# *YOU KNOW* / *ȘTII* IN ADULT AND ADOLESCENT TALK. A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN

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*Abstract: The aim of this paper is to review and illustrate the functions of the pragmatic marker you know / știi in English and Romanian conversational discourse respectively. The paper addresses its functions as a monitor in discourse and as a metalinguistic monitor. In this function you know / știi is speaker-oriented, either focusing on the illocutionary force or serving as a face-saving device. The paper provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of you know and its Romanian counterpart stii in adolescent talk. Comparisons are made with findings from earlier research undertaken in English-speaking communities, involving adult speakers (Erman 1987, Schiffrin 1987, Macaulay 1991, Macaulay 2002).*

*Keywords: discourse markers; hedges; gender; positive politeness; illocutionary force*

## 1. Preliminary remarks

The importance and multifunctionality of pragmatic markers in everyday is a central issue in synchronic studies (e.g. Ostman, 1981; Erman, 1987, Schiffrin, 1987, Macaulay 1991, 2002), as well as diachronic studies (cf. Briton, 1990, 1996). It is generally recognized that pragmatic markers have little or no meaning in themselves and can only understood either through clues in the speech situation, or by having a conventionalized pragmatic meaning mapped onto them.

It is generally argued that pragmatic markers operate on two main levels: the textual/ideational level and the interpersonal level. Their basic functions are those of monitoring discourse and the activity of communicating (cf. Jakobson, 1960; Halliday, 1970; Brown and Yule, 1983; Brinton, 1996). Additionally, however, pragmatic markers serve an important metalinguistic function when they focus on the message proper. In other words, they function as comments on the speaker's meaning rather than on the propositional content of the message.

As textual monitors, pragmatic markers create coherence and signal transitions of various kinds. At the textual/ideational level, their basic function is to "move" the text forward, to ensure that the addressee gets a coherent overall picture and can make sense of what is being communicated. For this purpose they are involved in the encoding and editing of the text signalling either current speaker's repair of previous of discourse or a new direction of it, or current speaker's stalling for time in the production of current turn. Typical examples in this category include *I mean*, *or rather*, *you know*, *hang on*, *what I was going to say*.

At the interactional/social level, pragmatic markers function as social monitors. For this purpose they elicit audience involvement by calling for action on the part of the addressee, such as confirmation of a previous claim or signalling turn-taking. Examples include tags such as *ok*, *right*, *wouldn't it*. The discourse marker *you know* is frequently used in this function as well. Another important function at the interactional level is that of comprehension-securing, in other words, getting that the addressee to agree with current speaker's understanding of a certain reference in the text.

When they serve a metalinguistic function, pragmatic markers signal the speaker's attitude towards the propositional contents of the utterance. At the metalinguistic level, they may relieve the speaker from being entirely committed to the truth value of the proposition, in which

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case they function as hedges or approximators. Examples of markers with a hedging function include *I think*, *I guess*, *you know*, *kind of*, *sort of*, *and so on and so forth*, etc. Through hedging and approximating, the speaker gives the addressee "a rough but sufficiently exact idea about a certain state of affairs for the general purpose of the conversation" (Erman, 1995: 144).

As hedges and approximators, pragmatic markers mitigate the force of face-threatening acts. They can be used to redress various kinds of face threatening acts (such as criticism, complaints, requests, suggestions, etc) or to strengthen the force of other acts that may be seen as beneficial to the addressee (e.g. promises). They may also be used to stress speaker's commitment to the truth of their utterance or to suggest that they are not taking full responsibility for the truth of their utterance, in which case they become simple yet efficient devices for avoiding disagreement with the addressee. They also have a face-saving function when they are used to mark topic changes. Such changes are face threatening and therefore are often done off record, the use of hedging serving precisely this purpose rather than signalling lack of confidence. In such cases hedges redress the imposition on the addressee's face perhaps partially apologise for it (Brown and Levinson 1987).

## 2. Database and methodology

The paper is based on two corpora of speech for Romanian and three corpora for English recorded in a wide variety of contexts. In order to conduct the quantitative analysis, the total sample of speech was transcribed, a total word count was provided and the relative frequency of occurrence established.

The Romanian data were recorded in Constanta between 2001 and 2003 (henceforth the Constanta Corpus) and consist of male and female same-sex naturally occurring interactions in both formal and informal settings (Hornoiu, 2007). The corpus amounts to over 33, 000 words. The sample includes twenty-four speakers[1] (twenty females and four males), whose ages ranged from thirteen to sixty-four (including ten adolescents, eight in their twenties, two in their thirties, three in their forties, and one in her sixties.

My primary concern in gathering the data on informal conversation has been to avoid the constraints inherent in a one-to-one interview where the interviewer is present. Therefore we have chosen not to be present while the informants were engaged in conversation hoping that the constraints stemming from the informants' knowledge that they are being observed can be alleviated.

For each session one speaker was selected and asked to choose someone they would feel comfortable talking to in the presence of a tape-recorder for about half an hour. The topic for discussion, however, was up to the informants. The choice to group them in dyads rather than in triads or in even larger groups was made with the view to avoiding the technical problem of recording each speaker on a different track. On the other hand, I have chosen to interview best friends because I hold the view that the closest one can come to getting natural speech in an interview situation is by interviewing *groups of peer*. This type of interview is the context most conducive to obtaining casual speech since the normal patterns of group interaction can direct attention away from the tape recorder.

All those involved in this project provided information on their social background and granted permission for the data to be used for linguistic analysis. Throughout the process, participants were free to edit and delete material as they wished. By handing over control of the recording process in this way, we managed to develop a relationship with my informants based

[1] Generally, one should aim at a minimum of five informants for each social variable (Hudson 1980).

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on mutual trust which, over a period of time, made it easy for our participants to ignore the recording equipment. All names are fictionalised to protect participants' identity.

The material represents naturally occurring conversation and there was no undue awareness of the recorder. Some of the informants in the Constanta sample reported that they soon began to ignore the tape recorder. Moreover, they were apologetic about the material calling it trivial and uninteresting, just the ordinary affaires of everyday life.

In addition to the data provided by the Constanta corpus, excerpts from the Bucharest set will also be used to illustrate relevant points and show that the phenomena under discussion are not restricted to the Constanta set. The Bucharest set comes from the corpus of spoken Romanian established at the Romanian Language Department, Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest. The recordings were made in a variety of settings including private homes, shops, offices and other public places in Bucharest, Ploiesti and Braila (Ionescu-Ruxandoiu 2002). However, the data provided in the Bucharest set are not included in the quantitative analysis since a total word count of the transcribed speech sample could not be provided.

The English data for the adolescent part has been extracted from the Bergen Corpus of London Teenager Language (henceforth COLT) recorded in 1993 by Stenström and collaborators in various school in and around London. The British adult material is based on 3 corpora: London-Lund Corpus (LLC) recorded between 1960 and 1975 (Svartvik and Quirk, 1980); the Ayr corpus recorded between 1978 and 1979 and amounting to approximately 120,000 words (Macaulay, 1991); and the Glasgow corpus recorded in 1997 (Stuart-Smith, 1999), providing a corpus of over 125, 000 words.

**3. The variable you know / ştii**

*You know* as a discourse marker is the topic of concern for an extensive research literature (e.g., Holmes, 1986; Östman, 1981; Schiffrin, 1987). This paper examines gender and age differences, both quantitative and qualitative, in the use of *you know* / *ştii*.

In order to provide information on the frequency of use, it is necessary to identify the variable. The examples in (1) contain the words *you* and *know* in that order but they are not examples of the discourse marker *you know*.

(1)
a. well *you know* how we're di- we're different
b. if *you know* somebody who's there you know if you're going to stay
c. *you know* Jim Sellars the M.P.
d. not what *you know* who you knew

(examples from the Ayr Corpus, Macaulay, 1991)

In all the examples in (1) the construction *you know* is part of the syntax of the clause and cannot be omitted. In the examples in (2) this constraint does not apply.

(2)
a. I could see *you know* the hunted look on his face
b. than if I was *you know* working nine till three
c. that I would be if I was actually *you know* out

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(examples from the Ayr Corpus, Macaulay, 1991)

The examples in (2) are clear illustrations of *you know* as a discourse marker. Far from being part of the syntax of the clause, they can be omitted without affected the grammatical acceptability of the clause. Moreover, they actually separate constituents which are usually contiguous.

The examples in (3), however, illustrates occurrences of you know which are potentially ambiguous to the extent to which it is possible to claim that there is a syntactic role to the construction.

(3)
a. *you know* I didn't have to think about it
b. *you know* it just so happened
c. but *you know* we had- we had a very good gym teacher
d. but I know that the time will come *you know* that they're going to get to that point

(examples from the Glasgow Corpus, Stuart-Smith, 1999)

If the examples in (3) were examples of informal written language, taken out of context, they might be interpreted as instances of *that*-deletion following the verb *know*. On the tape, however, the prosodic features make it clear that *you know* is not a verb with a following complement, but a discourse marker with a very distinct function. You know in the examples in (3) is generally uttered as a single unit with a falling intonation and often at a lower pitch than the surrounding speech.

Similar examples can be provided for the use of the corresponding Romanian counterpart *ştii*. The examples in (4) illustrate the use of *ştii* in contexts where it forms part of the syntax of the clause and therefore it cannot be omitted.

(4)

a. *ştii* că data trecută am am trecut peste– deci cum să spun eu am–
you know that last time I skipped over– so how shall I put it, I have -
b. nu nu pot știi de ce nu pot?
no I can't you know why I can't?
c. îl știi pe miki, nu?
you know miki, right?
e. cînd e prea bine știi că a greșit undeva
when everything is too good you know he did something wrong

(examples from the Constanta Corpus, Hornoiu, 2007)

The examples in (5) are the clearest illustrations of *ştii* as a discourse marker. In such cases *știi* is not part of the syntax of the clause and is prosodically marked by a falling intonation.

(5)

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a. dacă deschidea unu gura ne certam *ştii*
   if one of us opened the mouth we started fighting, you know
b. hai să-mi pun mai puţine activităţi *ştii*
   I should choose fewer activities, you know
c. nu mi-am calculat timpu' ca lumea *ştii*
   I didn't estimat my time properly, you know
d. chestia aia *ştii* cînd vii – vin acasă dacă el este rupt de beat
   that thing you know when you – I come home if he is dead drunk

(examples from the Constanta Corpus, Hornoiu, 2007)

For the purposes of the analysis, occurrences of *you know* / *ştii* are treated as discourse markers if they are not crucially part of the syntax of the clause and/or they are marked prosodically as separate units.

## 4. The quantitative analysis

### 4.1. The use of *you know* in British English corpora

In terms of the position in the clause, *you know* can occur in initial, medial or final position:

"By initial position is meant either the first position in the clause or immediately following a coordinating conjunction or a discourse marker such as well; by medial position is meant any position preceded and followed by any constituent other than a coordinating conjunction or a discourse marker; and by final position is meant a position followed by no constituent other than a terminal tag such as and that." (Macaulay, 1991: 156)

LLC speakers use you know more often in medial position as compared to COLT speakers. In COLT, middle position is also the preferred one, but both initial and final positions show higher figures than LLC. Thus, as far as the initial position is concerned, adolescents show a higher frequency when compared to adult speakers. The figures are given in Table1.

**Table 1 Position of you know in the clause - LLC and COLT corpora**

| Corpus | Initial | Medial | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| LLC | 5 % | 84.6 % | 10.4 % |
| COLT | 9.9 % | 77 % | 13.1 % |

The Ayr corpus shows a preference for final position for both lower-class and middle-class, although it is stronger in the lower-class group. The middle-class speakers have a clear preference for you know in medial position, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Position of *you know* in the clause – the Ayr corpus**

| | Initial | Medial | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lower-class | 16 % | 19 % | 64 % |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Middle-class | 25 % | 34 % | 41 % |

(Based on Table 10.11 in Macaulay, 1991: 156)
The figures from the Glasgow corpus show even more marked differences, as can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3 Position of you know in the clause – the Glasgow corpus**

| | Initial | Medial | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| Working-class | 25 % | 10 % | 65 % |
| Middle-class | 18 % | 50 % | 32 % |

### 4.2. The use of *ştii* in the Romanian corpus

The analysis of the data provided by the Constanta corpus shows that the Romanian discourse marker stii assumes the same positions as its English counterpart. Unlike its English counterpart, however, when it assumes final position and it co-occurs with a general extender, the general extender precedes the discourse marker stii, as shown in (6):

(6)

'dacă nu-ţi place cum e îngrijită de noi' **cu chestii de genu ăsta** *ştii*
'if you don't like the way we take care of her'and stuff like this you know

Table 4 **Position of *ştii* in the clause - the Constanta corpus**

| | Initial | Medial | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| Men | - | 21.5% | 78.5% |
| Women | 8.5 % | 24.5 % | 67 % |

Table 5 **Position of *ştii* in the clause - the Constanta corpus**

| | Initial | Medial | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adolescent talk | 6.5% | 15% | 78.5 % |
| Adult talk | 3.5% | 22% | 74.5 |

## 5. The qualitative analysis

### 5.1 The use of *you know* in British English corpora

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In analyzing the use of you know, researchers have emphasized its role in signalling shared knowledge (e.g., Schiffrin, 1987; Quirk et al. 1985; Holmes, 1986) or the effect on the addressee (e.g., Ostman, 1981; Schourup, 1985). More recent studies, however, point out that there are contexts where the basic meaning of *you know* has been bleached out and its use is no longer motivated by interpersonal intentions only. In such contexts, where the basic meaning is bleached out, *you know* has become grammaticalized much in the same way as lets (Hopper and Traugott, 1993) or certain uses of like (Romaine and Lange, 1991). Macauly (2002) comments on the use of you know in close proximity to the verb know in its basic meaning (shown in bold), as in (7):

(7)

a. but I **know** that the time will come *you know* that they're going to get to that point
b. *you know* you **knew** at some point
c. Do you **know** *you know* that's what I would have had with me

(the Glasgow corpus)

The fact that the speakers do not seem to be bothered by the repetition of *you know* in close proximity to the use of *know* in its basic sense supports the view that the meaning of you know and its interpersonal function have been at least partially bleached out. In such contexts we can safely assume that you in you know is no longer a second-person indexical, but it functions as an indefinite pronoun (cf. Eble 2000).

If you know is not primarily "addressee-oriented", then it may not emphasize solidarity by invoking shared meaning. Macauly (2002) pointed out that, in the Scottish data, you know sometimes appears as a idiosyncratic feature of the speaker's style. He argues that the function of such a usage is "to provide a form of reading pattern in a fluent narrative, or act as a kind of oral punctuation marker" (Macauly, 2002: 761). Far from indicating hesitancy or incoherent speech, it is effectively employed by fluent speakers as "an utterance lengthener" (Jefferson 1973: 69).

An interesting use of *you know* is when it occurs medially, sometimes within a constituent. In such position it is commonly used in middle-class speech to signal self-repair, as in (8):

(8)
and yet it's a shame because they- *you know* they do need they need a holiday but

In middle position, you know frequently co-occurs with hedges such as *sort of* and *kind of* , as in (9):

(9)
so there'll be a kind of *you know* they will avoid em Hilary em
it took me a while to *you know* sort of master it you know

(the Glasgow corpus)

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In co-occurrence with hedges you know is used to emphasize a constituent or a less expected expression.

This section has focused on the use of you know as a *textual monitor*. At textual level, the marker is not concerned with the addressee's decoding of the message, but rather with the organization of the discourse. This function is distinct from the one at the interpersonal level, where the focus is on constructing solidarity by invoking shared knowledge between the speaker and the addressee. The social/interpersonal function is extensively discussed in such studies as Schiffrin (1987), Quirk et al. (1985), Holmes (1986), to mention just a few.

### 5.2. The use of *ştii* in the Romanian corpus[2]

The analysis of the Romanian data shows that the informants in the Constanta sample consistently use *you know* in the social/interpersonal domain. At the interpersonal level, the three function are comprehension-securing, turn-taking (at the same time highlighting) and confirmation-seeking, by yielding next speaker's involvement.

A strong preference for the use of *you know* within the social domain is particularly noticeable in adolescent talk. The total figures for adolescent talk in the social domain are nearly twice those for adult speakers. The comprehension-securing function is frequently encountered in adolescent talk where it mostly concerns introducing a new referent in the discourse.

The excerpt in (10) reproduces part of a conversational exchange in which two teenagers are making small talk. At this point Mona is making confessions about the misfortunes of her love affair.

(10)

1 Mona: păi vreau să spun că cre' c-a fost cel mai nasol weekend de cînd sînt cu george
well, I mean I think it was the worst weekend since george and me started going out together

2 a fost sîmbăta cînd s-a-ntîmplat sîmbătă seară
it was on saturday when it happened on saturday evening

3 a fost duminică care pur şi simplu n-aveam ce vorbi cum–
it was on sunday when we simply had nothing to talk about as-

4 dacă deschidea unu gura ne certam ş**tii**
if one of us opened the mouth we started fighting, you know

5 şi duminică iarăşi ( ) a fost urît luni iar ne-am certat ş**tii**
and again on sunday ( ) on monday it was ugly we had arguement again, you know

6 Raluca: acum v-aţi revenit la starea iniţială?
now you're back to the way it used to be?

[2] The transcription conventions used for transcribing the interactions in the Constanta corpus are based, with some changes, on Ochs, Schegloff and Thompson (1996: 461-65). One important difference between these conventions and the ones used in this paper is that capital letters are neither used in the beginning of turns nor for new turn constructional units. Nor are they used at the beginning of proper nouns. Capital letters are used to indicate some form of emphasis. The interactions in the Constanta corpus have been transcribed phonetically. Thus we depart from some of the current spelling rules that apply to the letters **î/â** in medial position. We use the letter *â* only in such words as *român/românesc/românește/România*. Similarly, we use two variants for the verbal forms of *a fi* (to be) in first person singular and plural and in second and third persons plural (sînt/sunt; sîntem/suntem; sînteți/sunteți; sînt/sunt) depending on how our informants pronounce these forms.

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7 Mona: da cred mai avem unele scăpări d-alea **ştii**
yes, but I think we've still got some outbursts of anger, you know
8 mereu apropouri unu' la altu' **[**şi ::
we always drop innuendoes to each other and
9 Raluca : **[**da' e normal să se-ntîmple aşa
well, it's normal to be this way
10 deci nu o să ai niciodată ceva de genu' tot timpu' să fie frumos
so, you'll never have something like 'good all the time'

(the Constanţa corpus, Hornoiu, 2007)

As a marker of information state transition, y*ou know* has two discourse functions: first it is a *marker of meta-knowledge* about *what speaker and hearer share*; second *you know* is a *marker of meta-knowledge* about *what is generally known* (Schiffrin, 1987). The fact that *you know* verbalizes speakers' handling of cognitive tasks has interactional consequences. *You know* may open an interactional negotiation over the informational status of a generalization, i.e. the degree to which a certain piece of information is really shared knowledge. Thus *you know* may also be used to seek interactional alignments by establishing shared opinion.

In the example in (10) *stii* 'you know' marks transition from a state in which the addressee was not aware of a certain piece of information to a state when that piece of information becomes shared knowledge. Thus speakers may use *you know* to establish *common ground/opinion* and to enlist hearer agreement when such agreement is not otherwise forthcoming. Token tags far from being markers of insecurity and lack of assertiveness, as Lakoff claimed, are used to draw the addressee as a participant, into the conversation, reassuring the latter that the speaker cares about his opinions. When serving this purpose you know behaves very much like a tag and becomes an efficient way of *avoiding potential disagreement*.

Excerpts in (11) and (12) illustrate the use of *stii* 'you know' in adults' conversational style to mark the transition from a situation when speaker knows that addressee does not have particular information to a situation when speaker knows that hearer shares knowledge.

(11)

1 B: eram TErifiată de ideea că vor veni şi vor sta la noi↓
I was TErrified at the thought that they will come stay with us
2 mai ales neştiind nimic cît timp au↓
especially not knowing anything about how much time they've got
3 că dacă au timp puţin şi nu ştiu ce↑ măcar ameninţarea era mai limitată
'cause if they've got little time and, whatever, at least the threat was reduced
4 da' aşa mă gîndeam că poate vin şi stau toată vara toată toamna **ştii↑**
yeah I was thinking that maybe they come and stay the whole summer, autumn, you know

(the Bucharest corpus, Ionescu-Ruxandoiu, 2002)

In excerpt (12) Maria has been telling how she managed her final lesson during practicum. At this point she mentions one important aspect in her story, namely time management.

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(12)

1 Maria: **ştii** că data trecută am am trecut peste– deci cum să spun eu am–
you know that last time I skipped over– so how shall I put it, I have -
2 nu mi-am calculat timpu' ca lumea ş**tii**
I didn't estimat my time properly, you know
3 Iulia: mhm
mhm
4 Maria: şi am intrat pe timpu' ( ) şi acuma acuma zic
and I took ( )'s time and so, I say to myself
5 hai să-mi pun mai puţine activităţi **ştii**
I should choose fewer activities, you know
6 ca să mă încadrez în timp să nu mă trezesc iar că n-am timp
to finish on time and not end up running out of time again'
7 Iulia: mhm
mhm
8 Maria: şi mi-am pus prea **[**puţine
and I chose too few
9 Iulia: **[**aoleu şi ce? ţi s-au terminat prea repede?
ay and what happened? they were over too soon?
10 Maria: mi s-au terminat bine cu vreo două trei minute înainte **ştii**
they were over in time two or three minutes before the break, **you know**
11 Iulia: mhm
mhm

(the Constanţa corpus, Hornoiu, 2007)

In lines (1) and (2) she mentions an instance when she had problems with time management as she had not allocated enough time for the activities she intended to do but because she cannot be sure that Iulia knows of that experience she checks Iulia's knowledge with *stii că data trecută am am trecut peste deci cum să spun eu am nu mi-am calculat timpu' ca lumea stii* ('you know that last time I skipped so how shall I put it I didn't estimate my time properly you know'). In line Iulia (3) confirms receipt of information and then Maria moves on to telling about her final lesson when she chose fewer activities lest she should run out of time again. *You know/Stii* in line 5 occur in direct quote which provides one of the main aspects of her story namely finding solutions to problems related to time management in teaching, and through which Maria's story may become understood as an instance of a more general situation. The third instance of *stii* 'you know' follows another piece of new information in line 10 where she concludes that this time she has been successful in managing teaching time. Again Iulia acknowledges receipt of information by producing a minimal response in line 11.

We have seen that *stii* 'you know' brings about information states in which the speaker knows of speaker/hearer shared knowledge. Moreover it turns out with great regularity that *stii* 'you know' does not work alone in these transitions. An important part of these transitions is for the hearer to acknowledge his receipt of information either by affirming that piece of information

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using *yeah, mhm, aha* or other minimal responses showing agreement or by marking its reception with *oh*. The example in (13) illustrates the confirmation-seeking (turn-yielding) function:

(13)

1 B: da↓ da' trebuie să mă hotăresc de fapt ce fac pentru că am: aşa cam o turmă de iepuri
yes, but I've got to make up my mind what I'm going to do actually, 'cause I've got about a herd of rabbits

2 fiecare dată drumu-n altă direcţie
every time running in different directions

3 A : aşa eram şi eu↑
I used to be like that too

4 B : şi trebuie să mă hotăresc pe unde s-o iau↓ **ştii↑**
and I've got to make up my mind which way to go, you know

5 A : **aşa eram şi eu↑**
I used to be like that too

(the Bucharest corpus, Ionescu-Ruxandoiu, 2002)

When such markers of receipt of information are not provided, the speaker is likely to repeat that piece of information or to try again with a different bit of information (as in the initial part of extract 74: lines 1 and 2). This suggests that *you know* is complementary in function to the marker *oh* or to minimal responses which display the addressee as an information recipient, i.e. one that is actively involved in the production of talk through the process of receiving information. Because *you know* induces the addressee to act as an information recipient, it has the complementary function of ratifying the speaker as an information provider whose provision of information is contingent upon addressee's reception.

This allows us to understand why *you know* prefaces background information. Speakers may need to introduce background material before an upcoming narrative event will make sense to their addressees. Bracketing such material with *you know* marks its special status as to-be-shared information, as well as the speaker's dependency on addressee's reception of that information prior to his continued role as information provider.

Returning to excerpt in (12), Maria's point regarding the difficulties involved in managing time while teaching, may not be understood unless Iulia is supplied with information about a situation when too little time is allocated for too many activities. Thus Maria's status as information provider depends on her ability to establish that information as shared. She does this by prefacing it with *stii* ('you know') in line 1, and when Iulia delays her receipt of information, she repeats that bit of information in line 2, trying again to get it acknowledged. Maria then continues to tell her story in her role as information provider.

The excerpts analysed above illustrated the one of the discourse functions displayed by *stii* 'you know' and similar token tags: marking meta-knowledge with regard to what the speaker and the addressee share. Another discourse function is to signal **meta-knowledge about what is generally known**, as excerpt 76 illustrates.

(the Constanţa corpus, Hornoiu, 2007)

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At the interpersonal level, you know / stii frequently co-occurs with general extenders to indicate assumed similarity of participants' experience. According to Schiffrin, one function of *you know* is to mark "general consensual truths which speakers assume their hearers share through their co-membership in the same culture, society, or group" (1987: 274).

The excerpt in (14) illustrates the close co-occurrence of *ştii* 'you know' with a general extender. In (14) the speaker, a teenager, is telling her friend that she is going to her grandmother to get *grăsuţa* 'the little fat one', her dog's puppy, because she misses her.

**(14)**

1 Andreea : io mă duc să-mi iau grăsuţa astăzi
I'm going to take my plump one today
2 mă duc la bunică-mea să mănînc ceva
I'm going to my grandma to eat something
3 da şi săracii- vezi nu ştiu cre' că la bătrineţe cînd te ataşezi
yeah, and poor them – see, I don't know, I think that when you're old you grow fond
4 face- bine bunică-mea a-nceput cu teatru 'bine mamă dacă-'
my grandma goes– well she started to put on an act 'well dear if-'
5 la unchi-meu 'dacă nu-ţi place cum e îngrijită de noi'
to my uncle 'if you don't like the way we take care of her'
6 cu **chestii de genu ăsta ştii**
and stuff like this you know
7 că s-a ataşat de ea şi acuma îi e aşa s-o dea
cause she has grown fond of her and now she doesn't feel like sending her back
8 da' ştii şi mie mi-e dor de ea
but I miss her too, you know

(the Constanţa corpus, Hornoiu, 2007)

In lines 4 to 6 she is telling her friend that her grandmother has grown very fond of the puppy and she would rather Andreea didn't take it away. She carries on arguing that her grandmother is acting as if she felt offended by Andreea's intention: *bunică-mea a-nceput cu teatru 'bine mamă dacă nu-ţi place cum e îngrijită de noi'* ('grandmother started acting "all right my dear if you don't like how we take care of her") and then she uses a general extender followed by the discourse marker ştii 'you know' *cu chestii de genu ăsta ştii* ('and stuff like this you know'). The general extender evokes other ways of complaining. In using a general extender, Andreea is relying on an assumption of shared knowledge or experience (*cf*. Aijmer, 1996; Overstreet and Yule, 1997) which is then reinforced by *ştii* 'you know,' a discourse marker used to seek interactional alignments by establishing shared opinion (Schiffrin, 1987).

## 6. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to review and illustrate the functions of pragmatic markers in naturally-occurring conversation, with a focus on *you know* and its Romanian counterpart ştii. As monitors of discourse they function in three domains: the textual domain, the interpersonal/social domain and the metalinguistic domain.

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At the textual level they are instrumental in creating coherence and signalling transitions of various kinds. For example, the speaker may use *you know* either to refer to shared knowledge or to call the addressee's attention to a piece of information that the addressee does not know. At the interactional/social level, you know is used as a comprehension-securing and confirmation-securing marker. At the metalinguistic level, they may signal that the speaker is not entirely committed to the truth value of the proposition, in which case they function as hedges or approximators.

From the data provided by the corpora under discussion, some tentative conclusions can be drawn. *You know* / *ştii* is more frequently used in familiar settings, e.g., in conversations with friends or acquaintances. The use of *you know* / ştii is not exclusively based on assumptions of shared knowledge. The rhythmic organization of utterances, issues regarding turn-taking and repair, as well as the illocutionary force are also of relevance.

In the British corpora under analysis middle-class speakers have a preference for the use of you know in middle position to deal with phenomena of self-repair and elaboration. Working-class speakers, on the other hand, are more likely to use you know at the end of an utterance, focusing primarily on confirmation-securing.

The data show differences in the use of you know by adult and adolescent speakers. The marker is more text-oriented in adult talk in the British as well as the Romanian corpus. In adult talk *you know* / ştii is typically used as a textual marker in the thematic organisation of the text and as a cohesive device. By contrast, in adolescent talk *you know* / ştii is more likely to be used as a social and metalinguistic monitor. That is to say, the marker is more oriented towards to the activity of communicating with a view to keeping the flow of conversation going and ensuring that what is said is in accordance with the speaker's intended meaning.

Women are more likely to use *you know* / *ştii* in both British English and Romanian corpora. The Romanian adolescent girls in the Constanta corpus show a consistent preference for *ştii* 'you know' and employ it in narratives as a marker that invites common ground. As they approach adulthood their use of tags becomes significantly more diversified and elaborate to the extent to which they make consistent use of other members of the same category which they employ not only in stories and in making generalizations but in arguments as well. The use of these markers in this last environment proves that Romanian women attach growing importance to achieving consensus by converting the addressee to their own side in an argument. This enables them to avoid potential disagreement. In such contexts, the marker is used to underscore the illocutionary force of the utterance.

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