

To Know *you know* or not to Know: a Comparative Analysis of a Commonly Occurring Discourse Marker from the Perspective of Polish, English and Russian

Abstract

Multidimensional and complex, discourse markers still remain an under-theorized area of linguistics leaving the same much space for further research activities. Until the present day, there seems to be very little conformity when it comes to adequately defining the concept; notwithstanding the fact that scholars have examined the phenomenon of discourse markers in terms of their functions, contexts, languages, frequency, influence, and categorization, to mention but a few. By no means does the above list exhaust the topic and linguists still keep conducting studies of discourse markers; however, the body of research concerning this domain is mainly in and about the English language. In course of the analysis, the author discusses the multifunctional character of *you know* and on the basis of this conspicuous example demonstrates how complex and intrinsic is the phenomenon of discourse markers. Last but not least, the paper also attempts to determine certain common functions of *you know* in Polish, English, and Russian in order to reveal the existing differences and/or similarities occurring among the particular languages.

Keywords: contrastive analysis, discourse markers, *you know*

1. Introduction

Interdisciplinary approaches and comparative analyses are not so common in the existing literature of the field, which calls for an attempt to consider discourse markers (DMs) from the focal lens of different languages. The paper constitutes an attempt to provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of selected discourse markers occurring in English, Polish and Russian. As a point of departure, the author presents a concise overview of the definitions of discourse markers discussing the evolution of the terminology concerning the said phenomenon. This is intended to partially explain why one deals with such diverse terms as discourse particles (Schoroup, 1985); pragmatic formatives (Fraser, 1987); discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987); discourse connectives (Blakemore, 1987, 1992); pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1988, 1990, 1996, 1999); or discourse operators (Redeker, 1991). Among the wide spectrum of discourse markers *you know* stands out as an interesting subject

of an analysis. The overarching objective of this paper is to systematically investigate the said discourse marker *you know* in English, Polish, and Russian, especially focussing on its multifunctionality.

1.1 Classification of discourse markers

To begin with, it must be reiterated that there is no generally agreed upon definition of the term 'discourse marker' (Jucker and Ziv, 1998b: 1). The lack of a unified classification and categorization in the area of DMs results from the fact that different scholars apply diversified levels of quantitative and qualitative analyses and, which is inextricably connected with the above, the research methodology represents various aspects of DMs application. The body of current research in the field comprises studies carried out from various analytical perspectives as the phenomenon of discourse markers can be approached from the angle of their categorization, functions, influence, contexts, frequency and languages. Therefore, as it was said before, the terms are varied and occur in a variety of labels including the following: sentence connectives (Halliday and Hassan, 1976) discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987; Jucker and Ziv, 1998; Lenk, 1998) discourse operators (Redeker, 1991) pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1996) and discourse particles (Aijmer, 2002).

The most general and most frequently quoted definition was coined by Schiffrin (1987), according to whom DMs are 'sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk' (Schiffrin, 1987: 31). Another broadly understood and generally applied explanation is the one authored by Redeker (1991) who classifies a discourse operator as a word or phrase – for instance: a conjunction, adverbial, comment clause, or interjection – that is uttered with the primary function of bringing the listener's attention to a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterances with the immediate discourse context (Redeker, 1991: 116). Lenk's definition is quite similar in its nature and approach for it is rather focused on the pragmatic aspects of discourse. According to Lenk (1998), DMs are 'short lexical items, used with pragmatic meaning on a meta-lingual level of discourse in order to signal for the hearer how the speaker intends the present contribution to be related to preceding and/or following parts of the discourse' (Lenk, 1998: 2). From the perspective of another DMs scholar, namely Barbara Kryk-Kastovsky (2002), the classification particularly indicates the meaninglessness of discourse markers which, by definition, constitute pragmatic notions; putting it more specifically, their nature is pragmatic rather than semantic (Kryk-Kastovsky, 2002: 177). Despite the lack of consensus regarding a unified terminology, which stems from the fact that discourse markers are researched from the angle of different conceptual approaches, generally, scholars explore the same concept. However, these scholars investigate the problem through the prism of different linguistic theories and within diverse contextual environments.

1.2 Functions of discourse markers

Moving on to discuss different functions of DMs, it can be said that the spectrum includes a wide array of roles they perform in oral communication. They 'include discourse connectors, turn-takers, confirmation-seekers, intimacy signals, topic switchers, hesitation markers, boundary markers, fillers, prompters, repair markers, attitude markers and hedging devices' (Jucker and Ziv, 1998, 2f). Regardless the use of DMs in various languages, they basically may perform similar functions, which can be easily proven by a comparative analysis of a particular DM use, for example: the expression *you know* across Polish, English and Russian. Within the framework of human communication, DMs are applied in order to initiate discourse, to mark a boundary in discourse, to preface a response or a reaction, to serve as a filler or delaying tactic, to aid the speaker in holding the floor, to effect an interaction or share interaction between speaker and hearer, or, finally, to mark either foregrounded or backgrounded information.

2. Discourse marker you know in English

It is generally agreed by scholars working within the field of discourse markers that defining DMs functions is problematic and subject to a wide spectrum of interpretations and approaches. There is more than one view but Schiffrin's (1987) pioneering and detailed work sheds much light on the interpretation of DMs as she manages to analyze 12 specific markers and contexts in which they appear from a variety of perspectives. Schiffrin (1987) claims that language is always communicative either because (a) it is directed toward a recipient (immediate or eventual), (b) because language as such is intended to be so directed, and /or (c) because it is attended by a recipient. (Schiffrin, 1987: 6)

Y'know is one of DMs presented by Schiffrin (1987) in her studies and it is placed within the information state of talk due to its literal meaning which directly has an impact on discourse use; but on the other hand, it may also perform less directed literal meaning in reference to attention gained from the hearer to initiate an interaction focusing on information provided by the speaker. *Y'know* plays the role of a marker of shared knowledge between the speaker and the hearer. Schiffrin (1987) then elaborates on the phenomenon in a more detailed terms of meta-knowledge of speaker/hearer shared knowledge. The initial challenge concerns the fact that the speaker is not always aware whether the hearer shares knowledge concerning the speaker's subject of the conversation. Schiffrin (1987) explains the above by means of a matrix in which she demonstrates four knowledge settings. Each setting constitutes a different arrangement of what the speaker knows about the hearer's knowledge as well as what the hearer is actually familiar with; see the table below.

Table 1. Four knowledge settings, source: Schiffrin 1987: 268

Does speaker know of hearer's knowledge?

	YES	NO
Does hearer know of X? YES	(a)	(b)
NO	(c)	(d)

The interpretation of the matrix is as follows:

In setting (a) both the hearer and the speaker know the background information and the speaker is aware of the fact that the hearer knows it; in setting (b) the speaker is not aware of the fact that the hearer knows the background; in setting (c) the hearer does not have the knowledge of the background and the speaker knows that; in setting (d) the speaker does not know that the hearer does not have the knowledge of the background. The usage of *y'know* enables to reach setting (a) in the matrix of meta-knowledge, in particular, to generate a setting where the speaker knows about the shared/common knowledge with the hearer. Schiffrin concludes that *y'know* applied as an information state marker indicates transition to meta knowledge about common/shared knowledge. In conclusion, whenever the speaker resorts to the use of *y'know*, he/she places himself in the position in which his/her role as information provider depends on the hearer's reception. Due to the fact that the speaker may need various kinds of reception, from attention through confirmation to relinquishment of the floor, it does not come as a surprise that *y'know* appears in such a wide spectrum of contexts. Interestingly, *y'know* constitutes a marker which is frequently put under social scrutiny and sanctioned negatively due to its excessive use, especially in American English. Some researchers claim that the excessive use of *y'know* can be considered as over-reliance on the hearer, and this, in turn, leads to the stigmatization of its use.

Discourse marker *you know* appears to be ambiguous and multidimensional with diverse definitions and approaches undertaken by scholars in the field. For example, Müller (2005) raises the issue of DMs as used not only by native speakers but non-native speakers as well, videlicet investigating the use of discourse makers by the Americans and the Germans. Müller (2005) provides meticulous analyses of several functional categories of *you know* and their distribution between the American and the German group of speakers. The most striking feature is that the Americans use *you know* approximately more than five times as much as the Germans, which emphasizes the fact that DMs are rarely applied by non-native language speakers. Her explanation is that the application of DMs does not appear as a regu-

lar part of school curricula within the framework of second language acquisition. In her review of the contemporary research findings, she arrives at a conclusion that a mastery in the accurate use of DMs can be achieved by L2 speakers only when they are exposed to a frequent contact with native speakers, or, when they are exposed to foreign language while living abroad. Furthermore, Müller (2005) makes an interesting observation that an informal language learning context enables the learner to approximate native speaker's language competence, including an accurate and natural use of discourse markers. Müller (2005) follows Richards and Schmidt (1983) in the opinion that native speaker language competence is extremely difficult to achieve in a typical classroom environment; she reiterates the fact that it is only attainable when the learner is seriously treated as an equal partner in a conversation. Therefore, informal interactions with native speakers are of crucial importance in case of second language acquisition. In light of the above, the critical contributor to the appropriate acquisition and application of DMs by language learners is the exposure to natural language environment. The findings of a survey conducted by Müller (2005) among the German speakers of English confirmed her thesis that the time spent by the learner in an English speaking environment substantially influenced the learners' ability to use DMs and the frequency of their use.

The thorough account of DMs functions, including the functions of *you know*, Müller (2005) provides goes in line with the findings of other researchers of the area (see Östman 1981, Schiffrin 1997, Schourup 1985, Holmes 1986). Having narrowed her research of *you know* to its use by German and American speakers, Müller (2005) makes a distinction into a textual and interactional level. The table below demonstrates the functions of *you know* broken into the two aforementioned levels.

Table 2. Functions of *you know* used by German and American speakers of English, modelled after Müller 2005

Textual level	Interactional level
introducing an explanation	appeal for understanding
quotative <i>you know</i>	reference to shared knowledge
marking approximation	acknowledge that the speaker is right
marking false starts and repair	'imagine the scene'
marking content or lexical search	'see the implication'

Undoubtedly, the examples of textual and interactional uses of *you know* juxtaposed in the table prove the multifunctional character of the said discourse marker. As concerns the textual level, *you know* frequently denotes the user's search for lexical expressions. Furthermore, the marker appears after the utterance has been truncated when the speaker reiterates an element of the utterance with a corrected

word. Another use indicates that certain element of the utterance lacks substance and, therefore, is only an approximation of the speaker's line of thinking. Last but not least, *you know* most frequent application is to introduce the explanation. While discussing the interactional level, Müller (2005) gives a very detailed explanation of its particular functions emphasizing that *you know* is applied in varied manners and various extents. In other words, the meaning of *you know* translates into the expressions 'imagine the scene' and 'see the implications.' At the same time, Müller (2005) emphasizes the fact that 'imagine the scene' is the most frequently occurring function at the interactional level. Müller's discussion of *you know* is not confined merely to descriptions; she concludes her work with graphic presentations of statistical data which reflect the striking discrepancy between native and non - native speakers.

3. Discourse marker *you know* in Polish

Next section of the paper, gives a systematic investigation of the discourse marker *you know* in Polish, especially focusing on its multifunctionality. Within the course of the following discussion, an attempt is made to determine certain common functions of *you know* in order to later highlight the existing differences and/or similarities occurring among the languages in question. In Nowy Słownik Języka Polskiego (2005: 776) edited by B. Dunajec, *wiesz*, which is the Polish equivalent of *you know*, is defined as a filled pause intended to provide the speaker with an appropriate amount of time to think and to find adequate words or phrases, to conclude the speech, or, to divide the process of communication into units/parts. Further features which are pointed out in the above mentioned definition characterize this particular filled pause as a signal of contact between speakers, as an introduction of a new subject, or, eventually, as a demonstration of willingness to speak.

It is worth noting that one of the major obstacles which scholars examining this area of linguistics encounter is that the literature on spoken discourse is still quite limited in comparison to works devoted to the field of written discourse. This is why, among the few early accounts in the field, Pisarkowa's (1975) *Składnia rozmowy telefonicznej* is a pioneering research on spoken discourse which provides an insightful, detailed study of telephone conversation structures and which may serve as an introduction to the current analysis. Pisarkowa (1975) attempts to show certain patterns governing the syntax structure in spoken texts. The said patterns regulate the syntax and differentiate the spoken text from the written one mainly by maintaining the contact between the speaker and the hearer and by indicating the close correlation between what is uttered and what is thought and felt as well as the connection between the subject of the conversation and the conversation itself (Pisarkowa, 1975: 156). Pisarkowa (1975) stresses that spoken discourse i.e. the communication between the speaker and the hearer constitutes the most natural language usage

and language existence due to the fact that the essence stems from the relation of verification and perception of the spoken text which is immediately performed and simultaneously reflected in the recipient's reaction to given language output. Within the framework of the phone conversations she analyzed, Pisarkowa (1975) directs considerable attention to the occurrence of *wiesz* performing the function of a filled pause/discourse marker.

According to Pisarkowa (1975), the *you know* type of a filled pause characterizes of high usage frequency and the resulting variety of its likely positions within the sentence structure. The remaining variations include *Pan wie*, *No wiesz*, or *Wiesz co* and should be understood in very general terms. Nowy Słownik Języka Polskiego (2005) defines the scope of this type as all kinds of expressions, for example: insertions, emphases or tools drawing attention to a particular element of the utterance. The conative and vocative signal *wiesz*, as well as the variation *śłuchaj*, are deprived of semantic meaning and content. Nota bene, a conative function constitutes a kind of a stimulus influencing the recipient's reaction by means of language expressions and utterances. Ideally, it should affect the recipient's feelings and emotions eliciting his or her desirable reaction. That what results from a secondary semantic feature is strictly connected with the context, whereas a question cannot be considered a context. Interestingly, the discourse marker *wiesz* appears solely in the context of affirmatives or rhetorical questions which, parenthetically speaking, may perform the function of expressive affirmatives. Furthermore, *wiesz* frequently assumes the shade of meaning which could be labeled as a motivating factor; it can be found in justifications and explanations rationalizing demands while giving them a semblance of a kind request. Whether the intonation of the very signal is affirmative or interrogative is not relevant. The initial or final location of the discourse marker denotes an announcement of a future fact or states a past action with a shade of bragging or boasting, as reflected in the following examples: "Wiesz, podziwiał, że zrobiłem lub zrobię to a to". „Wiesz, dziewczyn to jest jak mrówek, ale ja w ogóle ostatnio zapomniałem jak to wygląda" (Pisarkowa: p. 23).

The final location often indicates the shade of exculpation where the speaker attempts to excuse him or herself; this function can be illustrated by the following: "Tylko ja bym na piątek chciał mieć z powrotem oryginał, wiesz." In addition, *wiesz* accompanied by another word or expression may perform the function of preparing the hearer to a lexical surprise, for instance a curse or a dirty word. This results from the fact that the speakers find it difficult to express themselves clearly or have difficulty expressing or clarifying their thoughts as in the example: "Tak, no wiesz, bo cholera, ja się prawie, bo ja się prawie w tej chwili zaczynam bać, wiesz" in which the said function is manifested.

The discourse marker *wiesz* which embodies a conative function may also perform a structural function. *Wiesz* introduces meaning as a component of a meta-text-

tual framework in a hypotactic mode by means of an objective sentence; this phenomenon takes place when *wiesz* replaces a whole quotation or a broader explanation which in the opinion of the speaker is redundant as it is like reminding about something obvious to both the speaker and the hearer. See the following example: „I wiesz, przychodzę do Z z dzienniczkiem, a Z wiesz, mówi: zdrowa jesteś? A ja mówię, no wiesz. I tak się zaczęła wściekać, powiedziała: do domu! Nie chcę cię tu w ogóle widzieć, jesteś chora! Wiesz, wywaliła mnie na zbity łeb” (Pisarkowa, 1975: 25)

The sentence above aptly illustrates the wide variety of functions which *wiesz* may perform within spoken discourse. One more significant phenomenon occurs when in certain contexts one *wiesz* is neighboring another *wiesz* performing a semantic function; the first one displays semantic emptiness. ‘Wiesz, czy wiesz, że 15. jest spotkanie z Klasą.’ Finally, in case of longer monologues *wiesz* performs the function of an interruption and reminds the hearer of his or her duty to pay careful attention to what is being said:

To nawet nie to, wiesz, ale po prostu żeby toto przyszło jakoś bliżej człowieka. Ale łązić tak? Tak patrzę na tych bubków, co tak tańczą, tak stoją, patrzą na siebie, wiesz, piją tę kawę, no trują wiesz, puszą te ogony, tak wiesz, jak głuszce, no i to takie nudne jest potwornie, no wiesz, bo te dziewczynki to nawet tak zerkają tam do nas, bo my niby tacy ważni jesteśmy, w [...], wiesz, rozumiesz. (Pisarkowa, 1975: 25)

Ożóg’s (1991) work *Studia nad polszczyzną mówioną Krakowa* represents another contribution to the studies of discourse markers. In his approach Ożóg (1991) analyses spoken discourse in terms of incipits understood as a few initial words opening the utterance. He distinguishes lexemes performing conative functions as a group of characteristic signals located at the beginning of hearer’s responses. Ożóg (1991) makes an observation that such lexemes constitute also the function of announcing an explication. One of the lexemes that belongs to the group is *you know* which accounts for a conative signal and which announces an informative field semantically connected with previous hearer’s responses. Interestingly, discourse marker *you know* may perform the function of the incipit, i.e. a phrase opening an informative field, but it may also play the role of a discourse frame like in the following example: “Wiesz, czytałam ostatnio nową powieść Fabera, on jest wdowcem, wiesz?”. Ożóg’s (1991) reasoning goes in line with other scholars in that besides opening and framing functions *you know* may assume the role of an operator which signals various endeavours undertaken by the speaker in order to convey the required message.

Yet another attempt on defining determinants occurring in the spoken language is undertaken by Krieger (1983) who focuses on the segmentation analysis of substantial functions of the spoken language as considered from functional-semantic and prosodic perspectives. According to Krieger (1983), several investigated determinants of spoken text segmentation such as predicative versions *wie pani*, *wie pan*, *widzisz*,

rozumiesz as well as verbs used in the second personal form: *wiesz*, *śłuchaj* constitute 8.2% of filled pauses deprived of semantic meaning. Krieger (1983) stresses that the above mentioned discourse markers predominantly perform the role of filled pauses which appear in the dialogue in order to separate elements of hypotactic and paratactic sentences (Krieger, 1983: 40). It is worth noting that the role of the said lexemes and their variants *wie pani*, *wie pan* were initially described by Pisarkowa (1975).

Within this context, it should be reiterated that some language users who speak very fast usually make a smaller or insignificant number of pauses; on the other hand, those who express their thoughts rather slowly, need much more time to reflect their ideas, and, in consequence of their mode of speaking, they produce a substantial number of pauses. However, Krieger (1983) clearly asserts that all pauses which are the effect of breath taking should be excluded from the sentence structure investigations as they merely constitute the result of a physiological process not a linguistic one. The scholar highlights the intrinsic correlation between the interruption occurring in spontaneous speech and pauses elucidating the fact that spoken language is abundant in pauses which are indispensable elements and characteristic phenomena of every speech. Thus, complete elimination of pauses would make the speaker incomprehensible for the hearer.

In the analyzed material, Krieger (1983) distinguishes periods of silence (unfilled pauses) which definitely exceed the number of filled pauses accounting in her study for mere 30.64% of all defined pauses. Krieger (1983) emphasizes the fact that spontaneous speech is seldom absolutely fluent due to the fact that it is interrupted by periods of silence or other types of pauses. As one may observe, the pauses occurring in spoken discourse contribute to its segmentation, and, consequently, their functions and positions cannot be neglected. Krieger (1983) refers to Goldman-Eisler (1968) who was the original scholar in the field of defining pauses and finding correlation between pause location and sentence structure. Moreover, according to Krieger (1983), the process of defining pauses in spoken texts is extremely difficult due to the fact that pause occurrence and frequency constitute an individual feature of the speaker and the number of pauses depends on speech rates. Krieger (1983) also ascribes paralinguistic sounds such as *e*, *y*, *a*, repetitions, false starts and lexemes such as *wiesz*, and *śłuchaj* to the category of filled pauses. The last subcategory may be considered to be of significant importance for this study. Further, Krieger (1983) claims that *wiesz* and its variants are not only an empty interruption signal to maintain the contact with the hearer but they may also serve as structural signals and co-create modal frameworks by means of introducing a quotation or, in indirect speech, subordinate object clauses (Krieger, 1983, p. 32). Let us consider the following examples:

NS- nie byłem przygotowany WIESZ / tak duchowo/ (v.1: 73)

NS- [...] / i ja przyszedłem WIESZ na drugi termin (v.1: 295)

In the analyzed texts, the position/location of *wiesz* in predicative-argumenta-

tive structure is between a predicate and an argument; but it must be emphasized that the usage of *wiesz* may be a characteristic feature of a given speaker who has a tendency to use *wiesz* almost in every position within a sentence. Nevertheless, the function remains unchangeable, namely, the speaker employs *wiesz* to manifest the willingness to sustain the contact with the hearer.

4. Discourse marker *you know* in Russian

As far as Russian is concerned, the occurrence of the discourse marker *you know* – *знаешь* also reveals clear similarities in its usage in comparison to Polish and English. The above seems to be an interesting feature in light of the fact that Polish and Russian belong to the Slavic family of languages whereas English is a typical Germanic one. Despite that typological difference, it goes beyond any question that they share common features. Charciarek (2010) makes an effort to review the usage of meta-textual expressions, including *you know*, in Slavic languages in his work *Polskie wyrażenia metatekstowe o funkcji fatycznej i ich odpowiedniki czeskie i rosyjskie* (2010). In Russian linguistic studies, the analysis of lexem *знаешь* was originally carried by Winogradow in the early 1970s. In his research, Winogradow (1972) labels the lexem *знаешь* and its variations as *modalnyje sława* arguing that they are characteristic features occurring in dialogues. According to Winogradow (1972), *modalnyje sława* constitute certain kind of an appeal to the interlocutor; they can also be described as a speaker's desire to stimulate the hearer's attention to any given element of the utterance (Winogradow, 1972: 580). In addition, *modalnyje sława* play in Russian spoken discourse the role of a tool to emphasize certain facts or to evoke in the hearer an emotional reaction to the ideas communicated by the speaker. In a similar vein, Kolesnikow (2001) claims that *modalnyje sława* perform the function of focus drawing and maintaining the interlocutor's attention to the subject of the conversation. Besides analyzing the approaches of the above mentioned Russian linguists, Charciarek (2010) also provides numerous samples of *you know* derived from the works of other Russian authors, such as Wampilow, Rozow and Dombrowskij. The following set of examples illustrates the various functions of the lexeme *you know*:

Знаешь, сегодня я получила письмо, Совсем неожиданно. И, думаешь от кого? [You know, I received a letter today. Quite unexpectedly. Who do you think from?] (Wampilow in Charciarek, 2010: 60)

Знаешь, ты меня не провожай. Чемодан легки... Я возьму такси [You know don't walk me off. The suitcase is light... I will take a taxi (Wampilow in Charciarek, 2010: 60)

Ты знаешь, он вчера сделал мне предложение. [You know he proposed to me yesterday.] (Dombrowskij in Charciarek, 2010: 61)

Ты знаешь, мне даже кажется, что он тебя бьёт. [You know it seems to that he beats you.] (Rozow in Charciarek, 2010: 61)

The prevailing function of the discourse marker *you know* as it is used in the Russian and Polish languages is to maintain contact with the speaker and in doing so to bestow the dynamics of the communication process. The use of *wiesz* and *знаешь* allows the speaker to structure the transition process thereby to indicate the opening or closing of the discourse at the same time performing either the persuasive or expressive function. The study of *wiesz* and *знаешь* usage in Polish and Russian additionally implies that they act as an instrument by means of which the speaker maintains control over the communication process. An apt observation made by Winogradow (1972) was that *modalnyje sława*, as he calls the expressions, are semantically empty. Andriejewa (2006) who also analyzed the occurrence of *знаешь* concludes that it performs a prevailing phatic function which accentuates the emotional closeness and which creates a friendly conversational atmosphere (Andriejewa, 2006: 135). In contrast, Sirotinina (1974) demonstrates in her research findings that *знаешь* appears to be one of the most commonly used tools of interrupting the spoken discourse, i.e. a filled pause. (Sirotinina, 1974)

Yet another function ascribed to the use of *знаешь* was observed by Szirajewa (1982) who perceives the lexeme as a phrase stimulating the hearer to an active and attentive participation in the spoken communication (Szirajewa, 1982). Similarly, Charciarek (2010) whose area of research interest focuses on the use of meta-textual expressions and their variations in a number of Slavic languages, points out an intriguing analogy clearly noticeable in the said languages. That analogy allows him to formulate a thesis that the contact auxiliaries, as he labels the discourse markers, are applied by the speakers in situations where they experience difficulties expressing their thoughts or intentions. Therefore, the use of *знаешь* and *wiesz* provides the speakers, in a way, with a solution to cope with their problems in communicating. The expressions ensure the speakers enough time to find an appropriate word or phrase. Moreover, according to Charciarek (2010), the use of the said discourse marker performing the role of a filled pause replaces periods of silence which are not socially acceptable. Charciarek (2010) underlines certain fact which is frequently omitted or neglected in the other studies of the subject; namely, that the semantic content which follows *wiesz* / *знаешь*, has a substantial informative value or that *wiesz* / *знаешь* result from the speaker's reflections or considerations, and, therefore, they constitute a component of subjectivization. Other conclusions stemming from Charciarek's analyses remain in the mainstream of the area of research; videlicet: they represent language tools enabling the speaker to introduce new information without resorting to additional explanations, so they may be generally understood as a kind of a communicative short cut. The speaker utilizes the mentioned tools referring to a shared knowledge of the speaker and the hearer who is supposed to receive and comprehend the given message in an appropriate way. The said phenomenon is frequently reiterated by other scholars, for example by Pisarkowa (1975) or

Müller (2005). Consequently, one may plausibly assume that the afore mentioned tools are of critical importance within the sentence structure, which, in turn, allows the speaker to convey the message in an abbreviated and concise form.

5. Conclusion

The investigation of chosen examples of the use of DM *you know* across the analyzed languages leads to a general conclusion that within the framework of various cultural and linguistic perspectives the usage of the said DM reveals numerous striking similarities. What is more, it appears that the similarities definitely outnumber the differences. What comes to the forefront of the conclusion is the fact that the marker *you know* demonstrates a major difference only in terms of the frequencies of its use within particular languages. The explorations of the use of *you know* in English, Russian and Polish allow to plausibly assume that there occur certain common features. In particular, the analyses indicate that across the said languages *you know* performs the function of initiating and maintaining an interaction between the speaker and the hearer. As for the organization of the communication process, *you know* marks the opening and closing of the information field whereas within the spoken discourse *you know* also serves as an instrument of emphasis drawing the hearer's attention to a particular element of the utterance. Furthermore, *you know* frequently performs the function of a filled pause whose purpose is to increase the fluency of speech. Finally, *you know* constitutes an idiosyncratic communicational short cut, an assumption that the hearer knows the core of the message conveyed. The analysis also displays that yet another commonly occurring feature of *you know* consists in that it may be both semantically meaningful and semantically meaningless, regardless the language in question.

The juxtaposition of the occurrence of *you know* in the languages chosen for the analysis demonstrates that there exists a certain difference too, especially in terms of socio-cultural contexts. It arises from the fact that in Anglo-Saxon culture(s) the frequency of *you know* is decisively higher than in Slavic culture(s). Somehow, the English language seems to be particularly predisposed to reflect an approach in which the speaker's opinions and views are extremely moderately expressed, and, hence, the spoken discourse abounds in the application of tools such as, inter alia, the discourse marker *you know*.

To sum up, the comparative analysis of *you know* as used in English, Russian and Polish sheds light on the fact how it is applied in different linguistic and cultural environments. Notably, the striking difference in the frequency of its occurrence in the English language in comparison to Slavic ones does not affect the multifunctional nature of *you know* and one still can point out its numerous common features occurring across the languages analyzed.

For the purpose of scholarly honesty, one should admit that the above discussion does not entirely exhaust the topic; there is still much room left for extended research. Therefore, the arguments presented in this paper may constitute some background for further investigations incorporating both the variations of the discourse marker *you know* and other linguistic and socio-cultural contexts.

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