

'*adi* as a Discourse Marker in Spoken Iraqi Arabic

Abdulkhaliq Alazzawie

Department of Foreign Languages, University of Nizwa, Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman

Abstract—The linguistic element '*adi* is extensively employed in the variety of Arabic spoken in Iraq to aid in communication and facilitate the cohesion and flow of conversation. '*adi* which roughly means *no worries, okay, how dare you?, yeah I hear you, or I've gone through the same thing myself*, displays properties typically displayed by discourse markers. For example, it occurs phrase-initially or phrase-finally, it is a grammatically optional lexical item, it is multi-functional and it is an essential feature of spontaneous oral discourse ... oral - rather than formal written - discourse among Iraqi speakers of Arabic. The aim of this paper is to investigate the use of '*adi*, its distribution and its varied context-dependent meanings and functions. The description and investigation are based largely on speech samples which the author recorded. These recordings were then transcribed and analyzed in order to identify the functions associated with '*adi* from a discourse analytical perspective.

Index Terms—discourse marker, context, multi-functionality, utterance, contextual clues

I. METHODOLOGY

The investigation of discourse marker (DM) '*adi* in the present paper draws from a corpus of approximately 9 hours of informal conversations and interviews with native speakers of this variety of Arabic. Pairs of speakers conversed with each other. The author recorded their conversations and also conducted interviews with 6 other native speakers. All of these recordings were then transcribed and analyzed. The corpus was compiled and then searched for examples of '*adi* displaying tokens, its distribution and function. Each occurrence was analyzed and identified. The linguistic and pragmatic features were examined and situated within a wider discourse context.

The focus of the paper is comparing the Arabic segment/speech unit '*adi* to English DMs to see if it falls within the parameters of DMs and to see if it possesses the necessary characteristics to be considered a DM. This makes it necessary to discuss equivalents or something quite similar of DMs occurring in English speech patterns such as *so, well, yeah, right* and *oh*.

'*adi* can also combine with other items producing the phrases *ee 'adi* "yeah, no problem", *ee la 'adi* "oh, yeah, no problem" and *la ee 'adi* "no problem, oh, yeah". Through analysis of naturally occurring conversations, the use of these forms was also investigated.

II. PROPERTIES OF DISCOURSE MARKERS

Jucker and Ziv (1998) state that there is no standard definition of the term discourse marker (DM), but there are certain characteristics that a lexical item or phrase possesses in order to be recognized as such. The following are some of the characteristics that have been suggested to date:

DMs are lexical items or phrases in speech (*right, I mean, you know, I think, well, the thing is*) or in writing (however, to sum up, etc). Other examples given by Schiffrin (1986) include *oh, now, then, so, and, but* and *or*.

DMS are optional. The grammar of an utterance is not affected if they are absent; the sentence structure will still be intact. In other words, DMs are syntactically independent; however, their removal may affect the ease of comprehension (Aijmer 2002, Eslami and Eslami-Rakkeh 2007). A good example of this would be the DM *however* which may be used to contribute to the meaning of a conversation by suggesting the direction in which the speaker is taking the conversation:

"The government is planning on spending billions on their upcoming space program, which may benefit mankind in some way some day. However, their priority should be here at home given our current economic situation."

Here *however* introduces an opposing point of view and it is often used in speeches, or debates (arguments for or against something), or arguments to introduce contrast – an opposing point of view to be considered - not overlooked.

A DM may have more than one function, depending on the context within which it occurs. One DM may have a variety of context-dependent functions. Fung and Carter (2007) refer to them or to this phenomenon as multifunctional DMs and they give the example of *so*, which can act to both launch (begin) and sum up or conclude a topic. Examples of both functions (to launch or sum up a topic) follow in (1) and (2) respectively:

(1) Examples of So Launching a Topic:

- a. So, Judy, are you coming to my party next Friday?
- b. So, what's up?

- c. So, where do we go from here?
- d. So, what now?
- e. So, what are you going to do?

However, if it is used to summarize a topic, *so*, in this context, might be represented in the following examples:

(2) Examples of So Concluding/Summing up a Topic

- a. So, now we have come to the end of this story and what a story!
- b. So, while we end tonight on a sour note, the weather will be sunny tomorrow!
- c. So, to conclude this argument . . . , or
- d. So, to sum up, Darwin believed and promoted the idea of evolution, but was the price he paid worth it?
- e. So, I would argue that if water becomes so scarce in the future, we will all have to drink milk or juice.
- f. So, here we are back at square one.¹

DMs may belong to different grammatical classes, proposed by Aijmer (2002), Carter and McCarthy (2006) and Fung and Carter (2007). In other words, DMs come from different word classes of adverbials and adjuncts such as *unfortunately, like, because, then, or, okay, as a matter of fact and basically*. They gave the examples of prepositional phrases *by the way*, response tokens² *right*, and interjections *oh*.

The following is an example of a speech *with by the way* between mother (M) and son (S):

(3) M: By the way, Uncle John is home from the hospital.

S: Oh, thanks mom. I'll give him a call.

Here is an example of a speech with a response *right*. A young student (A) phones his friend and classmate (B) and says:

(4) A: Hey, how come you're not in any of my classes this semester?

The called party replies:

B: I didn't sign up for the course until January because my parents want to take me to Europe to meet their parents.

Then the caller replies back:

A: Right (or Oh, right...). I forgot. You were born here and have never gone over

Below is an example of an interjection with *oh* in a conversation between mother and daughter:

(5) M: Ok, I'm going to the mall now. See you later. Bye.

D: Oh wait! I want to come too?

"Oh yes, well and then" can also be sequenced; below is an example of this sequencing. A daughter phones her mother:

(6) D: Hi mom. It's me.

M: Hi dear. Have you finished your supper?

D: Yes and how about you?

M: Yes and I'm on the computer now.

D: Oh yes, Well then, I won't keep you.

The daughter said Oh yes? (She was surprised that her mom was working on the computer at that time because her favourite show's on TV, for example, and she's missing it.)

Swan (2005, p. xviii) defines a 'discourse marker' as 'a word or expression which shows the connection between what is being said and the wider context'. He provides three examples of DMs: *on the other hand, frankly, and as a matter of fact*.³

DMs typically occur at the beginning of utterances, a characteristic which Schiffrin (1987) has used as a condition for classifying items as DMs. (Schiffrin, 1986) provides representative examples commonly used in the English language such as *now, you know, so, well, like, basically, I mean, because, actually, okay, and, or and oh*. It stands to reason that a lot of DMs can occur at the end if they can occur at the beginning of an utterance. Here are some examples:

(7)

a. By the way, I just heard what you said about me and that's not true.

b. I just heard what you said about me, by the way, and that's not true.

¹ The last example, "So, here we are again back at square one." is kind of ambiguous in the sense it could be used to both launch and conclude a topic. An argument or point of view has been introduced and some premise failed or wasn't right or didn't work out, so now they have to start again. Further points or further discussion could ensue and be brought up. When *so* is used with "let's try this again", it would seem to be the start of a new angle, a new try or perspective. It means let's give it another go, maybe try a different approach or maybe try something differently (if you're talking about track and field... run faster, jump higher. Try a different angle or perhaps different running shoes). But if *so* is coupled with "here we are back at square one", it indicates for example the hypothesis or reasoning was flawed. Something has not turned out and further research or attempts at doing something need to be done.

² Also known as response signals which indicate that a piece of information has been registered by the recipient (Gardner, 2001 cited in Moore, 2007, p 22). They provide information about the direction the conversation is taking.

³ As a *matter of fact* is usually meant in a contrastive sense. It usually means to set someone straight on something. For example, Cindy says to her friend:

Cindy: I hate Spanish. What's the sense of learning Spanish?

Friend: Well, your parents are Spanish, so it only makes sense that they'd want you to learn their native language. And, as a matter of fact, Spanish might become the next lingua franca given the number of its native speakers.

- c. I just heard what you said about me and that's not true, by the way.
- (8)
- a. Unfortunately, I have no more tickets left for that date.
- b. I have no more tickets left for that date, unfortunately.
- (9)
- a. However, I still have some tickets available for the concert on Sunday.
- b. I still have some tickets available, however, for the concert on Sunday.
- c. I still have some tickets available for the concert on Sunday, however.

III. CONTEXT, MEANING AND FUNCTION OF *ʔADI*

Now, *ʔadi*'s distribution, its varied context-dependent meanings and functions will be exemplified and examined. Examples of DMs in conversational English of equivalence and correlation with *ʔadi* will also be provided. *ʔadi* may serve to perform the following functions:

1. Offer of Material Support and Sympathy

Examples of both of these functions or sub-functions follow:

(1)

A: *Beti sigeer ma yisaʔ ʔaʔlti lo ʔindi mablag ʔabeeʔ hatha w ʔashtari bet ʔawsaʔ*

My house is too small for my family. If I had more money, I'd sell it and buy a bigger one.

B: *ʔadi ʔani ʔsaaʔdak*

Don't worry, I'll help you.

Speaker B is empathizing with speaker A at the same time he is offering financial support. It would be like saying "Gee, that's too bad. Don't worry... I'll help you (meaning he will actually give or lend the person money)."⁴ This is the intended actual meaning of a typical or usual response in natural casual spoken Iraqi Arabic conversation and used in this way in this context. Then, in English it would be like saying: "Gee, that's too bad. Don't worry. I'll lend you some money. Gee, that's too bad. I can help you out with that. Don't worry."

Speaker B's answer can, however, be an example of an habitual response towards someone who is expressing regret, or who is feeling bad, anxious or depressed about something with the intent of conveying sympathy only. Contextual and/or conversational clues (tone of voice, intonation, emphasis) would reveal the intended message of the speaker. Or, perhaps such clues would reveal the attitude and character of the speaker (what the speaker is feeling or thinking).

2. Consolation, Mitigation and Encouragement

Speaker B's response could have been like the following:

(2a)

ʔadi inshallah balmustakbal tigdar ani ham beti sigeer

No problem⁵, hopefully you'll be able to do that in the future. Mine is too small too.

In this case, *ʔadi* serves as an offer of moral support, sympathy and empathy. Its message can be expanded as "Don't worry. Things will work out in the long run. Everything will turn out fine. Everyone's okay and it's not forever. Everybody's healthy and happy and that's all that counts. You'll get a bigger house one day". The following are more examples of what you might hear in typical spoken English which correspond to *ʔadi* in the present context: "If that's your only problem, consider yourself lucky." Or, "You call that a problem? If I could be so lucky! which obviously is not too sympathetic. So, a speaker's response can be relative, or should I say a speaker's perspective is often reflected

⁴ This use of *ʔadi* could be interpreted as a type of "divergence" (Holmes, 2013, p 246) or "negative politeness" (Ibid, 285) so that the two participants in the conversation are not at the same level. It is like saying "wow my house is great and I have no problems at all but too bad for you." So, it can have the opposite effect instead of trying to make someone feel better and lessen their feelings of sadness, instead of trying to unburden them of their emotional and mental dilemma.

It is helping to make the person with the feelings of regret or the yearnings for something better feel better about their situation. So, yes *ʔadi* does serve to offer them support. But more emotional or mental than material; not like "I'll give you enough money to buy a nice big house tomorrow." Who's got that kind of dough? Who's willing/able to do that? No one I know. Rarely would an acquaintance actually give someone money who's expressing such a wish. It's one thing if it were a kid asking for a rubber ball or a son wanting a bike and his dad to help him out but someone expressing enough money to buy a bigger house! Of course, it's possible. But, is it probable? One would doubt the validity of the claim to help. Who gives that kind of money away to an acquaintance? Nobody I've ever know, that's for sure. For such an offer to be believable, the speaker should have made it more clear by adding another sentence such as "Don't worry, I'll help you. I can lend you some money. You would have to pay me back, but I won't charge you any interest. Or, "Don't worry. I'll lend you some money. You'll have to pay me back, but I won't charge you any interest."

⁵ In this context "no problem" might not be the best translation of the DM *ʔadi* because you would never say "no problem" when someone told you about a problem of this nature where someone is distressed about their living situation. That would be making light of someone's problem or feelings or issue. Something dismissive like that would only be more hurtful because when you are feeling hurt or sad, you want what you say to be heard, listened to, acknowledged and validated. A more proper choice in this instance would be "Oh, I get you", or "oh, boy, don't I know" or "oh yeah, I hear you" or even "Ah, I'm sorry" or "Oh, I'm sorry" or "I'm sorry to hear that". So you are basically saying I've listened and I understand you're upset and I empathize or sympathize with you. And then follow it with at least one or more sentences in an attempt to make the person feel better and/or give them hope for a brighter outcome in the future.

"No problem" might be said in instances where the "problem" isn't that great and can be easily and quickly solved as in:

"Gee, I don't know how I'm going to get there tomorrow. My car broke down and it's not going to be fixed until Wednesday". Then, a friend might reply "Oh, no problem, I'll pick you up tomorrow."

in their responses which in turn are based on their life experiences. This person might consider the other one to be lucky in comparison to him.

So, *ʔadi* is meant to cheer up the person and lessen their bad, anxious and regretful feelings by offering them moral support and empathy. Putting that all together, *ʔadi*, used in this context, is an habitual, typical automatic response meant to offer moral support and empathy towards someone who has expressed feelings of regret, anxious, or even depressed about something.

Here is another example of *ʔadi* serving to console, mitigate and encourage. A student (Speaker B), who has failed his Math course, feels terrible:

(2b)

A: ʔashufak mahmoum yaʔakhi shinu alqusa

You look sad, my friend; what happened?

B: wallahi risabit bmadit arriyathiat

Well, I failed my Math.

A: ʔadi yaʔakhi tʔeeda assana almuqbila

Don't worry, my friend, you can take it over.

ʔadi here echoes the frequently in use English phrase "it's not the end of the world". It also parallels "Oh, that's a bummer", or, "Bummer! That's too bad, but you know you can rewrite it again next year. So, don't feel too bad. A lot worse things could happen. Don't worry. Just study hard and ace it next year. You know what? For now, just forget about it. It's not the do all and the end all. An English speaker often might say "Yeah, I hear you. I feel the same way. Or Yeah, I hear you." Or "I know exactly what you mean and what you're going through". And "Don't worry. It's not the end of the world. You can take it again next year." The following are more parallel examples of what you might hear in typical spoken English discourse where the psychological burden is totally wiped out: "To hell with it! Let's go out and celebrate!"

ʔadi used in this way helps to cheer a person up and lessen/ease the feelings that are bringing them down. So Speaker B cheers up Speaker A by minimizing or deflecting from his bad feelings while, simultaneously, offering sympathy and a brighter prospect in the future.

Speaker A's reply is prefixed by *ʔadi* which basically means "Don't worry, I'm sorry to hear the bad news". It can also be translated as "Yeah, I know what you mean. Or, that's too bad. I wish I could do something to help you. Or I'm sorry to hear that. I wish I could do something to help you."

Perhaps, the core meaning of *ʔadi* would best be reflected and exemplified by the expression "Don't sweat it" as in (2c) In English, this expression is more oriented towards the young generation and that is also more colloquial. Let us say one male teenager is talking to his friend about his chances of getting on the football team he tried out for.

(2c)

Speaker 1: Gee, I wonder if I'm going to make it on to the football team.

Speaker 2: What! You sure are.

Speaker 1: You think so?

Speaker 2: Don't sweat it (You've got this one.) Oh, for sure you've got this one. I've never seen anyone play like you. You are one of the best, so don't sweat it.

So, to recap, this function of the DM *ʔadi* consists of three sub-functions:

- Consolation as in "Wow. That's too bad. Don't worry. Oh, I'm sorry about that."
- Encouragement as in "It's not the end of the world you know. It could be a lot worse. You can improve the situation by doing X, Y and Z. So, things will get better. You'll do better next time. You can rewrite the exam next semester or year." *ʔadi* gives encouragement and hope for a brighter outcome, hope for future success and for brighter prospects.
- Mitigation. What's this? Lessening the load or wiping it out altogether. In English it would be like saying: "Forget about it. You can rewrite the test next year. The extra course will just make you better in math than if you had just scraped by this year." Of course, some do try to minimize like "Math, schmath. Don't you hate it? Oh well, better luck next year. I'll be writing the exam tomorrow, so don't be surprised if I join you."⁶

3. Acceptance of a Proposal

An example of *ʔadi* in this role is the following:

(3a)

A: Shinu raʔyak nzour bet Abu Ali

What do you think about going to Abu Ali's house?

B: ʔadi

Yeah, why not?

⁶ Of course there is a group of other English expressions that express all what *ʔadi* serves to convey - No problem, not to worry, no worries (especially Australians with this one), not a problem, bummer; or BU.....mer (sounds like buh-mer dragged out more). Ones of encouragement like "You've got this one. Ones that try to wipe it out as if it were totally insignificant: "Forget about it. Who cares?" Big deal. No big deal. No biggie (meaning no big deal). It's not that big of a deal. It's no big deal. It's really not that big of a deal.

In English "why not" might be coupled with the sentence "Yeah, let's (yeah, let's go). The closest translation or equivalents are statements like: "fine with me, I have no problem with that. Sure, I'm game. Sure, why not? What else is there to do?", and "We're not doing anything else, so yes let's (go)." Here *ʔadi* is a typical, standard, normal, habitual response.

There are always different levels of expressions or different textures of meaning conveyed by the DM *ʔadi*. Let us say two male friends are talking about visiting a third male friend they see fairly often: What do you think about going to visit Abu Ali? You might get a response like one of the following:

(3b)

Sure, I'd like that.

Yeah, okay.

Okay, when were you thinking of going?

But let us say there is one girl who is the sister of the boy her friend has a crush on and she asks her smitten friend: What do you think about visiting my brother, Abu Ali? Then you might get a response like: REALLY!!! You're not kidding? Yes.. let's go.... NOW. I can't wait! Oh my god. I'm so excited. I can't believe I'm doing this!

Or maybe one sister says to her other sister: Hey, do you want to go visit Abu Ali? (an old neighbour they haven't seen in years.) The sister replies: Yeah, that would be great to see him again. Let's do it. When do you want to go?

4. Disapproval, Reprimand and Indignation

An example of *ʔadi* serving this role of voicing indignation, criticizing and reprimanding follows. Speaker A is scolding speaker B:

(4)

A: *ʔadi* takhith sayyarti bidun *ʔilmi* wbidun ithni w*ʔadi* tsiwwi biha hadith w *ʔadi* tutrukha bashari⁶ w ma tikhbirni

How dare you take my car without my knowledge, without my permission (without asking me!) and without having a driver's license! How dare you cause an accident! And how dare you abandon it on the road without telling me anything!

B: ee *ʔadi* dialla rouh

So there! There you go!

The English equivalent expression "how dare you!" is more an exclamation not a question. In English "how dare you!" is used when a person is angry and, though it is written like a question, it is said in a declaration of anger and thus the exclamation at the end instead of a question mark. The spirit behind the meaning of *ʔadi* is closely echoed in English in the following statements: "How could you do such a thing! What the hell were you thinking! Are you crazy or what! I'm so mad at you. How could you! What (the hell) were you thinking! Have you lost your mind!"

Speaker B, that is the person being reprimanded, replies in a defiant tone ee *ʔadi* "so there!". The meaning of this Arabic DM in this context can be explained by discussing an equivalent form in English. There is this English expression "So there!". It is the soul of ee *ʔadi*'s meaning. It is used usually in a situation where, for example, there are two people arguing about something and the person who has the last word often makes verbal victory statement followed by "So there!", usually said decisively and angrily. It is probably used mostly by immature people like disputing siblings or kids in a schoolyard or when they are playing together.

So let us say classmates on the school ground are arguing.

(4b)

Kid nbr 1 says: My dad will beat your dad up.

Kid nbr 2 replies: No, my dad will beat yours up.

Kid nbr 1 counters: No, my dad will. He's bigger than your dad.

Kid nbr 2 replies: Well, my dad has a black belt in karate. So there!

The final "So there!" is said angrily and decisively as if to say "See, I showed you, didn't I?" who's who/who's boss/who has the final word. That final statement, "so there!" usually "settles" the argument with the real verbal blow occurring in the preceding sentence/s. (i.e., Well, my dad is unusually strong. And he has a black belt in karate. So there!)

Maturity level of the participants in this conversation has something to do with how the argument played out and the types of things said and the diction used. For example, two professional business men would not be arguing tit for tat like this and say something like "So there" when trying to prove a point. That would definitely be out of place and would be too juvenile and unprofessional.

5. Politeness and Courtesy

Following is an example:

(5)

A: *ʔashkurak ʔala hal musaaʔada wallahi ma ʔaʔruf kef arudlak hatha aljameel*

Thank you for your help; I really don't know how to return this favour.

B: *ʔadi (yamʔawwad ʔadi) ihna ʔikhwa.*

No worry, we are like brothers.⁷

⁷ In English, you might hear "You're like a brother/sister to me". Or, "you're like family." Or, "I'm closer to you than I am to my own family."

To bring out the meaning of *ʿadi* in this context, a more natural way of expressing this conversation is required. Corresponding examples of utterances which might be heard in typical spoken English are: "Thank you for helping me. I don't know how I'll ever repay you." Or, "Thanks so much for your help. How will I ever repay you?" Or, "Thank you for your help. Boy do I owe you! How can I make it up to you?"

The polite and courteous reply is strengthened further by combining *ʿadi* with another DM *yamʿawwad* and followed again by *ʿadi*. This combination acts together to express a higher level of politeness. English examples which most closely align to the Arabic meaning are: "You don't owe me a thing. After all, what are friends for? Oh, forget it. You're such a good friend. That's the least I can do. Oh stop! Will you? I take care of family and you're... you're like family to me (not typical... only in a certain context.) Or, "You're like a brother/sister to me." You've helped me too you know. So forget about it. One good deed deserves another. Oh, that was nothing at all. Don't even think about it. You've done enough for me already. You don't owe me anything, so forget about it! That was nothing... nothing at all. You don't have to do anything. I was glad to help you. So, don't worry."

In English it is not meant as an extra level of politeness more so as putting the person at ease in terms of relieving their feelings of indebtedness. However, the Arabic version and this English example both display going an extra step to make the person feel better and perhaps also serves to save face.

6. Mild Criticism and Sarcasm

The following is an example:

(6)

ʿadi tiji lalmthian bidoun qalam w raqa wʿadi tiji mitʿakhir

It is okay to come to the exam without pen and paper and it is okay to come in late.

The criticism and sarcasm can be expressed in the following rhetorical manner which conveys the spirit behind the meaning of *ʿadi*: Is it okay to come to an exam without a pen and paper? And maybe you should be late too while you're at it? Or, "Yeah, it's OK to come to an exam without a pen and paper! And why not be late too while you're at it?" Or, "Yeah, it's ok to come to an exam without a pen and paper and why not be late too? Yeah, show up late why don't you?" The DM *ʿadi* in this context can also be rendered as "sure" as in: "Sure it's okay to come to an exam without a pen and paper and be late too while you're at it. Sure, why don't you! Or "Sure it's OK to come to an exam without a And why don't you come in late too?" said in a sarcastic tone of voice.

Again there are different levels and textures of meaning depending on the speakers involved, or the context, and as we mentioned before, sometimes the intended meaning. Is a particular linguistic unit in the utterance stressed? Is the meaning elevated? Is the talker calm? Angry? Happy? Disappointed? Frantic? Panicking? What is their role? teacher/student, boss/employee? What is their relationship? Parent/child, older sibling/baby of the family What is the level of formality? Senior staff/junior staff, trainer/trainee Is formality required or a part of the situation?⁸ As Brown & Yule (1986) point out, such background information, setting and relationships among speakers and hearers are obviously relevant for understanding the communicative event. There are often different layers of meaning and this is certainly the case when someone is being sarcastic.

7. Requesting and Granting Permission

A student asks her Teacher: Is it okay to leave class early?

(7)

A: ʿadi ʿatlaʿ alyawm mubakkir min almuhathara

Is okay for me to leave class early?

B: ʿadi

It is okay.

Of course the teacher would say something like "Yes, that's fine. All right. Yes, that'll be fine"; Yes, you may, Yes, you have my permission (i.e., a bit more formal and old school i.e., a student asking their teacher). Or, "Yes, you may do that". Or, if a less formal teacher/class: "Yes, that's OK." But, you'd never expect a teacher to sound over zealous or too lax and lenient like "Of course John, you needn't bother to ask"; then so many kids would be cutting class it wouldn't be funny. Imagine if a teacher actually said: "Of course, there's no need to ask." Then for sure... kids would start taking advantage of the situation.

8. Indifference and Obliviousness

The following dialogue between two speakers exemplifies this use of use of *ʿadi*:

(8)

A: ʿaljeeran sawthum ʿaali jiddan

The neighbors are very loud

B: ʿadi daʿiman hum hakatha

We got used to it; they are always like that.

⁸ Or is the speaker eager or anxious? So, let's say a mother has been waiting to hear from her daughter who's in the hospital giving birth. After giving birth, the daughter phones her mom. Mom, it's over and I survived" and the mom might reply: Oh.... Congratulations. I'm so glad. "So, is it a boy or a girl?"

The spirit behind the meaning of *ʔadi* in this context in Arabic might be best understood by the following group of utterances in conversational English: "Oh...we're used to it. They're always like that. Or, "Oh, we're used to that raucous. They're always carrying on like that.

Oh, we're used to that by now. We've tried to get them to pipe down, but they're so inconsiderate. They'll never change."

Following are three English examples where the DMs *yeah*, *well* and *oh* serve functions similar to *ʔadi*:

(8a) Example of *yeah*:

A: Is that neighbour blasting his music again?

B: Yeah, nothing new. And the funny thing is... I hardly notice it now becuz I'm so used to it.

A: maybe you're getting deaf! (Then, they both laugh)

(8b) Example of *yeah* and *well*:

A: Wow, that baby sure cries an awful lot.

B: Yeah, well, you get used to it.... Hardly bothers me now.

(8c) Example of *oh*:

A: Your neighbour's dog barks non-stop.

B: Oh, we don't even hear it anymore really; we're so used to it.

9. A Hedging Device of Softening Criticism and Face-saving

Face saving is trying to put the person at ease, rid them of anxiety and make them feel better. The DM *ʔadi* acts in this manner as in the following conversational exchange:

(9a)

A: tiʔakharit ʔalaya w tiʔakharit ʔaani ʔal dawam

You're late and now I'm going to be late for work.

B: ʔasif jiddan ma liget almifateeh

I'm very sorry, I couldn't find my key.

A: ʔadi bass la tsaweeha kul yom

Okay, but don't do it every day.

The essence of the meaning is: "It's OK this time, but don't do it again." Or, "It's okay, but make sure you have your keys and everything ready the night before." Or, "It's okay, but don't do it everyday. So, next time, be prepared!" And "That's all right; just don't do it again."

This function and meaning of *ʔadi* can be illustrated using the English DMs "Oh", "well" and the common expression "no worries". Daughter (D) says to her mother (M):

(9b)

D: Mom, I accidentally ran over your flowers with the lawnmower.

M: Oh, don't worry. They'll grow back.

D: What if they don't?

M: Well, I can always plant more.

10. Resignation and Submission or Surrender to Something Beyond One's Control

ʔadi may also signal a sense of resignation:

(10)

A: hay shlon ʔaysheen bhal althrouf alqasiya wa alʔawthaʔ altaʔbana – tafjeerat w mashaakil a jaysh w mudahamat

How can you live under such terrible conditions?... the explosions, all these problems, the army, and the raids?

B: ʔadi tiʔawwadna ʔaleha

What can I do! What other options are there?⁹

In this instance, *ʔadi* expresses a sense of helplessness, and the sentiments expressed here are echoed in English by "What can we do? It's not like we have a choice." It expresses this sense of surrender that there's nothing they can do to change the situation.... there are no alternatives... they are forced to live like that and just deal with it the best they can. *ʔadi* signals this sense of resignation.

11. Divergence in Opinion and counter proposal

The following dialogue between two speakers (A and B) demonstrates the use of *ʔadi*:

as divergence in opinion:

(11)

A: shinu raʔayak bilsafar lbaghdad

How about going to Bagdad this weekend?

B: ʔaljaw har lesh ma nʔajla liyom ʔakhar

No (or No way.), the weather's too hot. Why don't we go some other time when it's not so hot? (or Why don't we put it off for another day?)

ʔadi ʔidna tabreed bassayara

⁹ The literal meaning is "We're accustomed to this." But, the heart of the meaning is "What can I do! What other options are there!" because there's no getting accustomed to that kind of situation.

Oh come on. What's the problem? The car's got air-conditioning.

12. Assurance and Facilitation

The following dialogue between two speakers (A and B) demonstrates the use of *ʕadi* to signal assurance and facilitation:

(12)

A: ?assuwar alli ?arsalitha balskype kul al?irsal fishal w ma wislan

All the photos you sent through Skype didn't come through. I didn't get any of them.

B: ʕadi ?arsilhin marra ?ukhra

Don't worry. I'll send them again.

13. Confirmation Seeker

The following is an example:

(13a)

A: mihtaj roha lkarkouk lshira? Qanafat bass ʕindi dawam w ma ?agdar ?rouh

I need to make a trip to Kerkouk to buy a sofa set but I can't because I'm working.

B: yamʕawwad la tihtam aani ?rouh ?ashtareehin ?ilak

Oh, well I can do that for you.¹⁰

A: sahih trouh ʕadi ma ysabiblak muthayaqa

Really! Or, Oh, really? You'd do that? (Or You would do that for me?) I hate to impose on you.

B: ee la ʕadi jiddan la la ʕadi

Oh, it's nothing.... nothing at all. Oh, it's no problem whatsoever. Or, yeah not at all

Note that speaker B used *ee la ʕadi* which is a cluster of three DMs. Its core meaning would best be echoed by the English phrases "yeah, no problem whatsoever. Yup, It's no trouble whatsoever. It'll be a cinch. Don't even think about it."

Some interlocutors use it so frequently as a fixed and lexicalized discourse marker. It seems to cover various aspects of the interaction expressing agreement and acknowledgment. At the same time the expression indicates divergence from presuppositions and assumptions:

Neighbour/friend (A) says he'll go pick up the sofa set for his friend (B):

B: You'd do that for me? I hate to impose on you. Are you sure that wouldn't be a problem?

A: Yes, I'm sure. Or, Yes, no that wouldn't be a problem. (Yes, I'm sure. No, that wouldn't be a problem.) Yes, no... no that wouldn't be a problem.

"No" is a restatement as if to stress that it really isn't a problem...that it's no bother at all. This is a reassurance and a confirmation to put the person at ease... to assure them it's OK.

The casual and spontaneous usage of the complex DM of Arabic *?ee la ʕadi* can also be exemplified by the English complex DM "Yeah, no, okay". Typical examples of this expression are:

(13b)

A: Are you sure you don't want to play baseball on Saturday? Are you sure you want to miss the tournament?

B: Yeah, no... maybe not.

A: Do you want some ice cream? (spoken to someone who's on a diet and is really desperate to lose weight)?

B: Yes, no, okay.... Maybe just a little.

People are answering without a lot of thought.... They are spontaneous answers in informal situations. And it could be the other way around:

(13c)

A: Are you sure you want to miss the tournament?

B: No, yeah... maybe not.

Or no, yeah, no well, maybe not.

Or:

A: Do you want some ice cream?

B: No, yes, no.... oh, maybe a little wouldn't hurt.

It should also be noted here that *ʕadi* is not unique to the variety of Arabic spoken in Iraq. Kanakri and Al-Harshsheh (2013) identified nine functions of this DM in spoken Jordanian Arabic such as consolation, permission, rebuke, contempt and courtesy. In Jordanian Arabic as well, *ʕadi* "serves various functions in different contexts and situations" (Ibid p. 62).

The aim of the preceding discussion has been to investigate the linguistic element *ʕadi* to determine if it falls within the parameters of being a discourse marker. To this end, its distribution, its varied context-dependent meanings (no worries, ok, how dare you!, etc.) and functions have been examined. Some instances in which *ʕadi* correlates with English DMs or expressions have been given, together with a discussion of shared properties, functions, meaning and distribution.

¹⁰ Or, "Oh, don't worry. I'll pick it up for you."

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on interactional exchanges from 10 different speakers in different situations which represent real language usage, both the distribution and function of the token *ʔadi* were investigated.

ʔadi conforms to many of the generalizations about discourse markers. It occurs only in oral discourse; it is a short element of language; it appears in utterance-initial position; it is optional as its omission does not alter the grammaticality or the referential meaning of the utterance although it might make the utterance less acceptable pragmatically, and it is of an ambiguous lexical specification which makes it difficult to classify into a particular syntactic category.

It has also been shown that *ʔadi* performs the discourse and pragmatic roles and functions of text cohesion and attitude signaling. Examples of this Arabic DM, its complex clustered version *ee la ʔadi* and the corresponding English equivalents *oh, yeah, well* were investigated. They reveal how the DMs indicate the attitude, belief and opinion of the speaker at different layers and angles of discourse. They also reveal the direction in which the conversation is heading. The investigation shows that the functions are varied, as is characteristic of discourse markers. It is such structural descriptions, roles, and functions which support its classification as a DM.

A more thorough investigation is required in terms of equivalence and correspondence between *ʔadi* and English DMs to explore their characteristics, distribution, meanings, functions and roles. Such an investigation will undoubtedly have significant implications and consequence for language education and translation. Clearly DMs present a problem. They are interesting to study and analyze but very challenging to teach because of their abstract nature and variedness in terms meaning which is impacted and determined by context.

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Abdulkhaliq Alazzawie, holds a Ph.D. degree in Linguistics from Simon Fraser University, Canada, in 1991, an M.A. in Linguistics from University of Ottawa in 1985.

He is currently an Assistant Professor at The University of Nizwa, Oman. He has recently published two research papers entitled: "*Yamawwad: A Discourse and Pragmatic Marker in Iraqi Arabic*" and "*The Discourse Marker wa in Standard Arabic- A Syntactic and Semantic Analysis*". His research interests include English/Arabic Syntax within the Principles and Parameters Theory, Adjunction and Discourse Analysis.

Dr. Alazzawie has worked in the Department of Linguistics, Simon Fraser University where he taught English Syntax, English Morphology and Introduction to Linguistics. He has also taught Linguistics and translation courses at ITTIHAD University in RAK, UAE.