

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background which brings the researcher to conduct a study entitled *An Analysis of Discourse Markers Found in Five Feet Apart Movie*. It includes the background of the study, research questions, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In spoken interaction, particularly in everyday communication and cinematic dialogue, speakers frequently use expressions such as *well*, *so*, *I mean*, and *but* to manage the flow of conversation, express attitudes, and respond to others. These expressions occur naturally in spontaneous interaction and play an important role in maintaining coherence and interpersonal relationships (Brinton, 1996). In emotionally driven conversations, speakers often rely on such linguistic elements to signal hesitation, soften responses, or clarify meaning (Fraser, 1999). However, despite their frequent occurrence, these expressions are often overlooked or not fully analyzed in specific interactional contexts.

These expressions are commonly referred to as discourse markers. According to (Schiffrin, 1987), discourse markers are linguistic elements that function to organize discourse and connect utterances without contributing directly to propositional meaning. They help speakers manage turn-taking, signal transitions, express attitudes, and guide listeners in interpreting meaning. For example, in the utterance “Well, I’m not sure about that,” the marker *well* functions to soften the response and indicate hesitation. Similarly, in “So, we should try another way,” the marker *so* signals a conclusion or result of previous discussion. Another example can be seen in “I mean, we need to think about this carefully,” where *I mean* is used to clarify or reformulate the speaker’s statement. In addition, (Fraser, 1999) explains that discourse markers serve as pragmatic devices that signal relationships between segments of discourse. This view is also supported by

studies on discourse particles which highlight their role in structuring interaction and conveying speaker stance (Aijmer, 2002). Therefore, discourse markers play a crucial role in ensuring that communication is coherent, natural, and meaningful, especially in spoken interaction.

In recent years, movies have been widely used as sources of linguistic data because they present contextualized and naturalistic spoken interaction (Brinton, 1996). Movie dialogues often reflect real-life communication patterns, including spontaneous responses, emotional expressions, and interpersonal negotiation. One movie that provides rich interactional data is *Five Feet Apart* (2019), a romantic medical drama directed by Justin Baldoni. The story revolves around two characters, Stella Grant and Will Newman, who suffer from cystic fibrosis and are required to maintain physical distance to prevent cross-infection. Due to this restriction, physical contact is limited, and communication relies heavily on verbal interaction. As a result, their conversations are characterized by emotional intensity, hesitation, reassurance, and negotiation, which are likely to involve frequent use of discourse markers. This condition makes the movie a relevant and meaningful source for analyzing how discourse markers function in emotionally driven interaction.

Although discourse markers have been widely studied in the field of discourse analysis, many previous studies tend to focus on general spoken interaction or different genres of movies without paying specific attention to the role of discourse markers in emotionally intense and physically restricted communication contexts. From a pragmatic perspective, the interpretation of meaning is highly dependent on context and interactional conditions (Levinson, 1983). Therefore, discourse markers may perform different pragmatic roles depending on the communicative context in which they occur. However, the use of discourse markers in interactional contexts characterized by emotional intensity and physical restrictions remains relatively underexplored. In situations where physical closeness is limited, speakers tend to rely more heavily on verbal communication to express emotions, maintain interpersonal relationships, and negotiate meaning during interaction. In the context of *Five Feet Apart* (2019), where the two

characters are unable to express intimacy through physical contact because of chronic illness, discourse markers may play a more significant role in conveying emotional meaning, organizing interaction, and maintaining relational dynamics. Consequently, there is still limited understanding of how discourse markers function within this unique communicative context. Therefore, further investigation is needed to examine the types and functions of discourse markers used in *Five Feet Apart* (2019).

Based on the research gap identified above, this study aims to analyze the types and functions of discourse markers used by the two characters, Stella Grant and Will Newman, in the movie *Five Feet Apart* (2019) based on Schiffrin's (1987) theoretical framework. By examining how discourse markers are employed in emotionally driven and physically restricted interactions, this study is expected to provide deeper insights into the pragmatic roles of discourse markers in constructing meaning and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, this research is expected to contribute to the field of discourse analysis by providing empirical evidence on the use of discourse markers in cinematic dialogue, particularly within emotionally intensive and physically restricted communicative contexts.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the researcher will attempt to formulate the following research questions:

1. What are the types of discourse markers used by Stella Grant and Will Newman in the movie *Five Feet Apart*?
2. What are the functions of the discourse markers used by Stella Grant and Will Newman in the movie *Five Feet Apart*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the introduction of the research and the research questions above, this research seeks to:

1. To identify the types of discourse markers found in the dialogue between Stella Grant and Will Newman in the movie *Five Feet Apart*.
2. To analyze the functions of discourse markers used by the main characters in the movie *Five Feet Apart* based on Schifffrin's (1987) framework.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of linguistics, particularly in discourse analysis. Theoretically, this study enriches the understanding of discourse markers by providing empirical evidence of how these linguistic features are used in spoken interaction within a movie script, specifically between two characters in *Five Feet Apart* (2019). The findings may also support, refine, or expand the discourse marker classifications proposed by Schifffrin (1987), which are widely applied in discourse studies. Practically, this study is beneficial for students and future researchers as a reference in conducting similar studies on discourse markers in film dialogue or other media. Additionally, the result of this research may help English learners become more aware of the functions of discourse markers in communication, especially in expressing emotions, maintaining the flow of conversation, and enhancing clarity in spoken language, which can further improve their speaking and comprehension skills in real-life interaction.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on the analysis of discourse markers based on Schifffrin's (1987) theoretical framework. The scope of the research is limited to identifying types and the functions of discourse markers in spoken interaction, particularly in organizing conversation, signaling transitions, and supporting interpersonal communication. The study examines discourse markers from a linguistic perspective without discussing other language aspects beyond their relevance to this analysis.

The data of this study are taken from the spoken dialogues of the two characters, Stella Grant and Will Newman, in the movie *Five Feet Apart* (2019).

Other characters' utterances are excluded because they are not central to the main interaction analyzed in this research. The study uses only the original English audio script, excluding subtitles or dubbed versions. In addition, non-verbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, and intonation are not analyzed. Therefore, the findings are limited to the use of discourse markers by the two main characters and cannot be generalized to all dialogues in the movie or to other films.