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Multifunctionality of English Discourse Marker *okay* in British and  
American Movies

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## **Abstract**

The present paper focuses on the investigation of the discourse functions of *okay* in British and American movies. The effective application of discourse markers in conversation is a crucial aspect of discourse competency. The present paper aims to investigate how often the discourse marker *okay* is used in British and American movies and to research and compare the multifunctionality of the discourse marker *okay* in British and American films. This study was carried out by examining underlying conceptual patterns of discourse markers, their linguistic expression, and features. To achieve this goal, the data for this study was obtained from movies of different genres of British and American films. Transcriptions of the movies were collected and analyzed using the qualitative descriptive and discourse analysis methods. The findings of the study reveal that the discourse marker *okay* is most frequently used in the interpersonal category in both British and American films. According to its functions, the discourse marker *okay* is most often used for agreement, confirmation, and acknowledgment, as well as for the closing of a topic, whereas it is most rarely used for opening topics.

## 1. Introduction

Communication, the primary function of which is to transfer information from one person to another, is a highly complicated process. To ensure an adequate perception of the reported facts by the addressee, the addresser often has to rely on various linguistic devices that carry discursive and pragmatic meaning rather than give factual information (Cribe & Degan, 2019). Discourse markers are an integral part of everyday communication. Using discourse, a person can express his or her relationship with the interlocutor (Carter et al. 2011 cf. Hasniar 2017); for example, one can oppose the interlocutor by using *but*, *however*, or vice versa – be polite, hide his or hers true face' and use 'softening' particles, for instance, *so*, *that* or *even*. According to Aijmer (1984), discourse markers are significantly associated with informal spoken English; they facilitate the speaker's communication, contribute to a fluent conversation (cf. Aşık, Cephe 2013), and help readers and hearers to understand the writer's constructed discourse. Thus, discourse markers engage the addressee to maintain conversation between the speaker and the hearer (Alami, 2015; Banguis-Bantawig, 2019). In other words, they aid in engaging readers or listeners, elicit a reaction (Hongyu, 2016), and enable the interlocutor to convey his or her understanding, agreement, and interest (Guo, 2015).

Scholars generally agree that discourse markers are polyfunctional (Castro & Marcela, 2009; Furko, 2014; Ding, Wang, 2015; Liu, 2016; Chen, 2018, etc.) both at the interpersonal and textual levels (Alami, 2015). It is emphasized that the interpersonal discourse marker's function conveys the point of view of the speaker or the writer, whereas the textual discourse's function "signals connections between spoken or written thoughts and "linking discourse units further apart" (Dylgjeri 2014 cf. Banguis-Bantawig 2019, 4). Thus, discourse markers serve as key elements in text creation and comprehension due to their functions for effective communication. Although they are considered optional from the semantic and grammatical point of view, they help to create acceptable, natural and communicatively effective texts (Kohlani 2010). Discourse markers such as "*well*, *oh*, *um*, *yeah*, *right*, *let's see*, etc. perform a specific signalling and monitoring function in the cooperative give-and-take of conversation, and signal different nuances of participants' intentions, as well as information on their reactions to the conversation flow. Such typical functions served by DMs make them likely to function as significant markers of the common ground in a discourse between speakers and hearers' (Guo 2015, 70).

The movie is one of the parts and means of mass culture and communication (Kavan, Burne 2009). According to Hasniar (2017, 4), a film portrays society's reality and not a "transfer" of reality to the big screen without altering it. A film is an audio-visual communication medium that transmits a message to a group of people gathered in a particular location. It is a form of visual communication that employs moving images and sound to convey tales or provide information. The meaning or content of films worldwide can be disclosed through more than just the nonverbal language of characters. In terms of discourse markers, markers can help the viewer understand the movie's plot and follow and feel better about the events taking place in it.

According to Qainbo (2016), research on discourse markers has been undertaken since the 1970s; nevertheless, additional study is required, particularly on the pragmatic and interpersonal value of discourse markers (cf. Al Rousan, Al Harahsheh, Huwari 2020). Although there has been a high interest in analyzing discourse markers in different types of discourse, there is a lack of information about how discursive markers differ across the various types of English language, more precisely between British and American English. Even though spoken American and British English are mutually intelligible, there are still some differences that, in some cases, may lead to misunderstanding between speakers. Such research is essential because, according to Hongyu (2016), the use of discourse markers is influenced by cultural factors. Fuller (2003) shares the same opinion (cf. Banguis-Bantawig 2019).

## **2. Theoretical aspects of discourse markers**

### **2.1. The Definition and Characteristics of Discourse Markers**

Discourse markers can be used to make the language or written text consistent and easy to understand (Granger 1996 cf. Šimčikaitė, 2012). Discourse markers (hereinafter referred to as "DMs") are called differently in the literature - sometimes they are called *connective particles*, *pragmatic particles*, *pragmatic markers*, *discourse connectives*, *discourse particles*, or *discourse markers*.

Term discourse marker was mentioned for the first time by Labov and Fanshel (1977), who stated: "As a discourse marker, *well* refers backwards to some topic that is already

shared knowledge among participants. When *well* is the first element in a discourse or a topic, this reference is necessarily to an unstated topic of joint concern." (cf. Sadeghi, Yarandi 2014, 102).

The scientific literature reveals that there is no agreement among researchers, indicating that there is not a single agreed-upon definition of discourse marker; this is something that can be deduced from the fact that there is no consensus among researchers. Gabrys expressed the same opinion (2017). Torres (2002) defines DMs as multifunctional words that may have both grammatical and discourse meanings. Most linguists would agree that discourse markers contribute to the coherence of the discourse by signaling or marking a relationship across utterances (Vickers, Goble 2011, 2). According to Verschueren (2000), a DM is a linguistic means that indicates the speaker's meta-pragmatic awareness, which is used to demonstrate the link and coherence relationship between a discourse and other sections of the discourse, or it is an attitude or cognitive trait that reveals the proposition of the speaker's conversation (cf. Chen, 2018, 62). Shulin (2012) simplified the interpretation of a DM, and defines it as "an expression used to adjust verbal communication by the coding program information with independent intonation".

It is observed that many scholars quote and follow Schiffrin's (1987), Fraser's (1999) and/or Blakemore's (1992) concepts of DMs and their approach to the issue. It is stated that the importance of DMs was first emphasised by Schiffrin (1987), according to whom DMs are elements that are sequentially reliant and serve to separate discourse units (cf. Sadeghi, Yarandi 2014, 103; Ryo 2018, 3). He also points out that bracket units include such entities as sentences, propositions, speech acts and tone units and the exact nature of which she deliberately leaves vague and emphasises that DMs are undiscovered language units that are used in the course of a conversation. The author points out that DMs include a lot of conjunctions, like *and*, *but*, *or*, as well as inserts like *oh*, *huh*, *uh*, *um*, adverbs - *then*, *now*, and lexicalized phrases like *I mean*, *you know* (Schiffrin 1987 cf. Sadeghi, Yarandi 2014, 103). And the discourse itself consists of:

"The 'Exchange structure' which represents turn and adjacency pairs; 'Action structure' which devotes to speech acts and conversational management; 'Ideational structure' which contributes to cohesive relation, topic relation and functional relations; 'Participation framework' which shows a relationship between the speaker and hearer, and, finally, 'Information state' which concerns

the speaker's and hearer's knowledge and meta-knowledge." (Schiffrin 1987, cf. Ryo 2018, 6).

Schiffrin (Schiffrin 1987 cf. Ryo 2018, 6) provides 11 markers indicating which markers function in which conversation plane (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Planes of Talk in Which Markers Function

Information state	Participation framework	Ideational Structure	Action structure	Exchange structure
*oh	oh		oh	
well	*well	well	well	well
		*and	and	and
		*but	but	but
		*or		or
so	so	*so	so	so
because		*because	because	
	now	*now		
then		*then	then	
I mean	*I mean	I mean		
*y'know	y'know	y'know		

Source: Schiffrin 1987 cf. Ryo 2018, 6

It is observed that Schiffrin's (1987) reasoning is acceptable to linguists (Winnie, Yap, Wong 2016; Yuko 2016) and they agree that a DM is an independent component that plays an important role in a dialogue, although removing the DM from a sentence does not structurally change it (Schiffrin 1987 cf. Algouzi 2021). Blakemore (1992) also stated that DMs are necessary during a verbal communication, as they help to communicate. In addition, connectivity itself is one of the main characteristics of DMs because DMs are used for maintaining communication (Aşık, Cephe 2013).

Other scholars like Fraser (1999) have called DMs pragmatic signs; they have also discerned the discourse markers and the pragmatic markers. The author described DMs as a lexical expression helping to show interfaces between the contrast, subtext, and detail. It was also emphasised that DMs consist of conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions that help to enter

into a topic, to connect topics (Fraser 1998, 1999 cf. Sadeghi, Yarandi 2014), to provide the discourse with a coherent whole (Zhao, 2014).

Fraser (1999) used to group DMs into "discourse topic markers, discourse activity markers, and message relationship markers" (Sadeghi, Yarandi 2014, 104). Later the scholar grouped DMs into more complex categories, noting that each category includes different markers (cf. Ryo 2018, 5):

- Contrastive DMs: *but, alternatively, although, contrastive, contrary to expectations, conversely, despite (this/that)...*
- Elaborative DMs: *and, above all, after all, also, alternatively, analogously, besides, by the same token...*
- Inferential DMs: *so, all things considered, as a conclusion, as a consequence (of this/that), as a result (of this/that).*

Scholars emphasize that DMs may be at the beginning of a sentence, although they may be in the middle and at the end of a sentence; they simultaneously perform textual and interpersonal functions; they are often verbal; they are used frequently, although they are not obligatory; their absence does not make the sentence incomprehensible (Castro, Marcela 2009; Aşık, Cephe 2013). Also Schiffrin (1987) and Brinton (1996) state that DMs are not obligatory, as DMs can be extracted from the utterance without changing either its structure or the content of the statement (cf. Castro, Marcela 2009); however, they are especially important in conversations (Brinton 1996 cf. Arya 2020). Semantically, a DM has little or no importance to the statement. In other words, when they exist, they do not contribute to the meaning of the statement or content, but they indicate how it is to be understood, what follows next or what has happened with respect to the speaker, hearer and the discourse (Lee-Goldman 2011).

Besides, according to Brinton (199), Jucker & Ziv (1998), DMs as short expressions have few or no prepositions, or it is difficult to define them lexically (cf. Castro, Marcela 2009). It is generally accepted that DMs are multifunctional, commonly used in the oral discourse (Castro, Marcela 2009; Aşık, Cephe 2013; Šinkūnienė et. al., 2020; Algouzi 2021).

According to Hellerman and Vergun (2007), DMs are words or phrases that operate within the linguistic framework, so as to establish the relationship between the topics or grammatical units in the discourse, i.e. such words as *so, well, and then* (cf. Castro, Marcela 2009, 61). Usually discourse markers are grouped into relational discourse markers

(pragmatic connectors like *such as and, but, because, actually*) and into non-relational discourse markers (pragmatic particles like *such as well, I mean, you know*).

In summary, it can be stated that different scholars evaluate the definitions and features of discourse markers differently. Discourse particles, a connecting part of a discourse, a pragmatic marker, or a pragmatic particle are attributed to DMs. Words or word combinations, the lexical meaning of which has little impact on the meaning of the sentence, but which perform many important functions that help the interlocutor to interpret the sentence correctly, are considered to be discourse markers. It is observed that discourse markers are more common in speech than in writing. Any particular discourse marker may operate differently in different contexts of use, i.e. the meanings of discourse markers may vary according to both the communicative and discourse context. In most cases the sentence structure remains unchanged after having removed a discourse marker from a sentence.

## 2.2 The Function of Discourse Markers

Discourse markers can perform numerous and different functions. Moreover, the same marker can perform multiple functions that often merge in the same context and can be difficult to separate (Šinkūnienė et. al., 2020). It is emphasised that "DMs can and often do appear in more than one category, such as the word *so*, which can function as either an opening or closing frame marker, as a sequence marker, or even as a turn-taker". Then the possibility that a particular marker will play the role of more than one function may vary depending on the content/context (Rennie, Lunsford, Heeman 2016, 1280).

According to Sun (2013), discourse markers enable speakers "to make their presence felt in the text, to give guidance to the audience as to how the text is organised, what processes are being used to produce it, and what the speaker's intentions and attitudes are regarding the subject matter, the readers, and their text". Thus, the discourse markers do not contribute to the content of the message, but subtly modify it in various ways (Buysse 2010 cf. Valūnaitė-Oleškevičienė et. al., 2020) and this, according to the author of the work, can be considered one of their most important functions. A similar opinion is shared also by Brinton (1996), who states that DMs are grammatically optional but at the same time they are needed because they perform various pragmatic functions (cf. Castro, Marcela 2009). In the absence of DMs that indicate or explain the speaker's intentions, communication is more likely to

break, if the listener interprets the word based only on the context and intonation used (Fraser 1990 cf. Arya 2020). One can agree with Ostman (1982), who states that DMs attach courtesy to a conversation, whereas DMs such as *well*, *like*, or *I mean* help to express empathy or gain approval (Arya 2020).

The scholars like Jucker and Ziv (1998) present four key functions of DMs (cf. Chen 2018, 63). Firstly, DM as a discourse tool that combines language components. In terms of modality, a discourse marker is a tool of pragmatic marking. From the perspective of correspondence, a discourse marker is a mark that means suggesting and realizing interpersonal relationships between the two parties. Finally, from the perspective of cognition, a discourse marker is a mark that means helping and guiding communicators to deal with discourse behavior.

Based on Brinton's research, S.Mülle claims that a DM performs several functions (cf. Chen 2018, 63):

- (1) arousing discourse;
- (2) marking the boundaries between discourse;
- (3) predicting answers or reflections;
- (4) acting as a filter for discourse or delay skills;
- (5) helping the speaker to stand firm;
- (6) forming a good interaction between the speaker and the listener;
- (7) marking the anaphoric and back discourse
- (8) marking the foreground or background information.

According to Hellerman and Vergun (2007), DMs also perform pragmatic functions because the speaker uses DMs to determine whether you understood the information (like *as you know*, *I mean*). They can also be used to express surprise (like *oh*), or "for subtle commentary by the speaker suggesting that what seems to be the most relevant context is not appropriate e.g. *well*" (cf. Castro, Marcela 2009, 61). Also Liu (2016, 1277) shares the same opinion, stating that DMs perform meta-pragmatic functions when creating discourses, indicating the speaker's intention and emotions, shortening the interpersonal distance, and regulating the interpersonal relationship. In terms of the speaker's intentions and emotions, the author divides meta-pragmatic functions of DMs into several additional functions "including revealing personal feelings of the speaker, expressing the subjective evaluation of the speaker, showing the way of expressing his or her own speech, and modifying the utterance expression and so on". The author emphasises that, first of all, DMs help to create the context. The speaker always tries to keep his/her discourse consistent and fluent during communication, so that it is easy for the hearer to better understand the whole context. For this purpose, the speaker uses DMs to inform the hearer in advance that the

speaker wishes to start a new topic by using such words, serving as hints, like, for example, *first, firstly, first of all, at first, in the first place, in the beginning, to begin with, to start with, once upon a time, now, etc.*, or to show that the topic is completed by using such words as, for example, *therefore, thus, finally, eventually, at last, in conclusion, in short, in the end, in a word, in brief, in summary, on the whole, as a result, to sum up, to conclude, etc.*, or seeking for emphasis, summarising what has already been said, returning to what has already been said, the speaker uses such DMs as *you see, you know, anyway, as noted above, as mentioned before, to return to my point, back to the original point, etc.* DMs can also directly or indirectly help to express feelings or intentions, show the speaker's emotions (hesitations, self-confidence, etc.). Discourse markers that reflect these meta-pragmatic functions can be adverbs, such as *I doubt, I suppose, I think, I believe, I regret, I admit, I hope, etc.*

According to Šinkūnienė et. al. (2020), there are various functional classifications of discourse markers, but, probably, the most popular division is the division into textual and interpersonal functions performed by pragmatic markers. Markers that perform textual functions help to structure the discourse, to reveal logical connections between different elements at the sentence or discourse level, whereas interpersonal functions focus on creating and maintaining the relationship with the addressee. Functions performed by discourse markers are often related to their position in a sentence or in the so-called periphery of a sentence. Brinton (1996), relying on Halliday (1973), provides a list of ten functions, which she groups into two main categories. Firstly, the textual function "is related to the way the speaker structures meaning as text, creating cohesive passages of discourse, using language in a way that is relevant to the context". Secondly, the interpersonal function is related to the nature of social exchange, i.e. with the role of the speaker and hearer (cf. Castro, Marcela 2009, 60).

**Table 3.** Brinton's (1996) List of DM Functions

Textual functions	Initiation of the discourse, including grabbing the hearer's attention
	Completion of the discourse
	Help for the speaker
	Maintaining the discourse
	Emphasizing the new topic or shift in the topic
	Emphasizing the old or the new topic
	Marking "sequential dependence"

	Correcting one's own or others' discourse
Interpersonal functions	Presenting a subjective response or reaction to the previous discourse. Demonstrating understanding or attention (feedback) to the speaker.
	Cooperation, confirmation of assumptions, expression of understanding, request for confirmation, showing courtesy

Source: Brinton 1996 cf. Castro, Marcela 2009

Also according to Arya (2020), DMs, being multifunctional, can operate in different ways depending on the context. When performing textual functions, "DMs generally indicate a structural boundary in the discourse, pointing either backwards or forwards in the discourse to signal the relationship between the utterances they connect". When performing interpersonal functions, DMs can be used to express general knowledge, solidarity, courtesy or emotions, attitudes (Arya 2020, 250).

Still other scholars, like Fung and Carter (2007), attribute DMs to four functional headings, i.e. the interpersonal, reference, structural, and cognitive categories (cf. Arya 2020). Table 4 provides the summarised Fung and Carter's (2007) DM multi-categorical framework.

**Table 4.** Fung and Carter's (2007) discourse marker multi-categorical framework

Category	Discourse functions and markers used
Interpersonal Denoting affective and social functions	Marking shared knowledge: <i>see, you see, you know</i> Showing responses (agreement, confirmation, acknowledgement): OK/okay, oh, right/alright, yeah, yes, I see, great, oh, great, sure Indicating attitudes: well, really, obviously, absolutely, basically, actually, exactly, to be frank, etc. Indicating a stance towards propositional meanings: <i>really, exactly, obviously, absolutely</i>
Referential Marking relationships between verbal activities preceding and following a DM	Mostly conjunctions, marking cause, consequence, contrast, coordination, disjunction, digression, comparison: <i>because/cos, so, but, and, yet, however, nevertheless, and, or, anyway, likewise, similarly</i>
Structural Working in two levels: textual and interactional. Indicating discourse in progress and affecting the subject under discussion, returning to a previous topic or moving ahead to a new topic, or affecting even the distribution of turn-taking.	Opening and closing of topics: <i>now, OK/okay, right/alright, well, let's start, let's discuss, let me conclude</i> Sequencing: <i>first, firstly, second, next, then, finally.</i> Marking topic shifts: <i>so, now, and what about, how about.</i> Marking continuation of the current topic: <i>yeah, and, cos, so.</i> Regain control over the talk or to hold the floor: <i>and, cos.</i> Summarizing opinions: <i>so</i>
Cognitive Marking the cognitive state of speakers, particularly in unplanned speech, when there are unsignalled shifts in topics or when inferential procedures are required to understand	Indicating the thinking process: <i>well, I think, I see, and</i> Reformulation/self-correction: <i>I mean, that is, in other words, what I mean is</i> Elaboration: <i>like, I mean</i> Hesitation: <i>well, sort of</i>

Source: Arya 2020, 251

It can be noticed that, although Table 4 provides more DM functions, they are only more detailed; however, in general, when grouping them, they can be attributed to the same textual or interpersonal functions.

Filipi and Wales (2003) state that DMs, such as *okay*, *right*, and *alright*, perform all functions depending on the context of the discourse in which they are uttered. For example, the DM *alright* can be uttered when starting or ending a topic depending on the context of the discourse, when and where it is uttered. The DM *okay* is a pragmatic marker, meanwhile it can be used at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of a conversation, although *okay* usually marks the shift from one conversation segment to another (cf. Vickers, Goble 2011). Also A. Benkortbi stated that the DM *okay* is used to start and to end conversations, to start new topics or to change them. For example:

A: Right, let's get started. We need to get the suitcases into the car.  
 B: *Okay*. I'll do that. Katie, will you help me?

Also when ending the conversation, for example (Benkortbi):

[Mother (A) and daughter (B) on the telephone]  
 A: So we'll see you on Sunday, Liz.  
 B: Right, *okay* Mum.  
 A: *Okay*, see you then, love.

It seems that *alright* is functionally similar to *okay*, although Turner (1999) states that *okay* and *alright* differ because *alright* indicates a change of the topic, whereas *okay* indicates a subtle shift of attention in the same topic. On the other hand, Filipi and Wales argue that *okay* also indicates continuity of the topic, whereas *alright* indicates the shift to a new topic. So, although the DMs *alright* and *okay* are similar, there are subtle differences between them (cf. Vickers, Goble 2011).

Meanwhile, Beach (1993) points out that the DM *okay* conveys a special meaning, i.e. it can be surprise, respect or even contempt for the previous saying. For example:

S: What do you mean hope. Get (th)em off the planet don't rele:ase (th)em an(d) have (th)em kill other people.  
 G: *O ::: k a ::: y?*  
 S: (I)f they can't ha- (i)f they can't handle reality the:n: get the fuck out 'ya know get

outta tow:n  
 G: Right but d- does that still give us the right to:- to- to kill (th)em.

It is specified that the DM *okay* can be used simultaneously at different levels (Schleef 2005 cf. Gaines 2011). According to Schleef (2005), the DM *okay* performs three interrelated functions, i.e. it can help to test comprehension + can calm down, can express satisfaction, can understand or direct + can close a topic (Othman 2010; Gaines 2011). Moreover, Schleef (2005) states that DMs, such as *okay*, are extremely important for the transparency of understanding of the discourse (Othman 2010).

### 3. Data and methods

The present study is a corpus-based analysis that focuses on the discourse marker *okay* in film dialogues. The data for the analysis was drawn from ten films, five of which were British films, and five were American films. Table 4 and Table 5 shows the British and American films used in this study based on their duration, production year, genre and total running words.

**Table 4.** Information about British movies

<b>Film</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Total running words</b>
<i>Dead Man's Shoes</i>	90 min	2004	Thriller, Crime	7 224
<i>Fish Tank</i>	120 min	2009	Drama	5 292
<i>Kingsman The Golden Circle</i>	141 min	2017	Action, Comedy	10 865
<i>Me before you</i>	111 min	2016	Romance, Drama	10 127
<i>T2 Traispotting</i>	117 min	2017	Comedy, Drama	8 935

**Table 5.** Information about American movies

<b>Film</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Total running words</b>
<i>Black swan</i>	108 min	2010	Drama	5 653
<i>Central Intelligence</i>	116 min	2016	Action, Comedy	15 447
<i>Criminal</i>	87 min	2004	Thriller, Crime	8 526

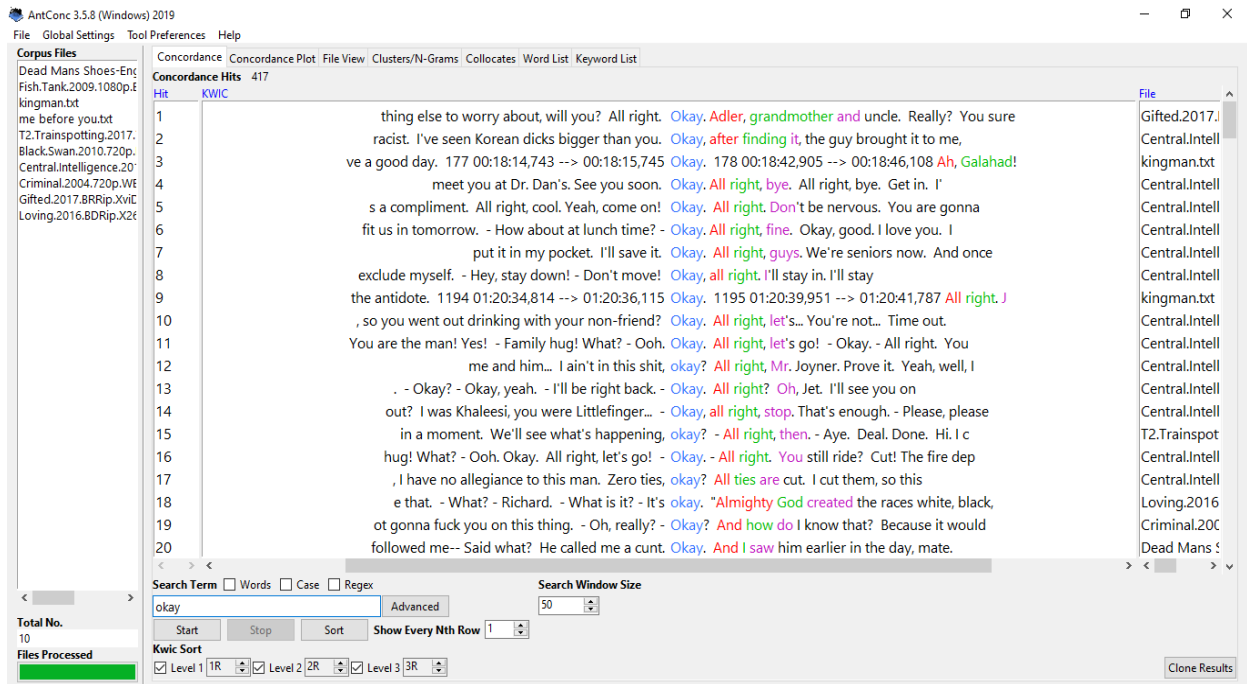
<i>Gifted</i>	101 min	2017	Comedy, Drama	9 996
<i>Loving</i>	125 min	2016	Romance, Drama	5 867

Table 1 shows the British films used in this study based on their duration, production year, genre, director and total running words. As could be seen from the table the oldest film dates back to 2004 while the newest one dates back to 2017. The total number of word tokens extracted from British movies was 42,443. Further, Table 2 presents American movies as well based on their duration, production year, genre and total running words. As well as British movies, the oldest American film dates back to 2004 while the newest one dates back to 2017. The total number of word tokens extracted from American movies was 45,489. As can be seen from the data table, films of different genres were selected for the analysis. All movies were divided into pairs so that genres and durations of films coincided.

The qualitative descriptive method (Qualitative Content Analysis) was used in this research. According to Seixas, Smith, Mitton (2018, 780), "this is a dynamic analytical tool intended to depict the informational content of the data. Although similar to quantitative content analysis, this is different because the codes are commonly generated from the data (i.e. derived inductively) in the course of the study". This method is aimed at determining what the functions of the DK *okay* in the movies presented in Tables 4 and 5 are.

The data for the analysis was extracted from movie corpora so that the comparison between British and American movies could be drawn in terms of the usage of a discourse marker *okay*. The film dialogue corpus was compiled by gathering text forms of movie scripts which were obtained on the Internet on Yts-sub.com. Accordingly, the film dialogue corpus is the convenient tool in the present study for investigating further. To compile a corpus of film dialogues, the computer program AntConc was used. Since this computer program prefers raw data in .text files, all movie scripts had to be transformed to such a file type. To prepare the raw data, firstly, scripts were saved as Microsoft Word files and exported in the form of text. In order to set up a corpus of film dialogue, the program computer AntConc was used to store 10 movie scripts which contain in total 87,932 words. Figure 1 presents the screen of Antcon.

**Figure 1.** Sample picture of AntConc program



The corpus of both British and American movies consisted of approximately 110,000 words. It was established that there were 242 occurrences of discourse marker *okay* in total. The scripts of all movies were carefully studied and the instances of the occurrence of the discourse markers *okay* were picked out. All instances of *okay* in which it was not utilized as a discourse marker were omitted. The following examples show these instances:

(1) *-Hey, focus. Lou, you gotta watch what I'm doing.*

*-Sorry*

*-That's right. He's going to be okay.*

(Me before you, 2016)

(2) *- She hasn't come come down yet.*

*- Just give me five minutes to make shure it's okay. You can't leave yet.*

(Criminal, 2014)

To conduct and analysis, Schiffrin's (1987) criteria for determining discourse markers was utilized:

- 1) it has to be syntactically detachable from a sentence;
- 2) commonly used in initial position of an utterance;

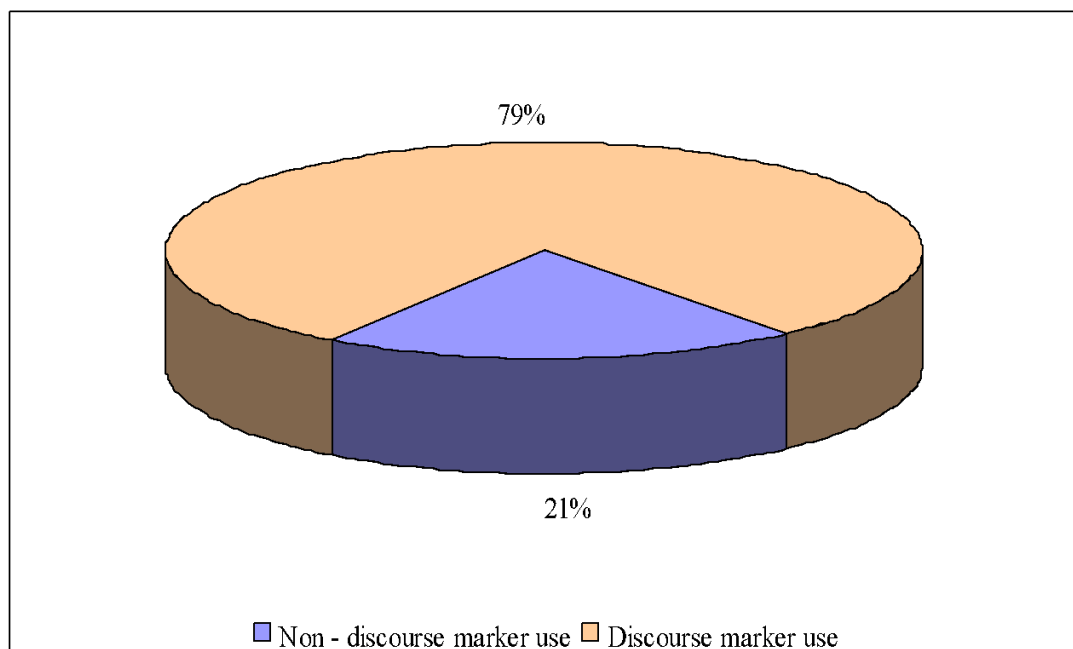
- 3) it has to have a range of prosodic contours;
- 4) it has to be able to operate at both local and global levels of discourse
- 5) has to be able to operate on different planes of discourse to be considered as a DM.

Secondly, the data was divided into two groups: the group of British movies and the group of American movies.

### 3. Results and discussion

All cases of *okay* used by actors in both British and American movies were studied carefully and later occurrences of the word *okay* that was used as a discourse marker were counted separately. As it was mentioned before, in the British corpus that consisted of 42,443 words the word *okay* was used 102 times, where it was used 81 times as a discourse marker, whereas American corpus made up 45,486 with 315 occurrences of the word *okay*, 256 of it was used as a discourse marker. The distribution of the word *okay* is presented in Figure 2, Table 6 and Figure 3 and Table 7.

**Figure 2.** Usage of the discourse marker and non-discourse marker *okay* in British movies.



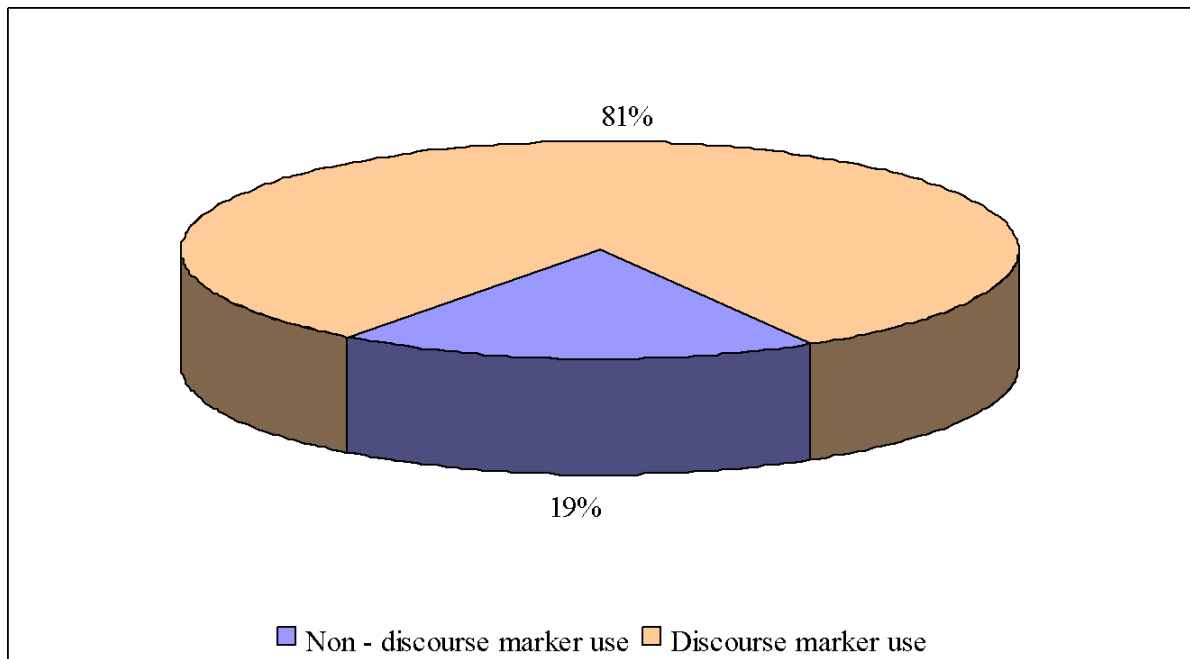
When analysing the usage of the word *okay* and the DM *okay* in certain films, it can be noticed from the data presented in Table 6 that the DM *okay* is used quite often in all the British movies analysed, and only single words *okay* are not used as a DM.

**Table 6.** Usage of the word "okay" and the DM "okay" in British movies.

Film	Duration	Year	Genre	Total running words	Okay (tokens in total)	okay (DM use)
<i>Dead Man's Shoes</i>	90 min	2004	Thriller, Crime	7 224	14	11
<i>Fish Tank</i>	120 min	2009	Drama	5 292	14	9
<i>Me before you</i>	111 min	2016	Romance, Drama	10 127	47	39
<i>T2 Traispotting</i>	117 min	2017	Comedy, Drama	8 935	9	7
<i>Kingsman The Golden Circle</i>	141 min	2017	Action, Comedy	10 865	18	15

The word *okay* is also more often used as a discourse marker in American movies (Fig. 3).

**Figure 3.** Usage of the discourse marker and non-discourse marker *okay* in American movies.



As it is also seen from the data presented in Table 7, the DM *okay* is used quite often in all American movies analysed, and only single words *okay*, as in British movies, are not used as a DM.

**Table 7.** Usage of the word *okay* and the DM *okay* in American movies.

Film	Duration	Year	Genre	Total running words	Okay words	DM okay
<i>Criminal</i>	87 min	2004	Thriller, Crime	8 526	68	53
<i>Black swan</i>	108 min	2010	Drama	5 653	40	30
<i>Central Intelligence</i>	116 min	2016	Action, Comedy	15 447	129	112
<i>Loving</i>	125 min	2016	Romance, Drama	5 867	31	20
<i>Gifted</i>	101 min	2017	Comedy, Drama	9 996	47	41

As the number of words in British and American movies varies, it is important to estimate the frequency of usage of the word *okay* and of the DM *okay*. The raw frequencies then are:

**British movies** = *okay* words 102 per 42,443 words

**British movies** = DM *okay* 81 per *okay* words 102

**American movies** = *okay* words 315 per 45,486 words

**American movies** = DM *okay* words 256 per *okay* words 315

The frequency of usage of the words is calculated according to the formula provided by the Grammar lab:

$$\frac{102}{42443} = \frac{x}{10000} \quad (1)$$

Where x (our normalised frequency) per 10 000 words.

$$x=24$$

After having calculated the frequency of usage of the word *okay* and normalised their frequencies, it turned out that the word *okay* (more than 3.3 times) and the DM *okay* (almost 1.6 times) appeared more often in American movies.

The second aim of the present study was to provide what functions the DM *okay* performs in movies. As it was mentioned before, the DM *okay* can be attributed to the

interpersonal and structural categories. Their functions in the interpersonal category might be showing responses (agreement, confirmation, acknowledgement) and in the structural category - opening and closing of topics (Fung, Carter 2007 cf. Arya 2020). Other scholars also point out that the DM *okay* can be used at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the conversation (Filipi, Wales 2003 cf. Vickers, Goble 2011; Othman 2010; Gaines 2011), it can also help to check comprehension + can reassure, express satisfaction, understand or direct (Othman 2010; Gaines 2011). Whereas, according to Beach (1993), the DM *okay* is usually used at the beginning of the sentence or in the statement as a signifier that the present action is finished and the second is about to start - it can be attributed to the structural category or to opening topics.

The DM *okay* in the current study was also found to perform a range of functions when used by actors in movie dialogues. The functions in the interpersonal category and the statements illustrating this are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8.** DM *okay* functions in the interpersonal category in British movies.

Functions	Film name	DM <i>okay</i>	Examples
Showing responses: Response Elicitors Okay?	<i>Dead Man's Shoes</i>	5	- And when you're here, you've got to abide by my rules. <i>Okay?</i> - Hey man how you doing'? Rich. You okay?
	<i>Fish Tank</i>	1	- Come on. - You <i>okay?</i>
	<i>Me before you</i>	7	- You like clothes? - I don't do much, <i>okay?</i> - Is he <i>okay?</i> - He's not great. Bit of a chill.
	<i>T2 Traispotting</i>	5	- <i>Okay?</i> - No, Simon. - Well, calm down, <i>okay?</i>
	<i>Kingsman The Golden Circle</i>	5	- You feeling <i>okay?</i> - I'm a little tired, but fine, thanks. - Are you <i>okay?</i> What happened? - Just give me five minutes, <i>okay?</i>
	<i>Dead Man's Shoes</i>	4	- Enjoy yourself, man - <i>Okay</i> , Weir.

Agreement, confirmation, acknowledgement			- You gonna go upstairs and play on your computer before tea? - <i>Okay</i> .
	<i>Fish Tank</i>	4	- Only if you give me a discount. - All right then. A pound. - A pound, you plank. - <i>Okay</i> . Fair dues. - Just give her a prod. - It's <i>okay</i> . I've got her.
	<i>Me before you</i>	6	- Please, sit down. - Oh, <i>okay</i> . - please call and let me know. - <i>Okay</i> .
	<i>T2 Traispotting</i>		
	<i>Kingsman The Golden Circle</i>	2	Poppy, would you pass the sugar, please? - <i>Okay</i> . - Harry, it's <i>okay</i> . It's fine. They know that we know you.

As is seen from the data presented in Table 8, the response elicitors *okay?* are often used in British movies - they were used 23 times in five films, only slightly less – the DM *okay* was used 16 times for agreement, confirmation, acknowledgement.

The functions in the structural category and the statements illustrating this are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** The DM *okay* functions in the structural category in British movies.

Functions	Film name	DM <i>okay</i>	Examples
Opening topics	<i>Dead Man's Shoes</i>	-	-
	<i>Fish Tank</i>	2	- If it did, you'll get fish disease. - <i>Okay</i> . Do you see the fish in front of you? - <i>Okay</i> . You'll be grand. You'll be better in the morning.
	<i>Me before you</i>	4	- Um, <i>okay</i> , are there any other restaurants? - <i>Okay</i> . Would this be the right sort of thing to wear to a concert?
	<i>T2 Traispotting</i>	-	
	<i>Kingsman The Golden Circle</i>	2	- <i>Okay</i> , so your mystery bottle, huh? - <i>Okay</i> , as fabulous as your catalogue is..
	<i>Dead Man's Shoes</i>	2	- I'm really ashamed of myself for losing control.

Closing of topics			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Okay</i>, mate.</li> <li>- Yeah. I'll be around anyway.</li> <li>- Right, <i>okay</i>.</li> </ul>
	<i>Fish Tank</i>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I'm makin' tea.</li> <li>- <i>Okay</i>.</li> <li>- Number 17, please.</li> <li>- <i>Okay</i>.</li> </ul>
	<i>Me before you</i>	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I'm getting concerned about Will and I was wondering if you could just call me back.</li> <li>- <i>Okay</i>. Thanks. Bye.</li> <li>- I'm on my mobile, if you need me.</li> <li>- <i>Okay</i>.</li> </ul>
	<i>T2 Traispotting</i>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I don't like to think of you working there, <i>okay</i>?</li> <li>- <i>Okay</i>.</li> </ul>
	<i>Kingsman The Golden Circle</i>	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I'm fine. Have a good day.</li> <li>- <i>Okay</i>.</li> <li>- you may shed a tear in private.</li> <li>- <i>Okay</i>.</li> </ul>

It can be noticed that the DM *okay* in the structural category in British movies is used more often than the DM *okay* in the interpersonal category in British movies. The DM *okay* was used for opening topics 8 times, and for closing of topics 36 times in 5 films; so in total 44 times, while the DM *okay* in the interpersonal category was used 39 times. However, after having analysed the films, it was noticed that the DM *okay* which is used in the interpersonal category, i.e. for agreement, confirmation, acknowledgment, is often simultaneously used also for closing of topics. Also Gaines (2011) stated that the DM *okay* can simultaneously perform more than one function and emphasized that *okay* can play more than one structural role in the talk-in-interaction, e.g., closing/opening, appearing in different levels and boundaries in the organization of the discourse, so can a single instance combine several discourse acts in a variety of combinations, e.g., checking for understanding + reassuring, checking for understanding + deflecting imagined suspicion, closing + reassuring + expressing satisfaction, etc." (3292). Thus, 22 cases in closing of topics out of 36 cases can be attributed to the interpersonal category (agreement, confirmation, acknowledgment), and 9 cases out of 16 cases assigned to the interpersonal category (agreement, confirmation, acknowledgment) can be attributed to the structural category (closing topics functions). Thus, it can be stated

that the DM *okay* was used 61 times in the interpersonal category and 53 times in the structural category in British movies.

The functions in the interpersonal category in American movies and the statements illustrating this are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10.** The DM *okay* functions in the interpersonal category in American movies.

Functions	Film name	DM okay	Examples
Showing responses: Response Elicitors Okay?	<i>Criminal</i>	23	- Dolores, you <i>okay</i> ? - Fine. - Keep her there, <i>okay</i> ? - I'll be right back.
	<i>Black swan</i>	3	- Is that <i>okay</i> ? - One more pull, <i>okay</i> ?
	<i>Central Intelligence</i>	18	- Hey, you play your chessboard however you like, <i>okay</i> ? - Just give me a second, <i>okay</i> ?
	<i>Loving</i>	6	- You gonna ask him to use the telephone and you gonna call Raymond and ask him to bring his gun, <i>okay</i> ? - Everything <i>okay</i> ?
	<i>Gifted</i>	7	- Go to the car, <i>okay</i> ? - Hey, you <i>okay</i> ? You good? All right.
Agreement, confirmation, acknowledgement	<i>Criminal</i>	13	- Look, I don't wanna be your friend, okay? - <i>Okay</i> . - His name is Brian. He's really nice. He's Spanish. - Oh, <i>okay</i> .
	<i>Black swan</i>	11	- It's that new girl from San Francisco. - <i>Okay</i> . - Your diaphragm is in a bit of a contraction. - <i>Okay</i> .
	<i>Central Intelligence</i>	37	- I'll save it. - <i>Okay</i> . - Just let me know if you need anything. - <i>Okay</i> .
	<i>Loving</i>	6	- Bring me that fresh water and take this one out. - <i>Okay</i> . - You all be good. - <i>Okay</i> , Daddy.

	<i>Gifted</i>	10	- Yup, I'm a really serious person. - Okay. - I can't do this. - Okay.
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It can be noticed that the DM *okay*, as response elicitors *okay*, was used 57 times and for agreement, confirmation, acknowledgment – 77 times in American movies. In general, the DM *okay* in the interpersonal category in American movies was used 134 times.

The functions in the structural category in American movies and the statements illustrating this are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11.** The DM *okay* functions in the structural category in American movies.

Functions	Film name	DM <i>okay</i>	Examples
Opening topics	<i>Criminal</i>	1	- Okay. I'm gonna give you 20 percent.
	<i>Black swan</i>	2	- Okay, that's beautiful. Let's start again from the beginning. - Okay, What about drinks?
	<i>Central Intelligence</i>	9	- Okay, listen to me. - Okay. How about we change the topic to something a little more fun?
	<i>Loving</i>	2	- Okay. I'm based in Alexandria, but I have an office in D.C. - Her water broke. - Okay. Take a breath. Take a breath. Breathe.
	<i>Gifted</i>	9	- Okay. Mary, I think you have something you'd like to say to the class. - Okay. The environment you have created for that child where she lives, the school she attends, it's substandard, every bit of it.
Closing of topics	<i>Criminal</i>	16	- No, wait. Come here. - Okay. - I'm coming down. - Okay.
	<i>Black swan</i>	14	- Okay. Guys, you can go. Thanks for your patience. - Have fun, you two. - Okay.
	<i>Central Intelligence</i>	48	- Get back in your office now! - Okay! - Relax, Mr. Joyner. I believe you. - Okay, thank you.

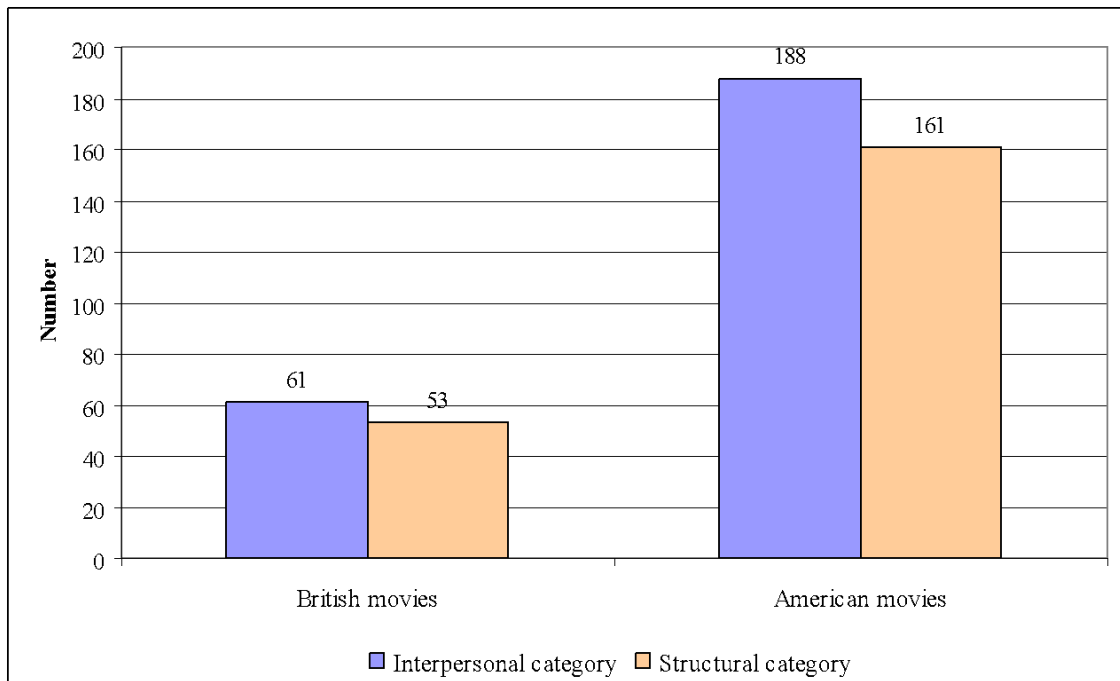
	<i>Loving</i>	6	- <i>Okay</i> . Thank you, folks, very much - Yes, I understand. - <i>Okay</i> .
	<i>Gifted</i>	15	- Let's forget it, <i>okay</i> ? - <i>Okay. Okay</i> . - I won't do it again, so don't be afraid of me. - <i>Okay</i> . Thank you.

As can be seen from the data presented in Table 11, the DM *okay* was used 23 times for opening topics and 99 times for closing of topics. In total, the DM *okay* in the structural category was used 122 times in American movies.

However, again the DM *okay* which is used in the interpersonal category, i.e. for agreement, confirmation, acknowledgment, is often simultaneously used for closing of topics. 54 cases out of 99 cases for closing of topics can also be assigned to the interpersonal category (agreement, confirmation, acknowledgement), whereas 39 cases of 77 cases attributed to the interpersonal category (agreement, confirmation, acknowledgement) can also be assigned to the structural category (closing topics functions). Thus, it can be stated that the DM *okay* was used 188 times in the interpersonal category and 161 times in the structural category in American movies.

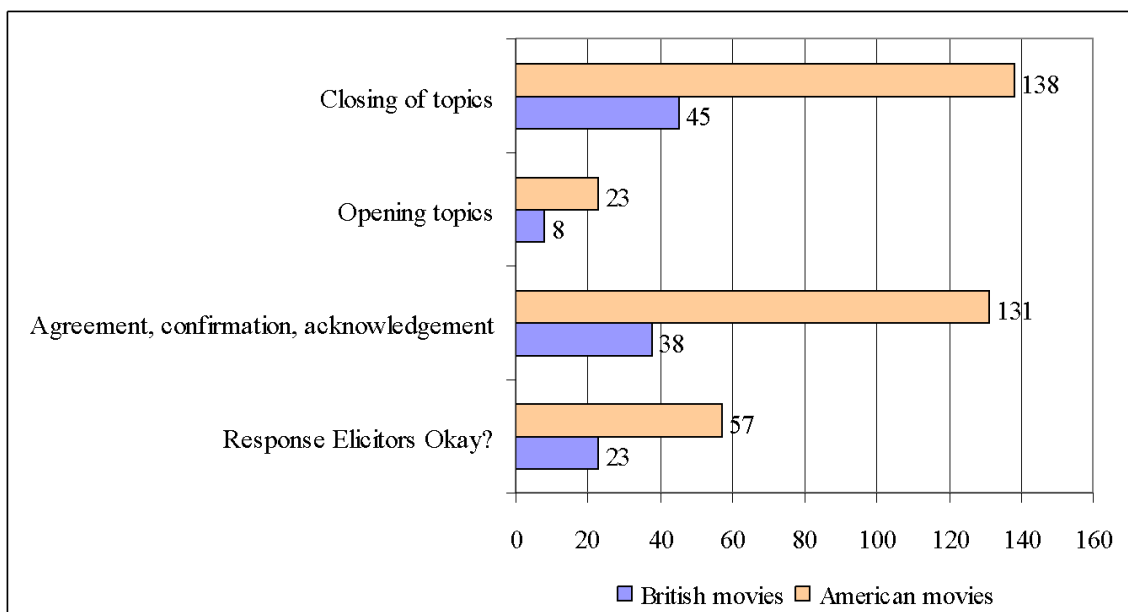
The usage of the DM *okay* by categories and functions in British and American films is presented in Figures 4 and 5.

**Figure 4.** Usage of the DM *okay* by categories in British and American movies.



It can be noticed that the DM *okay* is used quite often in both the interpersonal and structural categories in British and American movies, but the DM *okay* is used more often in the interpersonal category in British and American movies.

**Figure 5.** Usage of the DM *okay* by functions in British and American movies.



When analysing the usage of the DM *okay* by functions, it can be seen that the DM *okay* is most often used for closing of topics and for agreement, confirmation and acknowledgement in both British and American movies. It can be noticed that the DM *okay*

as a response elicitor *Okay?* is more often used in American movies; meanwhile it is less commonly used for opening topics in movies.

## 5. Conclusion

A discourse marker is words or word combinations with the lexical meaning that has little effect on the meaning of a sentence; when removed, the sentence structure remains unchanged, but the discourse marker performs the textual and interpersonal functions.

Having analysed 5 British and 5 American movies, it was found that in the British corpus that consisted of 42,443 words the word *okay* was used 102 times, where 81 times was used as a discourse marker, whereas American corpus made up of 45,486 words with 315 occurrences of word *okay*, 256 of it was used as a discourse marker. When the frequency of the discourse marker *okay* was compared (normalized their frequencies), it was found that the American movie utterances turned out to be the leading source - there the word *okay* was used more than 3,3 times and the DM *okay* was used almost 1,6 times more often in American movies.

The present study revealed that the DM *okay* is most commonly used in the interpersonal category in both British and American movies. According to its functions, it is most often used for agreement, confirmation and acknowledgement, as well as for closing of topic, whereas it is most rarely used for opening topics. It was noticed that the DM *okay* simultaneously performs more than one function in both British and American movies, i.e. it is simultaneously used both for agreement, confirmation, acknowledgement and for closing of topics.

In summary, it can be stated that the word *okay*, like the DM *okay*, is more commonly used in American movies. The DM *okay* is more often used in the interpersonal category in both British and American movies. Taking into account the DM usage functions, it was noticed that the DM *okay* simultaneously performs more than one function, i.e. the DM *okay* is simultaneously used for agreement, confirmation, acknowledgment and for closing of topics; besides, in terms of use, it is in these areas that it is most commonly used. Meanwhile it is most rarely used for opening topics.

## 6. Summary in Lithuanian

Diskurso žymekliai naudojami filmuose gali padėti žiūrovui suprasti filmo siužetą, sekti bei geriau pajauti įvykius vykstančius jame.

Šio darbo tiriamieji klausimai yra: kokiuose filmuose (Britų ar Amerikiečių) diskurso žymeklis *okay* dažniau naudojamas; ar skiriasi diskurso žymeklio *okay* panaudojimo funkcijos?

Darbo tikslas - išanalizuoti anglų kalbos diskurso žymeklio *okay* daugiafunkciškumą britų ir amerikiečių filmuose.

Uždaviniai: išanalizuoti teorinius diskurso žymenų aspektus; nustatyti kaip dažnai diskurso žymeklis *okay* naudojamas Britų ir Amerikos filmuose; ištirti ir palyginti diskurso žymeklio „gerai“ daugiafunkciškumą britų ir amerikiečių filmuose.

Tyrimo objektas - diskurso žymeklis *okay* Britų ir Amerikiečių filmuose.

Tyrimo metodai: kokybinis aprašomasis ir diskurso analizės metodai.

Išanalizavus 5 Britų bei 5 Amerikiečių filmus, nustatyta, kad tiek pats žodis *okay* tiek diskurso žymeklis *okay* 1,6 karto dažniau naudojamas Amerikiečių filmuose. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad tiek Britų tiek Amerikiečių filmuose diskurso žymeklis *okay* dažniausiai naudojamas tarpasmeniniame lygmenyje. Pagal funkcijas dažniausiai susitarimams, patvirtinimams bei temos uždarymui, rečiausiai - pradedant temą, pokalbį. Tiek Britų tiek Amerikiečių filmuose diskurso žymeklis *okay* tuo pačiu metu atlieka ne vieną funkciją - tuo pačiu metu naudojamas tiek susitarimams, patvirtinimams bei temos uždarymui.

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