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The Uses of 'bahi' as a Discourse Marker in Daily Libyan Arabic Conversations

[PP: 171-181]

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Abstract

Discourse Markers (also called as Pragmatic Markers) play very important roles in the organization of discourse and/or fulfilling pragmatic functions in any language. They have been studied in a variety of languages, in a variety of genres and from a number of different perspectives by scholars from different research disciplines. As they form the topic for continuous research, due to the complex nature and varied functions across languages, the present paper attempts to examine the various uses of 'bahi', literally meaning 'okay', as a discourse marker in daily Libyan Arabic conversations. Twenty-two sets of videos, collected from 10 male and female subjects, and six audio-recorded conversations, of 15-40 minutes duration, made by the Libyan native speakers of Arabic formed the data of the study. A part of the audio-recorded conversations was also used to examine uses of 'bahi' based on gender differences in terms of frequency and use. The results showed that 'bahi' functions as a discourse marker that carries distinctive meanings in different contexts such as agreement, warning, expectation of more, showing admiration, blaming, and ending arguments, etc. Results from the recorded conversations part showed that the tendency to use the word by male and female speakers was almost the same in terms of the intended meanings. However, a higher frequency of using 'bahi' was observed among female subjects when compared to their male counterparts.

Keywords: Uses of *Bahi*, Discourse marker, Pragmatic Markers, Arabic Conversations, Conversation Analysis

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1. Introduction

Discourse markers can be defined as linguistic forms, used to express ideas or convey pragmatic messages in a particular situation. They are, there for, a purpose and without them many pragmatic instances, that help people understand what is meant in such a particular way and interpret the different utterances in a dialogue, will be missing. Discourse markers, generally referred to as "DM", are defined as brief and frequent linguistic expressions by which speakers deliver or receive a pragmatic message in the dialogue (Popescu-Belis & Zufferey, 2011). According to Schiffrin (1987) discourse markers as sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk (P. 31), i.e. nonobligatory utterance-initial items that function in relation to ongoing talk and text. Thus, the use of discourse markers has a lot to do with the use of language based on context. One can use the same marker in different contexts conveying different meanings. They are governed by various factors and are used for a reason that is already perceived by both the speaker and the listener. Additionally, discourse markers can be utilized and interpreted contextually, but not necessarily literally. Another important factor that governs their use is the culture or the environment in which they are employed to serve a sociolinguistic function. Moreover, a subconscious agreement from the interlocutors, about the way the discourse marker is used, is another important aspect. "Discourse markers are conjectured to give the hearer information about the discourse structure, and so aid the hearer in understanding how the new speech or text relates to what was previously said and for resolving anaphoric references" (Hirschberg and Litman, 1993, p.501). That is why Schiffrin (2001) rightfully observes that, "research on discourse markers has spread into many areas of linguistic inquiry, drawing scholars from many different theoretical and empirical orientations" (65).

In Libyan Arabic, discourse markers also play a major role in the perception and interpretation of everyday speech. Libyan Arabic is very rich with various linguistic markers which function variously. Speakers of Libyan Arabic have the advantage of using discourse markers based on social aspects where culture and environment play an important role in perceiving the meaning. In this paper, however, the focus will be on only one discourse marker known as *bahi* pronounced as /ba:hi/ generally meaning *okay* in English. However, it carries various meanings and functions according to the context in which it is used. In general, discourse markers are given particular characteristics to help identify them in a better way. Schourup (1999) lists some salient features characterizing discourse markers and their functions such as connectivity, optionality, non-truth conditionality, weak clause association, initiality, orality, and multi-categorality. As for 'bahi', speakers can play with the word to convey various meanings such as agreement, disagreement, warning, expectation of more, following up, showing admiration, blaming, and ending arguments. Also, 'bahi' plays a significant role in combining what the speaker as well as the hearer think about each other's statements. That is, it serves as a tool that reflects speakers' ideas and what opinions or reactions they may have towards something. As rightly stated, discourse markers can help clarify the link between ideas and their organization in speech (Hussein, 1997).

It is important to note here that the word 'bahi', when it was first used, it did not have all these different contextual meanings that it has today. However, the number of uses increased with the people's demanding communicative needs. This interesting phenomenon helps to understand the way people can manipulate the language in order to deliver different messages by using the same word. This is also one of the reasons for continuous research on discourse markers. As Lewis (2006) notes that there are three aspects suggested with reference to the relation between each marker's various meanings and the semantic values that are represented in the lexicon: the homonymy aspect, the pragmatic aspect, and the polysemy aspect. This applies to 'bahi' as well and will reflect in the data analyzed below. As

Discourse markers are considered to be quite complex in nature with varied functions in different languages, the focus of the present paper will be on exploring and discussing these various uses and functions, which have been initiated and manipulated by the people, for performing various communicative functions in various socio-cultural contexts.

2. Methods and Procedures

To accomplish the stated aims of exploring and discussing various uses and functions of the Libyan Arabic discourse marker '*bahi*', the following data-collection methods and techniques were employed. The choice of the methods and techniques selected was deliberate as they could ensure the data collection in rather controlled environment and guaranteed natural use of language, which was very essential for the purpose of the present study. The dialogues exchanged by the participants were not pre-designed as they were asked to speak naturally.

2.1 Video-Recording

This was the first method employed to collect the required data. The data was recorded at the College of Arts, Sebha University, during the year 2008 in a workshop in the association with the International Pragmatics Association. The data was collected in the month of October which continued for 3 days. Total of 22 sets of videos were collected from 10 male and female students, with an average age of 24 years old. The participants were doing their B.A in Applied Linguistics with the Department of English of the College of Arts, Sebha, Libya. They were all Libyan and their mother tongue was Arabic. Each pair of students was given a random set of story sequences to rearrange and talk about it in Arabic as they worked.

2.2 Audio-Recording:

The audio recorded conversations, with duration of 15-40 minutes, were exchanged between pairs of Libyan native speakers of Arabic at different times. A total of six conversations, made over the phone, were collected. The conversations were set to be male-male conversation, male-female conversation, and female-female conversation. A total of 12 subjects participated in the audio-recording of these conversations. The participants of the audio-recording were with different educational backgrounds and their ages ranged between 25-40 years old. The purpose of collecting these conversations, from the participants with different age group and educational background, was to shed light on the complex uses for '*bahi*' in such relations and examine such uses and frequency rate among male and female speakers.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

The collected data were analyzed by following these steps. First the recorded videos were observed carefully and the conversations were transcribed in order to decode different uses of the word *bahi*. The second step was to note down the uses of *bahi* by the participants with its purpose and the function. Whenever the use of the word *bahi* was noticed, it was noted down in a diary and its use was also noted in front of it by deciphering it from the context of that use. Same steps were followed for the audio-recorded conversations. The third step was classifying these uses of *bahi* based on various factors such as context, gender, etc. The primary aim behind following these steps was to control the accuracy of the data. In this paper, only the utterances, where the word '*bahi*' was used, are shared, analyzed, and discussed as the researcher believes them to be relevant to the purpose of the present study.

3.1 Video-Recorded Conversations

The three following extracts are written in Arabic and are followed by English translation. Analyses for these '*bahi*' uses in these conversations will follow. Interlocutors will be referred to as (A) for the first speaker and (B) for the second speaker.

Extract: 1

Participants	Translation in English	Original Conversations in Arabic
Speaker: A	The first one, first one, the second one. Here it is	هذه الأولى، اول وحدة، الثانية.أهيا
Speaker: B	bahi...the third, this (agreement)	باهي...الثالثة..هذه
Speaker: A	No	لا
Speaker: B	Here it is	أهيا
Speaker: A	Wait, they go together.	بعض مع هما استنى
Speaker: B	They are different, here it is, white and grey and yellow and grey, here it is.	مع البيضاء أهى، مختلفين، هما أهيا..الرمادية مع والصفراء الرمادية هنا لا،
Speaker: A	No, here	ايه
Speaker: B	Yes	مع البيضاء لا
Speaker: A	No the white one with.....	هنا هذه لا، لا
Speaker: B	No, no , this one should be here	باهي...بعدين؟
Speaker: A	bahi...then? (waiting for response)	

Extract: 2

Participants	Translation in English	Original Conversations in Arabic
Speaker: A	Look, this is the first one, and then he found a stick, bahi?(ok)	شوفى اول وحدة هذه ، وبعدين القى عصا باهى؟
Speaker: B	Put this picture	حطى الصورة اهيا
Speaker: A	No, this is the same; he found it thrown aha, bahi	لا ، هذه نفسها ، هذه القاها طايحة آه ، صح باهى
Speaker: B	Bahi (then), after the stick was broken, here he wanted to jump; which means this one is before that one, see? It means this one first.	باهى ، بعد تكسرت العصا وهنا بيتقفز معناها هذه قبل ، ريتى ؟ معناها هذه قبل

Extract: 3

Participants	Translation in English	Original Conversations in Arabic
Speaker: A	Yes, at first he was walking, then this	ايه الأولى كان ماشى وبعدين هذه
Speaker: B	bahi! (ok!)	باهى ، اوكى
Speaker: A	He was walking in all of them	كلين ماشى
Speaker: B	Yes, even this, they made him go this way, 'bahi' (in case) for example we say that when he tries to jump and in this one he is comes back, show me that one , show me that one	ايه ، حتى هذا دايرينه هذا ماشى هكى ، اتقولوا باهى مثلاً لما بينظ وهذا امولى هكى ، ترا هديكا ، ترا هديكا ؟

Analysis of the Video-Recorded Conversations

As can be seen, in extract 1, two uses of 'bahi' were observed. From the first, one can infer that DM 'bahi' here indicates agreement. It is the agreement of the hearer to what the speaker said without any type of objection so that the speaker can either switch to another step or let the hearer do that. The other use of 'bahi' denoted expectation of more information. That is, when the hearer said 'bahi', she took what the speaker has already said into consideration but still the information was not enough for her. That is why she said 'bahi' meaning 'then....?'. Here, she was asking the speaker, indirectly, to add more information which she needed. So, the two functions above reflect how 'bahi' was used in two different contexts giving two different meanings. It has been noted that with the help of discourse markers speakers can interpret utterances and use them for many purposes such as politeness, disagreement, and gap filling in a coherent way (Rai & Arif, 2011).

In extract 2, 'bahi' was first used to give the meaning of 'ok' or 'fine'; giving the impression that initially, the hearer does not mind what she heard but still she was fully convinced of her own opinion which might cause the speakers to go through further discussion until one of them is convinced by the other's opinion. The second use of 'bahi'

was to express conditionality 'in case of'. That is, if something happened, then an event is expected to happen as a result. The first use is related to the initiality characteristic of discourse marker introducing the meaning they mark. The latter use is related to the connectivity characteristic by which the marker indicates the connectivity between the discourse components.

In extract 3, 'bahi' was first used to express the speaker's doubt of the hearer's understanding; that is why she said 'bahi?' with a rising tone but in a polite, formal manner expecting the hearer to reply, in return, saying 'bahi' with a falling tone to assure the speaker. However, in the second situation, 'bahi' was used by the speaker to state her initial agreement with her own choice before getting the reaction of the hearer. She said 'bahi' so that the hearer infers that the speaker is already convinced with her choice. Finally, 'bahi' was used as a reference. The speaker repeated the previously observed note in the story and used 'bahi' as of reference to that and employed that in her findings about what is going to happen next. Accordingly, the marker was used each time in a way that is relevant to the context.

3.2 Audio- Recorded Conversations

As stated before, the audio-recorded data included 6 audio-recorded conversations exchanged between 12 participants. Again, only the utterances, where 'bahi' was used, are shared and analyzed here. Interlocutors will be referred to as (A) for the first speaker and (B) for the second speaker. Each two dialogues are followed by an analysis.

Extract: 4 Female-Female Conversations

Participants Translation in English

Speaker: A *Bahi, (so) any new faces?*

Speaker: B *No*

Speaker: A *bah. (Never mind) no problem*

Speaker: A *bahi (then) is work going well?*

Speaker: B *Yes, it is going well*

Speaker: A *bahi, bah (great)*

Original Conversations in Arabic

باهي من الوجوه الجديدة؟

لا

مش مشكلة باه.. يا الله

باهي الشغل منتظم؟

ايه منتظم

باهي باه

Extract: 5

Participants Translation in English

Speaker: A *This is my new cellphone number*

Speaker: B *Aha I see*

Speaker: A *bahi (anyway) where is my other sister? I keep calling her but she never picks up the phone.*

Speaker: B *She is busy studying for exams.*

Speaker: A *Are you home?*

Speaker: B *Yes, listen, my Mother had a surgery today.*

Speaker: A *My Mother? bahi (then) why has not anybody informed me?*

Speaker: B *Do not worry, she is fine now.*

Speaker: A *Bahi (ok) give me her new phone number*

Original Conversations in Arabic

هذا رقمي الجديد

أها

باهي، وين اختي الثانية؟ نتصل بيها ما ترد

مشغولة، عندها امتحانات

في البيت انتي؟

ايه، اسمعي، امي دارولها عملية اليوم

اممي؟ باهي خيركم ماخبرتوني؟

ما تخافيش، كويسة تورا

باهي عطيني رقمها باش انكلمها

Analysis

In extract 4, 'bahi' was first used to imply the meaning of 'so'. That is, it was used as a transition word from a previous point in the speech to a new one. The second use of 'bahi' was the result of knowing that there is nothing impressive or interesting to know. Therefore, 'bahi' here comes to mean 'never mind' followed by 'no problem'. The last use of 'bahi' was to express admiration. That is to indicate that the hearer heard something great. The second

'bah' was said with the deletion of the last vowel /i/ as it was said in a fast causal speech to show emphasis.

In extract 5, 'bahi' was first used as a marker meaning 'anyway'. The speaker was moving to another topic which seems to be of a concern to her. She used 'bahi' here to let the hearer know that what she will say is more important than her previous statement. The second utterance of 'bahi' indicated the meaning of 'then' or 'if so'. The speaker asked a question based on what she heard and used 'bahi' as a reference to the hearer's statement and asked a question based on that. The third use of 'bahi' indicated the meaning of 'ok' or 'fine' where the speaker then made another request.

Extract: 6 Male-Male Conversations

Participants Translation in English

Speaker: A *Excel program has serial numbers, right?*

Speaker: B *Yes, bahi! (so)*

Speaker: A *bahi (I see) good, as for serial no.1, bahi? (ok?)*

Speaker: B *bah (meaning 'ok', following up with the other speaker, and expecting more)*

Speaker: A *I want to add a row above row #1 so that I have nothing listed inside row#1.*

Speaker: B *Yes, it is easy to do it.*

Speaker: A *bahi (then) how can I do it?*

Original Conversations in Arabic

برنامج الإكسل فيه أرقام متسلسلة، صح؟

ايه، باهي

باهي كويس، بالنسبة للتسلسل رقم.1، باهي؟

باه

نبى انضيف صف فوق صف رقم 1 باش مايطلعلى شى فى وسطه

ايه، ساهل

باهي، كيف انديره؟

Extract: 7

Participants Translation in English

Speaker: A *I will go to the bank and then will come to pick you up.*

Speaker: B *No problem, I will finish my work and then leave.*

Speaker: A *Bahi (so) call me when you are done and I will come.*

Speaker: B *Bahi bah (ok, ok) thank you*

Speaker: A *Again, when you finish your work, call me, bahi? (deal)*

Speaker: B *I will, thank you*

Original Conversations in Arabic

توا نمشى للمصرف وبعدها انجى انروح بيك

مش مشكلة، توا انكمل شغلى وبعدها انروح

باهي كلمنى اول ما اتكمل شغلك باش انجيك

باهي باه، بارك الله فيك

كيف ما قتلك، اول ما اتكمل شغلك، كلمنى، باهي؟

ان شاء الله، بارك الله فيك

Analysis

In extract 6, 'bahi' was first used as a marker to indicate that the hearer is assuring the speaker's statement and is tacitly asking the speaker to complete the sentence. The second utterance of 'bahi' reflected the speaker's active response to the hearer by saying 'I see' and ending the sentence with a reference to the previous statement and then used 'bahi' again to check the hearer's comprehension. The third use of 'bahi' was used by the hearer to indicate comprehension of the speaker's statement. Finally, 'bahi' was used as a transition word after which the speaker asked his main question about an Excel task.

In extract 7, 'bahi' was first used to mean 'so'. The speaker made a response to the hearer's reply that means literally "so call me after you finish your work since you are not done yet". The second time 'bahi' was used to indicate the hearer's assurance to the speaker that he will call him by using 'bahi' twice. Such utterances, where 'bahi bah', is used can indicate emphasis. In the last utterance, 'bahi' was used to mean 'ok?' or 'deal?' The speaker is making an agreement with the hearer that he will come to pick him up.

Extract:8 Male-Female Conversation [A: Male, B: Female]

Participants Translation in English

- Speaker: A *I bought a soap bar and a face wash.*
 Speaker: B *I wanted the soap bar only*
 Speaker: A *I did not know that so I brought both of them*
 Speaker: B *Bahi (no problem) even if both of them.*
 Speaker: A *As for the gel, I brought all the three types 1, 2, and 3.*
 Speaker: B *No, only 1 and 2 will work, 3 will not work, I wrote that on the paper for you!*
 Speaker: A *No, you did not*
 Speaker: B *Bahi (transition word) and what about the other creams?*
 Speaker: A *I did not buy those. I only bought the soap, the lotion, and the gel*
 Speaker: B *Bahi (no problem) for now, those are bahi (good).*
 Speaker: A *Again, you said you only wanted two types of gel, right?*
 Speaker: B *Yes, only 1 and 2.*
 Speaker: A *Bahi (ok) bye*
 Speaker: B *Bah (ok) bye*

Extract: 9 Female-Male Conversation [A: Female, B: Male]**Participants Translation in English**

- Speaker: A *The check is ready now if you are willing to come to take it.*
 Speaker: B *Bahi bah (emphasis)*
 Speaker: A *Have you bought the new cellphone for me?*
 Speaker: B *No, not yet, I still did not go shopping.*
 Speaker: A *Bahi (I see)*
 Speaker: B *Bye*
 Speaker: A *Bye*

Analysis

In extract 8, 'bahi' was first used by the hearer to state that she has no problem with what the speaker said despite that it was not what she exactly asked for. 'bahi' was secondly used as a transition or an introductory word to the discourse. The third use of 'bahi' was to express that the hearer again has no problem with what the speaker said and she emphasized this by using 'bahi' again at the end of the sentence to mean that what the speaker said is fine for her. The last use of 'bahi' was to express the end of the conversation where both the speaker and the hearer said 'bahi' to end the conversation and then said 'good bye'.

In extract 9, 'bahi' was first used with emphasis to mean that 'the hearer is assuring the speaker that he got her statement and will definitely collect the check'. In the second utterance, 'bahi' was used to mean 'I see' in a way that reflected that the speaker is expecting another reply but in all cases, what she heard was fine.

3.3 Discussion and Findings

From the analysis of the conversations above, it is quite obvious that Libyan Arabic DM 'bahi' is used in different situations and contexts for varied purposes, for communicating various meanings. In all the conversations above, the Libyan Arabic DM 'bahi' was used around 30 times. The interesting phenomenon, as can be seen from the conversations, is that each time it was used, it had different communicative intent. Interlocutors (speaker and

Original Conversations in Arabic

- شريت الصابون والغسول
 نبي الصابون بس
 مش عارف، شريتهم هما الزوز
 باهي، حتى هما الزوز
 بالنسبة للجل، شريت الأنواع الثلاثة 1، 2،
 و 3
 لا، 1 و 2 بس، 3 ماتنفعش، كتبتلك في
 الورقة 1 و 2 بس
 لا، مش مكتوب
 باهي، وشن صار في الكريمات التانيات؟
 ماشريتهن، شريت الصابون والغسول
 والجل بس
 باهي، توا حتى هادين باهي
 قلتى نبي نوعين بس من الجل، صح؟
 ايه، 1 و 2 بس
 باهي، سلام
 باه سلام

Original Conversations in Arabic

- الشيك واتى كانك بتجي ترفعه
 باهي باه
 شريت النقال الجديد اللي قتلك عليك والا
 مازال؟
 لا مازال، ماحصلت كيف نمشى السوق
 باهي
 سلام
 سلام

listener) were using the word *bahi* to convey various meaning in different contexts and both were able to establish successful communication by inferring the correct meaning from the context. Though it was used for almost 30 times, there was no case in which the listener failed to get the intended meaning. The total occurrences of *bahi*, noted in all the conversations mentioned in the previous section, are tabulated below with the communicative function it was used for.

Table: 1 The total occurrences of the Libyan Arabic DM 'bahi' along with the communicative function it was used for

Occurrences	Function/Meaning communicated
1	To show agreement
2	For expectation of more information
3	Meaning 'ok' or 'fine'
4	Showing conditionality - 'in case of'
5	to express the speaker's doubt of the hearer's understanding
6	to state initial agreement with one's choice before getting the reaction of the hearer;
7	to assure the speaker
8	as a reference
9	Meaning 'so' - as a transition word
10	Meaning - 'never mind'
11	Meaning- 'no problem'
12	To express admiration
13	to show emphasis.
14	Meaning- 'anyway'
15	Meaning- 'then' or 'if so'
16	assuring the speaker's statement
17	active response to the hearer
18	Hearing check
19	to indicate comprehension
20	as a transition
21	Meaning 'so'
22	to indicate the hearer's assurance to the speaker
23	To indicate emphasis
24	Meaning- 'ok?' or 'deal? To make agreement for something
25	Indicating no objection
26	an introductory word to the discourse
27	Emphasizing no objection
28	For closing conversation
29	Assuring to do something
30	To mean 'I see'

It is clear from the table above that in each utterance, where the DM '*bahi*' occurred; it behaves differently in respect to the speakers' attitudes, thoughts, backgrounds, and socio-cultural norms. In most of the cases, except for 2-3 instances, the Libyan Arabic DM was manipulated by the speakers and listeners for conveying and communicating different intents.

However, it should also be noted that as a DM, this is not the characteristic only of the Libyan Arabic DM- '*bahi*'. Similar DMs are also observed in other languages too. In English for example, we can also see similar pattern for discourse markers. In English, linguistic items such as (um, like, well, by the way, etc) are known as discourse markers. They serve different functions depending on the context. '*Well*' as a discourse marker in English, has been widely discussed and analyzed. Research has shown that this single marker can convey

various meaning within the context. According to Jucker (1997), ‘*well*’ can act as a frame marker; it introduces a new topic to the conversation, a face-threat mitigator; whenever there is some type of incongruity between the interlocutors, and a qualifier; as it refers to a previous statement and qualifies it. If we look at another language, Chinese for example, we do not see different phenomenon. A discourse marker like ‘*Ranhou*’ meaning (then), can also denote different meanings according to the context. A study conducted by Liu (2009) showed that ‘*Ranhou*’ can convey more than one meaning. It can function as “topic succession”; to mark speaker’s sequence of thoughts. It can also function as “verbal filler”; whenever the speaker needs a pause to think about his/her following words. From the above, it seems that speakers of different languages, in general, tend to share the norm of employing one discourse marker to serve different meanings based on the context.

With regards to gender differences in the uses of ‘*bahi*’, there was no significant difference between male and female speakers in terms of types of uses by both the genders. However, the frequency of using ‘*bahi*’ was higher in female participants than male participants in the data investigated. The following table offers an overview of the comparative analysis of the uses of the Libyan Arabic DM *bahi* among the male and female genders. However, only major uses have been noted here. It does not provide all the uses to avoid redundancy as their uses have already been discussed in the previous sections.

Table:2 Uses of ‘bahi’ among male and female participants

Male Participants	Female Participants
Waiting for response	Introductory word to discourse
Checking understanding	Agreement
Agreement	Admiration
Understanding	Understanding
Emphasis	Expectation for more
Transition word	Ending conversations
Ending conversations	Transition word
Checking for agreement	To express “Anyway”

From the overview provided above, it can be said that ‘*bahi*’ was almost equally used in terms of the communicative intent for which each gender used it. However, when it comes to the frequency of using ‘*bahi*’ by male and female participants, it was noted that female participants used greater numbers of utterances with ‘*bahi*’. This could initially indicate a higher frequency of use among female speakers; however, examining the DM in wider contexts will allow better judgment based on different contexts. As a limitation of the study, it is worth to mention that the data collected, and shown herein for this purpose, was relatively small and hence the analysis does not make general assumptions, rather, it provides a reflection on how ‘*bahi*’ was used by male and female speakers.

It is also important to note here that the role that ‘*bahi*’, as a discourse marker, plays is so helpful that it saves a lot of efforts for the speakers in perceiving the meaning without having to say it in literal longer words. ‘*bahi*’ as a discourse marker, in Libyan Arabic conversations, functions in the same way the other discourse markers do. Discourse markers help speakers to interpret one utterance based on the information gained from a prior utterance which is referred to as “*local coherence*” where linguistic and structural function of discourse markers is to enhance the coherence of discourse (Schiffrin, 1987). To sum up the discussion, on a sociolinguistic basis, ‘*bahi*’ use will continue to be used based on speakers’ choices and perceptions.

4. Conclusion

‘*bahi*’ as a discourse marker, in Libyan Arabic, can be used to convey various meanings based on the context. These meanings can denote agreement, admiration,

expectation of more, understanding, checking comprehension, introducing new topics to the discourse, and blaming. As a result, 'bahi' may take other roles and as a result it may indicate further various meanings in the future based on the high frequency in which it is used now and the speakers' agreement on any use in the sociolinguistic context. Also, using 'bahi' among different genders is relatively similar looking at the types of uses incorporated. However, female subjects have a higher frequency of using 'bahi' than male subjects. As for this study, it is worth mentioning that the video-recorded data were not solely recorded to investigate 'bahi' alone, but 'bahi' was among the linguistic forms that were observed in the Libyan Arabic speech and was chosen as one of the topics that are worth to be studied. Accordingly, further work on the uses of 'bahi', in wider contexts and with larger amount of data, can manifest other important functions that 'bahi' serves and the benefits speakers gain from the word when it comes to delivering or perceiving a message. Also, focusing on how the word is naturally used between interlocutors can be better explained by making authentic interviews and watching how speakers use it in the different situations on a daily basis. A final note here is that the reader may notice repeated uses of 'bahi' in the dialogues. This is because the conversations here reflected the natural uses of the word. These uses had to be included in order to maintain the natural flow of speech. But they reflect the very crucial characteristic of the Libyan Arabic DM- 'bahi'- behaving in varied manners for serving different communicative intents of the Libyan Arab speakers in different socio-cultural contexts.

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