

The Semantic and Pragmatic Functions of /bʕdm/ “بعدين” in Informal Arabic

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Received 10/26/2022

Accepted: 02/04/2023

Published: 02/24/2023

Abstract

This study aims at investigating the functions of the informal Arabic discourse marker “بعدين” /bʕdm/. By figuring out these functions and highlighting the common used ones, this paper tries to help communicators to be aware of those functions in their communication and avoid any possibility of misunderstanding. “Twitter” was the main tool of collecting the data of this study. This social medium provided natural communication contexts that significantly assisted the analysis of this study. The dataset consisted of one hundred and five tweets containing /bʕdm/. Those tweets reflected texts written by native Arabic speakers from different nationalities. The analysis was guided by the relevance theory and the methodology of related literature. The findings of the study showed that /bʕdm/ has semantic meanings similar to the English adverbs “then” and “later.” It was used semantically as a temporal adverb putting actions in sequence or delaying a move to unspecified time in the future. /bʕdm/ was also used as a coherence marker supporting the value of the communicative situations. In this respect and based on the collected data, seven pragmatic functions were elicited in this study for /bʕdm/. Those functions were: a marker of orientation shift, a marker of result, a conditional marker, a marker of disagreement, a coordination marker meaning “but,” a marker of agreement and a marker of reason.

Keywords: /bʕdm/ “بعدين”, coherence marker, discourse marker, informal Arabic, relevance theory

Cite as: Alqahtani, F. A. (2023). The Semantic and Pragmatic Functions of /bʕdm/ “بعدين” in Informal Arabic. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies* 7 (1). 46-59.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol7no1.4>

Introduction

Steele (2015) emphasizes the importance of successful communication. When the message is sent correctly and received properly, the process is said to be successful. He refers to the fact that this process is a complex one since the words we use can have implied meanings that need to be correctly interpreted by the receiver, or otherwise the process of communication fails.

To identify the process of communication whether socially, syntactically, semantically or pragmatically, language researchers rely on analyzing discourse- spoken or written language extending beyond an utterance (Holmes, 2013). Shiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton (2001) state that although discourse has received different definitions by different language scholars, all definitions agree that a discourse is anything “beyond the sentence” (p. 20). Discourse is the mirror of human language. The forms and functions whether at the surface or underlying levels of language are reflected in its discourse (Schiffrin, 1987). Studies on language discourse can greatly contribute to make the communicative process easier for the users of languages through predicting the indications a discourse can imbed.

This paper tries to analyze a sample discourse to investigate the different functions of an informal Arabic discourse marker. A discourse marker is “a particle that is used to direct or redirect the flow of conversation without adding any significant paraphrasable meaning to the discourse” (Nordquist, 2020). Schiffrin (1987) indicates that those ties and the involved inferences that include pragmatic and contextual perceptions can increase the cohesion of a linguistic text.

Since Discourse Markers (DMs) are multifunctional (Müller, 2005), understanding the different functions of those discourse markers can guarantee the success of the communicative mission of language. The role of context is crucial here to identify what function of a DM is intended. Although some functions of a DM are more commonly used in spoken and written contexts, understanding the other minor functions can minimize the effort in understanding the message intended in a specific text containing that DM under discussion (Alkhaldeh, 2018).

The present study aims to investigate the possible functions of an Arabic DM “بعدين” /bʕdɪn/ (then, later) using the relevance theory developed by Wilson and Sperber in 1986. Al Kayed (2021), in his study of the DM *hasa* in Jordanian Arabic, presented a thorough and excellent reviewing of the previous studies on DMs using relevance theory. He ended his survey with the conclusion that more studies are needed to explore more Arabic discourse markers.

By investigating the functions of the DM /bʕdɪn/, this study hopes to add a worthy thing to the previous literature in this field. /bʕdɪn/ is an informal Arabic marker. It is more commonly used in spoken and informal writing.

Although discourse markers have semantic meanings, they also have pragmatic meanings that are only understood from the contexts in which they occur. So having studies on language discourse markers call considerable attention to make it easier for the users of languages to predict the different functions of a discourse marker, whether as a sender or receiver of a communicative context. This study tries to contribute to this field. It tries to investigate the different meanings and functions of the informal Arabic discourse marker /bʕdɪn/ to help the speakers of Arabic to be

aware of those functions in their communication and avoid any possibility of misunderstanding a text containing /bʕdm/.

This paper tries to answer the following research questions:

- 1- What are the meanings and functions of the Arabic discourse marker /bʕdm/?
- 2- What are the functions that are most commonly used?
- 3- What is the relationship between the function of /bʕdm/ and its syntactic position in a sentence?

By analyzing the underlying meanings of /bʕdm/ in the selected data, the paper hopefully ends up with appropriate answers that formulate the main findings of the present study.

Literature Review

Based on the fact that context is within the study of coherence and achieving coherence goes beyond words and phrases (Schiffrin et al., 2001), the analysis of discourse markers in general is crucial in this area. Discourse markers are used constantly by speakers to connect their ideas but not always to convey their direct or semantic meanings. These markers also carry meanings that are context-dependent (Scheler & Fischer, 1997) and here emerges the importance of knowing the hidden meanings of a discourse marker beyond the uttered words and phrases. Studying discourse markers has received interest from linguists for the aim of strengthening the process of communication and making it as understandable as possible for both the sender and the receiver.

Arab researchers have felt this necessity and started to pay a noticeable interest to the study of the different Arabic discourse markers, whether formal or informal. Those studies have tried to show the various meanings and functions of some discourse markers that are commonly used in Arabic.

The pragmatic functions of the Arabic discourse marker /Ĥayib/ (ok) and its cognate /tabb/ (ok) in Jordanian Spoken Arabic have been studied by Alharahsheh (2013). The study has reported that this discourse marker with its cognate convey ten pragmatic functions in Jordanian Spoken Arabic: a marker of backchannel, to mean “stop, let us understand the matter”, a break to show objection, an introduction of a new topic, softener for the disagreement force, a marker of challenge or confrontation, to signal the end of discourse, a message to the interlocutor to be patient, to give permission and they can be used as gap fillers.

Alazzawie (2014) tried to identify the functions of the Arabic connective word /wa/ (and). The study involved syntactic, semantic and pragmatic analysis. It classified the functions of /wa/ into: Initiator of discourse, conjunction, marker of temporal and manner adjuncts and marker of Associative and Path semantic roles. The study calls for more study in this field, and if possible compare the functions in Arabic and English.

Bidaoui (2016) identified the discourse markers used by three Arabic varieties: Moroccan, Egyptian and Algerian to express the meaning of elaboration. Twenty-four participants representing the three Arabic varieties took part in the study. The data collected included 12 informal multi-party conversation sessions and 21 sessions of structured interviews. The use of

DMs has been found to be affected by social factors: nationality and the type of interaction. Concerning nationality, the Algerian participants used more diverse DMs for elaboration than any other group. The most frequent elaboration DM is /yaʕni/ (I mean), which is used by the three nationalities. Regarding the type of interaction: /yʕni/ was highly used in structured interviews compared to same nationality informal conversations since it is shared among all nationalities. Other DMs registered in the study are highly used within participants of the same nationality to indicate local identity.

Al-Khawaldeh (2018) showed the functions of the discourse marker /kama/ (like) in Arabic journalistic discourse: Aljazeera.net and Alarabia.net. The discourse marker /kama/ occurred 290 times in the chosen corpus which approved its everyday use in the Arabic journalistic discourse. Four common functions were investigated, including elaboration, similarity, evidence and exemplification.

Alrajhi (2019) examined the meanings and functions of the informal Arabic DM /ʔlhin/ (now). She found that it can function as a temporal adverb and a coherence marker. Besides using /ʔlhin/ as an adverb meaning “now,” her study showed other pragmatic functions, including ideational shifting, raising the possibility of disagreement, marking a reason, engaging in negotiation and orientation shift.

The Arabic discourse marker /Lakin/ (but) was examined by Alsager, Afzal, and Aldawood (2020). The study investigated the functions and positions of /Lakin/ in newspaper articles compared with the English discourse marker “but.” The study’s findings showed that /Lakin/ is used mainly as a confirmation or addition marker by both native and non-native speakers. Also, it functions as the primary correction DM in standard Arabic. A third finding was that despite the enormous diversity in Arab dialects, they share the typical functions of /Lakin/. Concerning position, their study found that /Lakin/ appeared in the medial position.

Hamdan and Abu Rumman (2020) found out the pragmatic functions of /ya:hummala:li/ (Yahummalali) in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. When familiarity exists, the functions are identified. The study reveals nineteen pragmatic functions for Yahummalali, including disapproval, fear, condemnation, disappointment, mitigating exaggerated claims, wishing, expressing sadness, regret, dissatisfaction, shock, making threats, ridiculing, expressing anger, jealousy, desperation, surprise, sarcasm, indecisiveness and doubt or uncertainty.

Al Kayed (2021) observed the DM /hasa/ (now) in Jordanian Arabic. The study found that besides the adverbial meaning of /hasa/, it developed as a discourse marker conveying different functions. The study also showed that with its functions, it constraints the hearer to proper interpretations of an utterance.

Alshammary (2021) conducted a study to find out the functions of two Arabic discourse markers, /qSdk/ (you mean) and /yʕny/ (this means). Her data was based on texts written in Saudi Arabic. The study concluded that /qSdk/ serves three procedural meanings: asking for clarification, correction and making irony, whereas /yʕny/ serves the procedural meanings of clarification and asking for clarification.

Rania Habib (2021) used quantitative and traditional variationist sociolinguistic methods to examine the Syrian Arabic variable use of the interchangeable DMs /yaʕni/ and /ʔinnu/ (I mean/it means). Her data included speech of 22 adult couples and 50 children from the village of Oyoun Al-Wadi in Syria. Age and gender were observed factors in her study. Children and women showed more tendency to use /ʔinnu/. Women used more /ʔinnu/ than men and boys use more /ʔinnu/ than girls. According to the linguistic distribution, /ʔinnu/ occurred more in medial position and /yaʕni/ in initial position.

From the above survey, it is obvious that this field still needs more studies on other Arabic discourse markers. It also shows that the Arabic discourse marker /bʕdɪn/ “بعدين” (then, later) was never studied before. With the help of methods and procedures of analysis used in the previously mentioned studies and other significant works in this field on the top of which are *Discourse Markers* by Deborah Schiffrin in 1987, and *Discourse markers: Tutorial overview* by Lawrence Schourup in 1999, this study tries to contribute to this area of linguistic research by shedding some light on the different functions of the informal Arabic DM /bʕdɪn/ “بعدين” and the relation between those functions and their syntactic positions in utterances.

Method

This study relies on the relevance theory developed by Wilson and Sperber in 1986. Relevance theory as simply explained by Wilson (2016) looks at discourse comprehension as a process of inferences of sentences uttered by speakers in communicative contexts. It ends with interpretation of the intended meaning of that speaker.

Language is mainly used to deliver an intended message. Relevance theory implies that humans process the input within its context to make the most of relevance to achieve the value of the communicative process (Yus, 2006). Defining the implications of discourse markers, according to the framework of the relevance theory, goes beyond understanding the literal meanings of those markers (Blakemore, 2002). Instead, this process emphasizes the effect of contextual relations of utterances that results in deriving the relevant and intended meanings of the speech.

Participants

The sample of the study is a number of Arabic native-speakers communicative contexts on one of the most widely used social media channels “Twitter.” The search was guided by the word (يعني). The gained results have been revised to eliminate all the repeated or inappropriate tweets. The communicators are of different Arab nationalities and ages. The study is interested in how the DM under study is used in their utterances to convey different functions. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively. The functions of /bʕdɪn/ used in different contexts by Arab speakers were raised as a central goal of the present study.

Research Instruments

This study is a corpus-based one. The discourse includes messages and comments written by Arab speakers on Twitter. The number of texts through which the different functions of the Arabic discourse marker /بعدن/ are analyzed is one hundred and five.

Analysis and Findings

Based on the collected contexts, the DM /بعدن/, has semantic and pragmatic meanings. Semantically, on the one hand, the meaning of /بعدن/ is revealed from an adverbial use as a marker of temporal. It is used in two ways. The first one is similar to the meaning of the English adverb “then.” It puts actions or texts in sequence. The second semantic meaning indicates accomplishing an action lately at unknown or unspecified time, just like the English adverb “later.” Pragmatically, on the other hand, /بعدن/ is used to infer pragmatic connections between texts. It achieves coherence of contexts.

From the texts extracted from Twitter, it is clear that /بعدن/ is a standard marker used by Arab speakers. The analysis shows that 41% of the tweets represent the adverbial or semantic meanings of the DM /بعدن/ and the rest (59%) reveal pragmatic functions that play a role in achieving coherence of contexts. The following figure shows these percentages of the functions of /بعدن/:

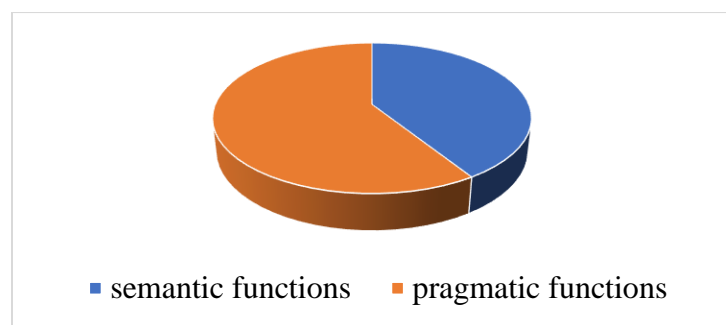


Figure 1. The percentages of semantic and pragmatic functions of /بعدن/

/بعدن/ as an Adverb of Time

Data analysis has shown a high percentage of using /بعدن/ as a marker of temporal which is 41%. In this respect, /بعدن/ is used in some tweets to indicate a sequence of actions and is comprehended as the English adverb “then” or to show that an action is done lately at unspecified time, and here it is interpreted like the English adverb “later.” The percentage of using /بعدن/ as an adverb referring to time (41%) is divided as follows between the two previous meanings:

Meaning “then”: 21%

Meaning “later”: 20%

The following examples show some tweets in which /بعدن/ is used semantically as an adverb of time:

(1) /εiðæ tɪbghæ ʃei ʔedʕlɔ:bəh bɪwədʕo:h wæ bɪðo:n tærædɔd kmærhæləh ʔo:læ
bʕdm tefæwædʕ/

If want thing ask it clearly and without hesitation as stage first then negotiate.

If you want a thing, ask for it without hesitation as a first stage then negotiate.

In example one, the speaker is providing advice for someone on how to ask for something. He is telling him that it is better to start strongly asking something that he deserves as a first step, then he moves to the next step, which is negotiation. So, here the DM /bʕdm/ is used to adverbially to put actions in order or sequence.

(2) /bæsæwɪ: kɪðæ bæʕ **bʕdm** ʔlɦɪm mæɪɪ: xɛɪg/

Will do like-this but later now I have no mood.

I will do like this but later, I am not in the mood now.

In example two, the speaker, upon asking to follow a specific way to do something, assures that he will do it like that but not at that moment because he is not in the right mood. Here the speaker uses the DM /bʕdm/ adverbially to indicate a time in the future that is not specified. He doesn't give a specific time for doing that action but, as inferred from the context, the action will be done sometime later.

Syntactically, it is noticed that the adverb /bʕdm/ does not occur in the initial position of an utterance. When meaning “later,” it generally comes at the end of utterances.

“bʕdm” as a Discourse Marker – Indicator of the Coherence of Texts

Besides the semantic use of /bʕdm/, the data collected shows some pragmatic uses of this DM. The analysis of the collected tweets investigates that /bʕdm/ is used for connecting ideas of texts 62 times out of the 105 texts under study. These uses include the following:

A Marker of Disagreement

(3) /**bʕdm** wɪʃ ʔɪmɔtæsæbɪɪ:n mæ jɛnædʕɪfɔ:n ʔlghɔbær/

Then why competitors not clean the dust.

Then why the competitors don't clean the dust.

In example three, the speaker clearly disagrees with the idea that the competitors are not asked to participate in cleaning the dust. /bʕdm/ is used here to connect this text with a previous one in which the speaker understood that cleaning the dust is not a part of the competitors' responsibility and didn't like that idea.

(4) /**bʕdm** mɪ:n gæl ʔɪ:nɔ ʔɪbærɪ læzɪm tɛkɔ:n wɑɪt/

Then who said that the Barbie must be white.

Then who said that the Barbie must be white.

In example four, the speaker uses /bʕdm/ to show his disagreement with the idea stated in a previous text that the character of Barbie must be white.

A Marker of Agreement

In the data analyzed, just two examples are found to support this use. This might indicate a fact that /bʕdm/ is rarely used to convey this function. Generally, /bʕdm/ comes in the initial position when meaning “agreement.”

(5) /bʕdm/ it is attractive what does she mean/

Then it is attractive what she means.

In example five, the speaker uses /bʕdm/ - the informal Arabic DM- then completes his sentence in English. /bʕdm/ is used here to show agreement on what she said.

(6) /bʕdm/ ʔi: ʔnæ ghæri:bəh dʒɪdæn/

Then yes, I weird very.

Then yes, I am very weird.

In example six, the speaker starts his utterance with /bʕdm/ to express her agreement on what has been said about her.

A Marker of Result

Most of the examples elicited under this function express a result that is undesirable.

(7) /læ tɛgædɛm tædʰɪjəh mæhæd tʰæləbhæ mɪnæk bʕdm tɪ:dʒɪ tæsʊm ʔæðænɛnæ/

Not give sacrifice no one asked it from you then come deafen ears our.

Don't give a sacrifice no one asked you to do, then you come and deafen our ears.

In example seven, the speaker advises someone not to provide any sacrifices without being asked. Then the speaker uses /bʕdm/ to introduce a clause in which the speaker mentions the undesirable result of doing that.

(8) /mʊʃkɪləh læmæ ʔstæhɪ: ʔsæwɪ: ʔʌnfɛləʊ ɪʔʃxæsʰ bʕdm ʔlɔm hæ mɪnhʊm/

Problem when ashamed I do unfollow for people then I regret from them.

It is a problem- when I feel ashamed, I unfollow some people which I regret later.

In example eight, the speaker uses /bʕdm/ to mention the result of doing unfollow to some people when feeling ashamed. They make him regret doing that.

A Marker of Reason

In two of the collected contexts, /bʕdm/ is used to introduce a reason of preferring or recommending an action upon another. This might indicate the less use of /bʕdm/ as a marker of reason based on the present data.

(9) /xɪlɪ:k tɛfækɛr tɛʃtæri: kærævæn ʔrxæsʰ wɪ ʔwfær bʕdm ʔlkærævæn læ jɪ:dʒɪ ʃlɛɪh ʔi:zæləh wælæ ʔəbɪ:lɛk mʊhændɪsɪ:n wɪ rʊxæsʰ bælədɪjæh wɪ tɛgdər tæxðəh mʃæk ɪðæ sæfərt/

Let yourself think buy caravan cheaper and safer, then the caravan not come on it remove or need engineers and licenses municipality and can-you take it with you when travel.

Think of buying a caravan which is cheaper and safer, then the caravan no directions for removal are received, and you don't need either engineers or municipality licenses, and you can take it with you when you travel.

In example nine, the speaker advises the listener to buy a caravan then he uses /bʕdm/ to introduce texts mentioning the reasons of why it is better to buy a caravan.

A Marker of Orientation Shift

This function is the most commonly used among all other pragmatic functions based on the study's data. Generally, /bʕdm/ comes at the beginning of the commentary texts.

(10) /tɛʔæli wi xæli ʔlʔʕhæl **bʕdm** ʔʃ ʃəghæl jə muʕliməh mə hʊ: minhæf/

Come and leave work then work Muslim not run away.

Come and leave work then, Muslim, work doesn't run away.

In example 10, the speaker asks the listener to come for a while and have a break from work, then he uses /bʕdm/ to make a shift commenting on the whole situation that work has no end and it doesn't run away, she can come back and finish that work.

(11) /ʔlhim ʔæmænə beləh ʔənəh tɛʕəgəb bəs leif məhəd təkælæm wi gæl ʔenu
mɑmno:ʕ **bʕdm** hæðə ʔlʕigəb min mi:n min ʔlʔi:dærəh wælə ʔbu: kætɪm wælə kɛl ʃəxsʕ
jɛʕtʕi: gærær min dʒihəh/

Now believe in God that punish-him but why no one speak and say it is forbidden then this punishment from-whom from the administration or abu Katim or everyone give a decision from side-him.

Now we believe that he was punished but no one said that it is forbidden then who put this punishment? The administration or Abu-Katim or anyone can give a decision?

In example 11, the speaker talks about a punishment taken by someone. He shifts to commenting on that situation by questioning some ideas related to that punishment- the source of that punishment and not announcing the decisions before giving punishments.

A conditional Marker

Here the DM **bʕdm** is functioning pragmatically to indicate that for someone to be eligible to do an action, he/she needs to accomplish some priorities. /bʕdm/ comes in the middle of the utterances. It connects a condition or priority to an action one is not eligible to do yet.

(12) /ʔɪnt ʔædɛl ʔɪmlæʔk ʔwæl **bʕdm** səʕlif ʕn ʔlkʊ:rəh/

You correct your spelling first, then talk about football.

Correct your spelling first, then talk about football.

In example 12, the speaker puts priorities before talking about football. He says knowing how to write correctly without spelling mistakes is before writing comments on football matches.

(13) /leɪtkʊm tɛntɛgdu:n fəgrætkʊm ʔɛli mə təʔdælæt **bʕdm** ʔəntɛgdu: ʃɛʔrɛhəm/
Wish you judge your items that not modified, then judge their poetry

I wish you judge your items that have never been modified, then you judge their poetry.

In example 13, the speaker puts a prior action of judging others' poetry. He says before doing that you should first evaluate your content, that has never been changed or modified.

Coordinating Marker Meaning “but”

Four tweets out of the collected 105 tweets have shown this function. /bʕdm/ is used to mean “but.” In those tweets, some actions didn’t happen because some factors prevented them. Here /bʕdm/ introduces the reason why something didn’t happen.

(14) /gɛlt kjʊ:t **bʕdm** tɛðækərt sʕautəh wɪ kənsælt/

Said-I cute then recognized his voice and cancelled.

I said cute but I recognized his voice and cancelled.

In example 14, the speaker said that he described someone as being cute, but he recognized that the voice of that person was not that good, so he cancelled what he said before. Generally, **bʕdm**, carrying this function, doesn’t come in the initial position.

(15) /bɛdɪ ʔstæfsɪr tʕʊləb akbər mənɪ: ʕn ʔldʒædwəl **bʕdm** ʔektæʃəft ʔɪnoh sʕɛrnæ

ʔɪhnæ ʔtʕ tʕʊləb ʔlkɪbær/

I want ask students older than me about the-schedule then remember that become we students old.

I want to ask students who are older than me about the schedules but I remembered that we became the senior students.

In example 15, the speaker wanted to ask seniors about the schedules, but he couldn’t because he discovered he is the senior student. The DM /bʕdm/ is used to mean “but.”

It is evident, from the examples presented in this part, that the pragmatic functions of the DM /bʕdm/ dominate its use in Arabs’ daily communication. A marker of agreement, disagreement, reason, result, orientation shift, condition and coordination meaning “but” are the main pragmatic functions found in this study.

Discussion

/bʕdm/ as a Discourse Marker

/bʕdm/ is tested as being a DM against the characteristics of DMs identified by Schourup (1999) as follows:

- **Connectivity:** A DM connects parts of discourse. /bʕdm/ achieves this characteristic in examples like:

/læ tɛhʊtʕ mɛlh zɪ:ʒædəh, **bʕdm** Tɛgʊ:l ʔəxbær ʔldʕəʒhtʕ/.

Don’t put salt more, then say what about pressure.

Don’t put more salt, then you ask about blood pressure.

- **Optionality:** This characteristic means that the discourse is acceptable without the existence of the DM. An example approving this is:

/ʔɪ:wæ ʔɪ:wæ kəmɛl/ (**bʕdm**).

Yes yes, complete (then what).

- **Non-truth conditionality:** If the DM doesn’t affect the truth of the utterance, it achieves this characteristic. An example of this is:

/bʕdm wələh klɒb hæʊs hæd ɪsm sændwɪtʃəh ənæ/.

Then in God clubhouse this name sandwich here.

Then swear in God, this club house is a name of a sandwich for us.

/wələh klʌb hɑʊs hæd ɪsm sændwɪtʃəh ənæ/.

In God clubhouse this name sandwich here.

Swear in God, this clubhouse is a name of a sandwich for us.

- **Weak-clause association:** Here, the DM is out of the structure of the sentence, for example:

/bæsæwɪ: kɪðæ bæʕ (bʕdɪn) ʔlħɪn mæɪɪ: xɛlg/.

I do like this (later) now no interest.

I'll do like this, now I have no interest.

- **Initiality:** About 20% of the occurrence of /bʕdɪn/ in the data collected is in the initial position.
- **Orality:** /bʕdɪn/ is mainly used in Arabic spoken discourse, and when used in written, that discourse is informal.

From the above analysis of the Tweets containing the DM /bʕdɪn/, this marker is not always used by speakers to convey its direct or semantic meanings (Schiffrin et al., 2001). It is also used pragmatically to achieve coherence of contexts. Seven functions have been detected in this study for /bʕdɪn/ as a coherence marker. Based on the frequency of occurrence in the collected data - from high to low - those functions are: orientation shift, a marker of reason, a conditional marker, a marker of disagreement, coordinating marker meaning “but,” then a marker of agreement and a marker of reason come at the end with the same frequency.

The questions of the study were viewed in the following way:

1. What are the meanings and functions of the Arabic discourse marker /bʕdɪn/?

Besides the semantic meanings of /bʕdɪn/, the present study investigated seven pragmatic functions of the informal Arabic DM /bʕdɪn/. Based on the analysis of the study, /bʕdɪn/ is used as a marker of agreement, disagreement, result, reason orientation shift, condition, and coordination.

2. What are the functions that are most commonly used?

The following table shows the percentage of occurrence of the semantic and the pragmatic functions of /bʕdɪn/.

Table 1. Percentage of occurrence of /bʕdɪn/ functions

Function		Percentage	
Semantic Functions	Adverb of time meaning “then”	21%	41%
	Adverb of time meaning “later”	20%	
	Marker of agreement	2%	
	Marker of disagreement	8.5%	

Pragmatic Functions	Marker of result	13.3%	59%
	Marker of reason	2%	
	Marker of coordination	3.8%	
	Marker of orientation shift	18%	
	Conditional marker	11.4%	

From the above table and out of the nine observed functions of /bʕdɪn/, the function that is most commonly used is as an adverb of time. On the other hand and when comparing semantic and pragmatic usage the DM /bʕdɪn/ in general, it is noticeable that it is used pragmatically more than semantically as follows:

Semantic usage = 41%

Pragmatic usage (a coherence marker) = 59%

The percentage of 59 is distributed among seven functions.

3. What is the relationship between the function of /bʕdɪn/ and its syntactic position in a sentence?

The analysis of the data could figure out the following points concerning this question:

- As a marker of time (adverb), /bʕdɪn/ is generally found at the end of the text when it conveys the meaning of the English adverb “later,” but when it is used to indicate a series of actions carrying the meaning of the English adverb “then,” it generally comes at the beginning of the following action or actions in the series but not the first.
- /bʕdɪn/ generally comes at the beginning of the clause that agrees or disagrees with a previous idea. /bʕdɪn/ usually comes at the opening of the context of a person expressing his/her attitude towards an action or thought.
- /bʕdɪn/ also introduces the clause that shows the results or the reasons of doing or preferring an action. So, it never comes at the beginning of someone’s context. The speaker starts saying something or delivering advice then he uses /bʕdɪn/ to mention the reasons that support his idea or pay someone’s attention to undesirable results of doing an action.
- As a coordinator marker, /bʕdɪn/ connects two actions: the first is an action that couldn’t be done or completed and the second tells why that action didn’t happen. /bʕdɪn/ occurs in the middle of the context, connecting the two actions.
- As an orientation shift marker, /bʕdɪn/ has no specific appearance in the context, but rarely at the end of someone’s utterance. Based on the collected data, it has been found at the beginning of an utterance commenting on a previous context, or within someone’s speech conveying the same purpose. The comment usually comes on the form of interrogative sentence.
- As a conditional marker, the utterance starts with mentioning an action that has priority on the coming action, which is introduced by /bʕdɪn/. /bʕdɪn/ here connects the two actions.

The first one should be fulfilled first to proceed to the other action. /bʕdm/ occurs between the two actions.

Conclusion

This study investigates the different functions of the informal Arabic discourse marker /bʕdm/. The findings of this study were extracted from a collection of 105 tweets of Arabic native speakers. The analysis of those tweets containing /bʕdm/ showed that this informal DM is used to provide adverbial information in two ways, putting actions in sequence like the adverb “then” or indicating doing or completing an action lately at unspecified time. It is also used as a coherence marker. The analysis elicited 7 functions: a marker of agreement, disagreement, reason, result, orientation shift, condition, and coordinator. Based on the relevance theory that guided this study, knowing the different functions of /bʕdm/ can limit the listener to specific interpretations of delivered contexts and make the process of communication comprehensive and effective, leading to understanding the intended meaning. This reflects the definition of linguistic constraints stated by Blache (2000, 222) that /bʕdm/ is a discourse marker with functions that play crucial role in interpreting contexts and can limit or constraint communicators to relevant readings of the communicative contexts.

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