: w ʔal-waqt muhim liʔan biʔimkanuk tasˤrif-uh bi-ʔa-taħli:l

And the-time important because ability-you spend-it in-analysis

"And time is important because you could spend it on analysis."

D: ʔal-muhim in ʔal-mawdˤuːʕ munasib l-madʒal-uk ʔ al-dirasi

PRT that the-topic plausible to-field-you academic

"…….. , that the topic is plausible for your academic field."

Similarly, *ʔal-muhim* is used to place emphasis on the main point the speaker wants to mention that the topic under discussion is plausible and expedient for the addressee's field of study.

2. SCHOURUP (1999)'S CHARACTERISTICS OF DISCOURSE MARKERS

Schourup (1999) makes available certain characteristics to identify which words can be termed as discourse markers so as to demarcate the boundaries between discourse markers and other closely associated words. The main reason behind these characteristics was in general the large disagreement between scholars at that time on the actual nature of the discourse markers and whether they can be singled out. By and large, such characteristics have been taken as a departure point to investigate discourse markers and how they are interfaced with other discourse complements (cf. Müller, 2005). These characteristics are attested by numerous studies in the discourse markers literature. They include: multi-categoriality, connectivity, non-truth conditionality, weak clause association, initiality, orality, and optionality (Schourup, 1999, p.230).

2.1 Multi-Categoriality

It is often stated that DMs can form a "heterogeneous group" in terms of their syntactic class (Schiffrin, 2001, p.57). The main reason behind this assumption is that such items are not structurally unified but rather derive from a variety of traditional grammatical word classes (Schourup, 1999). As regards the three elements used in the current research paper, we are in position to assert that they do not constitute a homogeneous set since each one of them belongs to a different category (based on intuition as for *yamaar* and on lexical counterparts as for *maar* and *ʔal-muhim)* (see Table 1):

Table 1
The Syntactic Class of Discourse-Related Markers

NO	Discourse marker	Syntactic class
1-	*Yamaar*	Noun
2-	*Maar*	Verb
3-	*ʔal-muhim*	Adjective

Thus, a heterogeneous set of a noun, a verb and an adjective is constituted.

2.2 Connectivity

According to Schourup (1999), a significant characteristic highly attributed to DMs is their role in connecting units of discourse. This amounts to saying that DMs are connectors at the first place. This property is maintained in the three words discussed in this research since all of them link some previous discourse stretches with some subsequent ones. *Yamaar* links an event with its negative result when will use in the past and an event and its result with some corollaries when used in the future. *Maar* links two discourse parts with contrasting contents, ironical import and resultative relation. *ʔal-muhim* links a discourse segment with a previously established discourse which undergoes diversion. Although the connection maintained by these three words is different in semantic relations, they link discourse parts rendering them one whole. According to Fraser (1996) and Blakemore (2002), the connectivity characteristic is criterial for determining the discourse marker status of any element.

2.3 Non-Truth-Conditionality

As discussed in the previous section and following Lenk (1998, p.27), all DMs do not contribute to the propositional content in the context where they show up. All of the three markers do not exhibit any semantic content which can affect the propositional content of the following discourse segment (i.e., utterance). In addition to connecting the discourse, they serve as indicators for the speaker's attitude towards the ongoing discussion.

2.4 Weak Clause Association

Due to Schourup (1999) and other scholars including Östman (1995) and Brinton (1996), DMs are considered as elements being outside the syntactic structure of a sentence to which they attach. This generalization has been mainly triggered by the assumption that DMs are "grammatically peripheral, in the sense that they do not enter into constructions with the sentence content" (Fraser 1990, p.391). However, this generalization has been heavily addressed in the last few years when researchers had begun appreciating the relation between discourse and sentence structure (cf. Prat-Sala & Branigan, 2002). In general, such words have been assumed to generate in the left periphery of clauses containing the discourse-related information. At face value, all of three markers investigated in this research seem to be contained within the left periphery, an issue left open for further research.

2.5 Initiality

For some researchers, such as Fraser (1996), Redeker (1991), Schourup (1999), and Schiffrin (2001), elements to term as DMs should show up clause-initially or at least in a fronting position. Indeed, all of the markers discussed in the previous section might occur clause-initially.

Consider the following data extracted out of the dialogues made recourse to in the previous section (the clause initiated by the marker is bracketed and appears in bold):

a. jamaar:

ʔal-ʁari:b itisˤal fi:-ni baʕdean [**jamaar kan msafer**]

The-stange called.he with-me later **PRT** was travelled. PRTCPL.3SG.M

"The strange thing is that he called me later and that he was travelling."

b. maar:

xið-hum maʕ-uk [**maar ytaʕalam-un luʁuh dʒ adi:dah bilmarah)**]

Take-them with-you **PRT** learn-they language new anyway)

"Take them with you (at least/anyway/so as to…. As a result of….) they learn a new language."

c. ʔal-muhim:

[**ʔal-muhim in ʔal-mawdˤu:ʕ munasib l-madʒal-uk ʔ al-dirasi**]

PRT that the-topic plausible to-field-you academic

"…….. , that the topic is plausible for your academic field."

2.6 Optionality

Most relevant studies often attribute the characteristic being optional rather than obligatory to DMs. This assumption amounts to saying that DMs can be deleted and hence nothing can happen to the truth-conditionality of the clause a given DM is attached to. However, much evidence can be brought in assuming that DMs are not optional but necessary for utterance production and perception (Jucker & Ziv, 1998; Schiffrin et al., 2008; Jarrah & Bader, 2012). This importance is mainly derived by their role in rendering the communication between the interlocutors easier and effortless, as will be touched upon in the following section.

2.7 Orality

Due to the fact that NHA is a spoken language without any written form or register, the three words discussed in section (2) show up only in the oral speech. They are used in normal among people of NHA's every day conversations.

2.8 Result

Having applied the characteristics most attributed to the discourse markers, namely multi-categoriality, connectivity, non-truth conditionality, weak clause association, initiality, orality, and optionality to *yamaar, maar* and ☐al-muhim, we are in position to assume that these words are truly discourse markers. With the exclusion of the characteristic *optionality*, all of these three words consider these characteristics; hence their status as discourse markers is borne out. On the other

hand, the issue that these words are not optional is due to the cognitive role they play in orchestrating the dialogue between the interlocutors. They are important in order to render conversations natural and accessible. This role is best captured once they are analysed within the general assumptions of the RT, which, in turn, is our next goal to explain.

3. EFFECT-EFFORT TRADE-OFF

Recent literature on DMs indicates that DMs are linguistic tools which are essential for the text and for both the speaker and hearer alike to compose and interpret the message correctly (Al-Jarrah et al., 2015, p.53). According to Taboada (2006), DMs guide the audience to recognize coherence relations. Such attempts to underpin the actual role of DMs have been propped up with the main tenets of the RT, which basically regards such expressions as linguistically-encoded instruction tools to the hearer, guiding him/her to optimal relevance (Wilson and Sperber 1993, pp.13-8). This optimal relevance is grounded within the effort-effect trade-off. In other words, relevance is defined in terms of the interplay between two competing forces, namely contextual effect and processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, 1995). An assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects in this context are large and the effort required to process it in this context is small (cf. Obeidat & Al-Jarrah, 2012). We can extend this argument on the DMs examined in the current research, postulating that these DMs are used not only to tie up the pieces of discourse as a coherent whole, but also to maximize the contextual effect of the utterance where these DMs show up and, at the same time, minimise the processing effort needed from the hearer to follow the speaker and thus fathom his/her message correctly.

For instance, as discussed in section (2), *jamaar* is used between two discourse segments of which the first one in sequence is the event, and the second one is the result which must be negative (i.e., bad) and surprising at the same time. Following this line of pursuit, we can assume that when *jamaar* is used, the hearer spends less effort in order to find out the conceptual relation between the event and its result. Without it, the hearer might not succeed in understanding the speaker attitude towards the result of the situation, given that the hearer can be unfamiliar with the negative results of the event. Using this DM, the speaker informs the hearer that he (the speaker) is not happy and is shocked by this result, giving room for the hearer to interact properly with the speaker; otherwise the communication in between breaks down. Additionally, when *jamaar* is used, it functions as a discourse building and structuring device since when the hearer gets familiar of the speaker's attitudes towards the result of event the latter encounters, the hearer can opt to orient the discourse towards what the speaker expects

the hearer to do/react. For instance, using this DM, the speaker expects the hearer to know more about the reason behind the speaker's negative attitude. Thus, *yamaar* can be counted as an orchestrating device which renders both the speaker and the hearer more interactive in their mutual conversation. Reasoning along these lines, *yamaar* lessens the hearer's effort to interact with the speaker, and maximizes the contextual effect of the speaker's utterance. The same logic can hold regarding *yamaar* when used as a corollary-introducing device.

Furthermore, *maar* is used to introduce the utterances with logical result, irony, and contrasting value, connecting it with the previous discourse. In fact, such conceptual relations between discourse segments are difficult for the hearer to grasp without using a device to impart such relations to him/her. Due to the fact that all of these uses are speaker-based, it follows that *maar* functions as an indicator of the speaker's involvement. Therefore, the hearer should interact in a way, rendering him more interested in the speaker's concerns and ideas, bearing in mind that the uses of *maar* are to connect two utterances of which the second one follows logically according to the speaker's belief. The thrust of the argument is that *maar* makes the hearer conceive of the fact that the ongoing discussion is important for the speaker who, in turn, expects the hearer to interact properly.

As regards the last DM, *ʔal-muhim*, it is clear this DM functions as anti-digression, making the hearer focus on what the speaker wants to discuss and/or explain. It is an interesting device used by the speaker when the hearer begins drifting away from what the speaker expects him/her to interact. On the other hand, when this DM is used, the hearer re-orients his/her interaction towards the speaker's main point. Hence, this DM restructures the ongoing discourse in order to maximise the interaction of the interlocutors and make their communication more constructive (at least from the speaker's vantage point).

CONCLUSION

The current study comes up with specific conclusions regarding the actual nature of three lexical items frequently used in NHA: *jamaar, maar* and *ʔal-muhim*. Firstly, these three words are discourse-based. *Jamaar* functions as pejorative (when used in the past) and speculative (when will use in the future) discourse marker. In the former use, it signals the speaker's negative attitudes towards the result or the consequence of one action the speaker encounters. Whereas, in the latter use, it signals the speaker's positive attitudes towards the corollaries of a result of one action. *Maar* introduces utterances with results which are logically derived, with ironical readings, and with contrasting information to what has been mentioned in the early discourse. *ʔal-muhim* is an anti-digression discourse marker used when the ongoing discussion digress ways from the speaker's main point. Secondly, all of these discourse markers consider the characteristics most attributed to the discourse markers except for optionality since all of them are important for discourse building. Thirdly, these words were assumed to maximize the contextual effect of the utterance where these DMs show up and minimise the processing effort needed form the hearer to interact properly with the speaker.

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