



## REPAIR AND REFORMULATION FUNCTIONS OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN FICTIONAL SPEECH

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**Abstract.** *This work focuses on the question of how discourse markers like I mean, that is, and rather serve as means of repair and reformulation in fictional dialogue. The use of these phrases allows speakers to adjust meaning, explain their thought process, clarify previous meaning, clear up, correct or restructure the order in conversation. Although these phrases are usually used for conversational uses and spoken ideas, they can also be found in literary dialogue, often serving as aids to a sense of realism, and as reflections of the way the character is thinking. The analysis also brings to light pragmatic and stylistic function of such markers and the ways in which repair and reformulation within fiction work to improve textual coherence, develop characterizations, and fashion a sense of what real communication means.*

**Key words:** *discourse, discourse marker, pragmatic marker, spoken discourse.*

### INTRODUCTION

Discourse markers are units that represent how one part of language is related to another in a linguistic context and guide communication. They function as elements that depend on the order of conversation, Schiffirin writes, and serve to frame segments of interaction.<sup>5</sup> In everyday spoken communication, expressions like I mean, that is, and rather commonly function as acts of repair and reformulation. Repair involves adjusting or correcting something that has already been said; reformulation means rephrasing an idea in order to make it clearer or more precise. Writers also use these markers purposefully in imaginative speech to mirror the back and forth of the natural spoken language and the inner thinking processes of their characters.

Discourse markers are linguistic markers which do not have major propositional significance but are important to control discourse and convey the speaker's intention. The pragmatic and interactional roles of communication in mediating the discourse have been emphasized by scholars in this vein including

<sup>5</sup> Schiffirin, D. Discourse markers. Cambridge University Press. 1987. -273p



Schiffrin, Fraser, and Blakemore. Repair means to adjust or correct what had been said in the past, and reformulation means to describe something more precisely (or simply in a slightly clearer way). These processes mimic natural spoken dialogue and show characters' modes of thought in fictional dialogue.

A discourse marker *I mean* often introduces self-repair in fictional dialogue. It communicates that a character realizes they may need to clarify, soften or adjust something that had come before. For example, "*It was lousy - I mean, it wasn't exactly lousy, but it wasn't great either*"<sup>6</sup>. Here *I mean* indicates pauses and emotional recalculation. The narrator is unclear and subjective in what he assesses. *I mean* might also be used as elaborative repair, by which the speaker amplifies (or expounds on), rather than corrects, an idea. That device plays a role in constructing psychological realism and natural conversation in fiction.

*That is* usually brings forth explicit reformulation or detail, not spontaneous hesitation. You do not make it used when you have more philosophical or formal speaking formality. Likewise, to exemplify, "*She was his relation - that is, his cousin on his mother's side*"<sup>7</sup>. In that sense, that increases the textual consistency and demonstrates speakers as deliberate and articulate. And by contrast, *I mean*, this feels more intentional and intellectual.

Reformulation and Contrast with *rather* and other words that used to be used. The marker does corrective and contrastive reformulation rather than contradiction. It substitutes a more precise or complex description for a first-draft one. For example, likewise, a stylistic revision arrives: "*He was not angry - rather, he was disappointed*"<sup>8</sup>. Here it indicates semantic accuracy and emotional calm. "*It was not fear; rather, it was a quiet anxiety*"<sup>9</sup>. This is an appeal to thoughtfulness. In fiction, *rather* seems to be very much stylistically regulated, very much less haphazard than *I think it is*, aiding in the sound of analysis and nuance-of-speech.

The use of repair and reformulation markers in fictional dialogue serves multiple stylistic purposes. First, they create authenticity by imitating spontaneous spoken interaction. Real-life conversations frequently include corrections and clarifications; thus, authors use these markers to make dialogue more natural. Second, these markers contribute to characterization. A hesitant character may frequently use *I mean*, indicating insecurity or emotional involvement. An analytical character may prefer *that is*, reflecting logical precision. The use of *rather* may signal refinement, education, or introspection. Third, repair and reformulation enhance coherence. They guide readers through subtle semantic adjustments and prevent ambiguity. In narrative prose, such markers also provide insight into characters' thought processes, especially in free indirect discourse.

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<sup>6</sup> Salinger, J. D. *The catcher in the rye*. Little, Brown and Company. 1951. – 112 p

<sup>7</sup> Austen, J. *Pride and prejudice*. Penguin Classics. 1913. – 34 p.

<sup>8</sup> Wilde, O. *The picture of Dorian Gray*. Penguin Classics. 1890. – 102 p



Conclusion. In conclusion, discourse markers such as *I mean*, *that is*, and *rather* perform significant repair and reformulation functions in fictional speech. They allow speakers to correct, clarify, and refine their utterances, thereby enhancing precision and coherence. Beyond their structural role, these markers contribute to stylistic realism and character development. Through repair and reformulation, fictional dialogue mirrors authentic conversational behavior and reveals cognitive and emotional dimensions of characters. Therefore, the study of these discourse markers demonstrates the close relationship between pragmatics, discourse structure, and literary, representation.

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<sup>9</sup> Woolf, V. *Mrs Dalloway*. Harcourt. 1925. – 67