

**Multicultural London
English /
Multicultural Paris French
2**

A joint Birkbeck/ Queen Mary
project

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Discourse markers

Extract 1: Weightlifting

- SP1: it's **like** (.) me yeah (.) I always
- just (.) I can just do weights for hours and **like** (.) no one in the class would be able to lift as much as me **like** you was there innit no one can lift as m- the teacher can't lift as much as me (..) and then **like** (.) I' ll still be ready to do more (..) .
- (Cheshire, 2011)

Extract 2: Altercation

- SP1: Il est, il est venu s'excuser mais Aude l'a encore
- rejeté il avait le seum !
- SP2: x en fait (.) les filles elles venaient vers moi (..) et **genre** et **genre** je les ai vues arriver vers moi et tout (.) et après j'ai vu lui il arrivait (..) et **genre** je l'ai regardé comme ça (..) **genre** en mode "tu veux quoi" et tout .
- SP1: ah xx Scarface ? .
- SP1: et après x dès que j'ai vu qu'il allait ouvrir la
- bouche je fais "casse-toi" !

Discourse markers have many different functions. They show the listener how to interpret what is being said; they don't affect the literal meaning

- Some of their more typical functions:
- marking the beginning or end of a turn
- marking grammatical structure by being placed at the beginning or end of a clause, or at the start of reported speech
- marking information that is new to the discourse or marking the start of a new topic
- showing how the speaker feels about what they are about to say or about what they have already said
- checking that the listener is following
- creating solidarity with the listener
- appealing to the listener for understanding
- (Spoken English Features)

Examples:

- **English:**
- **Well:** *well, I don't know about that.*
- **Like:** *and I'm, like, what do you mean?*
- **Of course:**
- **Yeah:**
- **Right:**
- **Oh:**
- **French:**
- **Genre:** *On dirait des gamins genre, 'non j'ai pas deux ans !'*
- **Façon:**
- **Crari:**
- **Style:**
- **En mode:**

Cross-linguistic comparisons

The examples in the boxes above were recordings made with young people in London and Paris. What similarities and differences do you notice in the use of **like** and **genre** how they are used?

Look at the list of discourse marker functions above: which of these functions do you think occur in the quotes above?

Exploring the text

- The quotes above have been chosen to illustrate particular discourse markers, however, in both the English and French transcripts, there are examples of very informal speech. These include both very informal words as well as sentence structures common in informal speech.
- In pairs or a small group, read one of the texts. What are the speakers talking about? Identify unfamiliar words. How much can you guess from the context in which they are used?

Carrying out your own research:

- Search online for unfamiliar words and expressions and their meaning. How much can you find out about the context in which they are used?
- Finding material to investigate: Listen to friends talking among themselves in informal settings, or prompt them to describe a recent event they have been involved in and note which discourse markers they use.
- Listen to a conversation recorded in Paris by the MLE/MPF team and make similar notes (sound file here).

Analysing your data

- What discourse markers are being used?
- For each discourse marker consider who is talking, what they are talking about, what the context is (formal/informal). What non-verbal effects do you observe? Do some speakers use them more often than others? If there are older speakers in your sample, do they use the same discourse markers as teenagers?

Drama and writing

- Devise and record a short drama/dialogue to exemplify the use of discourse markers and some of the other informal features you have explored. What characters would use these expressions? In what circumstances? What opportunities are there to project a personal identity using mimicry, gestures and sound effects?
- Choose one of the quotes above and write a very brief summary in formal English or in formal French of what the conversation is about.
- Try these activities in either English or French or in a scenario that uses both languages.

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