

# Pragmatic Markers in British English

*Meaning in Social Interaction*

Kate Beeching

*University of the West of England, Bristol*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# Contents

---

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of tables</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xv
<i>Transcription conventions</i>	xvi
1 'Well I mean I just sort of like you know ...'	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 What are pragmatic markers? Terms, categories and functions	3
1.3 Pragmatic markers and their functions in conversation	4
1.4 Polysemous, multifunctional and open to interpretation	6
1.5 Sociolinguistic aspects of pragmatic markers	10
1.6 The historical development of pragmatic markers	18
2 Corpus approaches, choice of markers and methodology	27
2.1 Corpus approaches and data investigated	27
2.2 Synchronic corpora	28
2.3 Choice of markers	31
2.4 Commonly occurring markers, D-values and collocations	32
2.5 Exploring attitudes to pragmatic markers	38
2.6 Methodologies for exploring discourse variation and change	41
2.7 Previous historical studies and diachronic corpora	45
2.8 Overview of the methodology	49
3 Well	51
3.1 Introduction	51
3.2 Functions in social interaction	52
3.3 Sociolinguistic features	60
3.4 Historical semantic change	70
3.5 Conclusion	74
4 Just	76
4.1 Introduction	76
4.2 Functions	76
4.3 Sociolinguistics	83
4.4 Historical semantic change	93
4.5 Conclusion	96

5	You know	97
5.1	Introduction	97
5.2	Functions	98
5.3	Sociolinguistic features	106
5.4	Historical semantic change	116
5.5	Conclusion	124
6	Like	126
6.1	Introduction	126
6.2	Functions	127
6.3	Sociolinguistics	136
6.4	Historical semantic change	152
6.5	Conclusion	154
7	Sort of	156
7.1	Introduction	156
7.2	Functions	156
7.3	Sociolinguistics	160
7.4	Historical semantic change	174
7.5	Conclusion	182
8	I mean	183
8.1	Introduction	183
8.2	Functions	183
8.3	Sociolinguistic features	190
8.4	Historical semantic change	203
8.5	Conclusion	208
9	Conclusion	210
9.1	Introduction	210
9.2	Pragmatic markers and social interaction	210
9.3	Macro sociolinguistic features	214
9.4	Situational variation	222
9.5	Historical semantic change	223
9.6	The impact of social interaction on meaning: politeness-induced semantic change	228
	<i>Appendix A</i>	230
	<i>Appendix B</i>	231
	<i>Appendix C</i>	234
	<i>References</i>	236
	<i>Index</i>	252

## Figures

---

2.1	Rates of occurrences of <i>Like, Just, Well, You know, I mean</i> and <i>Sort of</i> per 10,000 words in the corpora selected for detailed study as part of the pilot	page 37
4.1	Mean scores for the younger (student) subjects and the older (choir/book group) subjects	93
5.1	A synchronic/diachronic map of the polysemy of <i>you know</i>	124
9.1	Increasing with age: <i>Well, You know, I mean</i>	219
9.2	Incrementation: <i>Just, Like</i> and <i>Sort of</i>	219
9.3	Average attitudinal scores on 'polite', 'educated' and 'friendly' (PEF) for the six markers	221