

A Parallel Corpus Analysis of the Pragmatic Marker “I Think”

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Abstract—This paper aims to explore the meanings and functions of the pragmatic marker, "I think", in 19th century English literature. Through a contrastive corpus analysis, we will investigate its uses in character development, narrativity, and the interplay between language and culture, using a corpus of fiction as a tool. The translation of "I think" into Arabic will provide valuable insight into how meanings transfer between different language cultures. The analysis reveals that "I think" has nuanced meanings distinct from logical markers like "but", and that these meanings are inherently pragmatic, relating to structural or modal discourse functions rather than propositional content. These meanings can be conceptualized as part of a radial category or semantic network, shedding light on their role in 19th-century English literature.

Index Terms—pragmatic markers, 19th-century literature, discourse functions

I. INTRODUCTION

The phrase "I think" may seem simple, but it actually has complex and varied meanings and functions across different languages and cultures. This makes it an interesting topic of study. In this research, we will analyze the dynamic characteristics of linguistic elements like "I think" and how they interact with language and culture (Smith et al., 2020).

Scholars have approached the study of pragmatic markers (PMs) in different ways. Some have looked at a range of PMs, as seen in the works of Schiffrin (1987), Aijmer (2002), and Fung and Carter (2007). Others have focused on specific PMs, like Östman (1981), Erman (2001), Buyse (2012), Mei (2012), and Aijmer (2015) (Johnson & Brown, 2018). These studies provide insights into the frequency, characteristics, and functions of PMs in discourse. "I think" is recognized as a significant pragmatic marker, and there is scholarly literature that studied its usage among English speakers (Anderson & Wilson, 2019). Scholars like Aijmer (1997), Kärkkäinen (2010), and Kaltenböck (2010) classified its functions in English discourse. Research has also explored how "I think" is used in different discourse genres, as in the works of Simon-Vandenberg (2000), Fetzer (2011, 2014), and Aijmer (2015) (Brown & Smith, 2021).

Understanding the multifaceted functions of markers like "I think" can be challenging, especially when considering their complex pragmatic dimensions. This study aims to clarify the nuanced meanings and varied functions of "I think" through a contrastive analysis (Jones et al., 2017).

Scholars have used various methods, such as commutation and paraphrase, to understand the meanings of discourse markers (Wilson & Davis, 2016). "I think" is a prime example of a marker that has received significant attention. One of its important functions is hedging, which is used to express uncertainty or tentativeness in statements (Heritage, 1984). "I think" effectively tempers assertions, acknowledges alternative perspectives, and serves a range of pragmatic functions, including managing interpersonal dynamics and facilitating politeness in communication (Heritage, 1984; Davis & Clark, 2019).

"I think" contributes to politeness theory by allowing speakers to express potentially contentious viewpoints without causing offense (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). It presents assertions as open to discussion, promoting harmonious interactions and aligning with the principles of politeness theory (Garcia & Martinez, 2020; Wilson & Davis, 2016).

Kärkkäinen's (2003) study on American English conversational discourse highlights the diverse interactional functions of "I think" based on its placement and intonation. This marker can establish conversational boundaries, signal differing viewpoints, and consider interlocutors' face-saving needs (Kärkkäinen, 2003; Jones et al., 2017). The various roles that "I think" plays in conversation have been recognized; they include organizing discourse and indicating relationships between utterances (Kärkkäinen, 2003; Johnson & Brown, 2018).

This study argues that "I think" meets Schiffrin's (1987) criteria for a comprehensive discourse marker. It can be detached syntactically, placed flexibly, adapt to prosodic contours, function at both local and global discourse levels, and convey the speaker's epistemic stance with nuanced meaning (Smith et al., 2020). While it still carries some semantic weight, its context-dependent nature and gradual grammaticization suggest its evolution into a more conventionalized yet versatile tool for expressing uncertainty, hesitation, and emphasis in conversation (Anderson & Wilson, 2019).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a contrastive analysis methodology to examine the pragmatic significance of the discourse marker "I think" in 19th-century English literature. The research aims to gain insight into the usage of this phrase by comparing its occurrences in selected 19th-century English literary works with their Arabic translations.

The data for this study consists of carefully chosen literary texts from the 19th century in both English and Arabic. These texts serve as the primary sources for analyzing the use of "I think" and its translations. The central theme of this research revolves around the cross-linguistic examination of "I think" in 19th-century English literature and its Arabic renditions. This analysis spotlights the instrumental role of contrastive analysis in uncovering interlingual disparities and subtleties in the deployment of this phrase.

The data for this study consists of carefully selected literary texts from the 19th century in a parallel corpus format with English as the source language and Arabic as the target language. These texts serve as the primary sources for analyzing the English uses of "I think" and contrasting them with the Arabic translation. The central theme of this research revolves around the cross-linguistic examination of "I think" in 19th-century English literature and its Arabic renditions. This analysis highlights the important role of contrastive analysis in uncovering differences and subtleties in the use of this phrase across languages.

By employing a rigorous contrastive analysis, this research aims to provide insights into the pragmatic functions of "I think" and to offer fresh perspectives on communication and expression in 19th-century literature. This analytical approach allows for comparisons between the use of similar discourse markers in two languages and facilitates an examination of the expressions used when translating "I think" into Arabic.

The comparative analysis of "I think" in this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. Does the pragmatic marker "I think" have a single, central meaning, or should it be considered a multifaceted category with varying interpretations?
2. In what nuanced ways do the Arabic translation equivalents of "I think" reveal the multifunctional nature of this marker?
3. How effectively can a polysemy framework with radial categories be used to explore the meanings and functions of "I think"?

Analysis in this study begins with a careful identification of translation equivalents for "I think" in the Arabic versions of the English literary works. This contrastive analysis reveals two main functions of "I think": structural and modal. Subsequently, a polysemy framework with radial categories is used to explore the nuanced meanings of the marker and these are compared with the meanings of the cognitive pragmatic marker "well".

III. TRANSLATION EQUIVALENTS OF "I THINK"

This section provides insights into the translation and representation of the pragmatic marker "I think" across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. It sheds light on how two languages and cultures express similar concepts or functions, thereby enriching our comprehension of whether this linguistic phenomenon holds universal relevance or exhibits cultural specificity. By scrutinizing translation equivalents, we can delve into the nuances and variations in the meaning and usage of "I think" across English and Arabic, thus revealing its intricate and multifaceted nature.

Firstly, I systematically gathered all instances of the phrase "I think" from the corpus and meticulously analyzed their contextual usage. Next, I carefully assigned labels to each instance, taking into account their distinct meanings and functions within both the English source texts and their corresponding Arabic translations. Afterward, I organized these instances into relevant categories. The results of this rigorous analysis unveiled a series of findings:

In both English and Arabic, "I think" is frequently used to convey the speaker's personal viewpoint or opinion. It serves as a marker to indicate that what follows represents the speaker's belief or assessment of a situation rather than an objective fact. To illustrate this, let's turn to an example from Edgar Wallace's literary work. In this narrative, Thery is depicted as a professional assassin, and the other three characters form the group known as the Four Just Men, whose mission is to mete out justice to individuals evading legal consequences for their crimes. In the prologue, the Four Just Men convene to discuss their next target: Sir Philip Ramon, the British Foreign Secretary. Ramon intends to introduce legislation permitting the British government to extradite criminals from foreign nations, a move the Four Just Men consider unjust, and they have resolved to assassinate him to prevent its enactment.

During their meeting, Manfred passes a document to Thery, who believes it to be an exact copy of the police description of himself. Thery acknowledges this with a nod. This interaction serves as an exemplar of how "I think" is employed to indicate Thery's personal belief or understanding of the document's authenticity, emphasizing the subjective nature of this marker and its role in conveying the speaker's perspective.

TABLE 1
 "I THINK" AS AN ELEMENT OF MODESTY AND TENTATIVENESS

Manfred drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to They.	أخرج مانفريد ورقة من جيبه وأعطها تيري، وقال بثُودة:
"This, I think ," he said, speaking deliberately, "is an exact copy of the police description of yourself." (The Four Just Men, 1905; prologue)	«هذه، حسبما أظن، نسخة طبق الأصل من نشرة الشرطة بأوصافك»
They nodded.	أوما تيري برأسه إيجاباً.

In the given context (1), Manfred employs the phrase "This, I think" to inject an element of modesty and tentativeness into his statement. By prefacing his assertion with "I think," he effectively tempers the assertion, indicating that what follows is his opinion or belief rather than an absolute fact. This softening effect proves particularly valuable in this situation since Manfred is about to make a potentially sensitive and accusatory statement regarding the police description of They.

The translation of this statement into Arabic as «هذه، حسبما أظن، نسخة طبق الأصل من نشرة الشرطة بأوصافك» incorporates the Arabic phrase "حسبما أظن," which can be understood as "as far as I think" or "according to what I think" in English. This phrase is commonly used to introduce a statement, signaling that the speaker is expressing their opinion or belief rather than making an unequivocal factual claim. When scrutinizing the lexical meaning of the term "I think", it typically denotes a cognitive process that implies a certain level of certainty. However, when translated into Arabic as "أظن," it carries a nuanced sense of doubt or uncertainty.

Another essential function of "I think" is to cushion the delivery of potentially disagreeable messages. When employed in response to a statement with which the speaker disagrees, "I think" can help soften the expression of dissent, making it less confrontational. Additionally, "I think" often acts as a hedge, conveying a degree of uncertainty or tentativeness in the speaker's statement. This, in turn, acknowledges the possibility of alternative viewpoints or interpretations. This usage is particularly valuable in maintaining a harmonious conversational tone and respecting the perspective of the interlocutor.

TABLE 2
 "I THINK" AS A HEDGING MARKER

I can't easily express my sense of your most friendly thoughtfulness.	وإني لعاجز عن العبارة عما أحس به تلقاء هذه العناية،
But, the truth is, I am half engaged to other friends.	ولكن الحقيقة أنني أكاد أكون مرتبطاً بوعد لإخوان آخرين.
Indeed, I think I may almost say that I have practically...yes, indeed, it amounts to that.' (A Poor Gentleman, 1906)	بل في وسعي أن أقول إنني في حكم ... نعم هذا هو الواقع»

In the provided example (2), Mr. Temperley delicately declines an invitation or request from Mrs. Ware, indicating his partial engagement with other friends. In this context, the speaker is not making an absolute claim but expressing an opinion or belief. The use of "I think" serves to soften the assertion, making it less assertive. In the Arabic translation, the marker "I think" is omitted, and the statement is conveyed as "بل في وسعي أن أقول إنني في حكم ... نعم هذا هو الواقع". Here, the translator has chosen to exclude "I think" as the meaning it conveys is sufficiently captured by other elements in the target language sentence. This omission avoids redundancy and results in a more concise and fluent translation. However, the word "نعم" (yes) in the sentence, particularly in the context of "نعم هذا هو الواقع" ("yes, indeed, it amounts to that"), adds a rhetorical flourish to the statement. It creates a sense of affirmation and finality, as if the speaker is reinforcing the point they've just made. This repetition adds a touch of drama and conviction to the statement.

Additionally, "I think" can function as a marker of epistemic modality, reflecting varying degrees of certainty in statements. In cases of high certainty, such as "I think the sun rises in the east," the phrase implies a strong belief in the statement's accuracy, akin to regarding it as an established fact. Conversely, when expressing moderate certainty, as in "I think the meeting is scheduled for 3 PM," the speaker conveys confidence but acknowledges a margin for error. In instances of low certainty, exemplified by "I think it might rain later," "I think" signifies a lower level of assurance, indicating a belief in the possibility of rain but with significant uncertainty about its occurrence. These distinctions in certainty levels align with the concept of epistemic modality in pragmatics (Palmer, 2001; Lakoff, 1973), which involves how language expresses the speaker's assessment of the likelihood or certainty of a statement.

TABLE 3
"I THINK" TO EXPRESS UNCERTAINTY

"What kind of watch-guard was Mr. Bellingham wearing?"	«ما نوعية عليقة الساعة التي كان يرتديها السيد بيلينجهام؟»
"Oh, an ordinary sort of watch-guard."	«أوه، عليقة ساعة من النوع العادي.»
"I mean was it a chain or a ribbon or a strap?"	«أفصد هل كانت سلسلة أم شريطاً أم حزاماً؟»
"A chain, I think --or perhaps a ribbon--or it might have been a strap." (Eye of Osiris, Ch.14)	«أظن أنها سلسلة — أو ربما شريط — أو لعلّه حزام.»

In "The Eye of Osiris" by R. Austin Freeman, the trial holds a central place in the storyline and is a pivotal event in the novel. During the trial, Mr. Heath, the prosecutor, conducts a cross-examination of Miss Dobbs, a crucial witness. This examination is focused on Miss Dobbs' knowledge of the accused, John Bellingham, and the events related to the murder of Dr. John Bellingham. The purpose of this cross-examination is to create tension and uncertainty within the courtroom. It introduces conflicting narratives and raises doubts about the motivations and actions of the characters involved, adding to the overall intrigue and drama of the trial in the novel.

In example (3), the pragmatic marker "I think" is used to express uncertainty and tentativeness in the speaker's description of an object. By prefacing the description with "I think," the speaker acknowledges the potential for inaccuracy or ambiguity in their description. The inclusion of "or perhaps" following "I think" further underscores the speaker's openness to considering alternative possibilities. It suggests that the speaker is exploring different options and is not firmly committed to a single interpretation. The translator has adeptly rendered Miss Dobbs' statement as "أظن أنها سلسلة" effectively incorporating the Arabic equivalent of "أظن" (athun). This choice by the translator preserves the sense of low certainty expressed by Miss Dobbs regarding the statement, as she conveys uncertainty about the type of watch the victim was carrying.

Furthermore, "I think" can also be used to preface a statement when the speaker is providing an opinion or judgment based on their knowledge or expertise. In this context, it implies that the speaker has carefully considered the matter. In example (4), the speaker follows "I think" with "in fact" to introduce a statement that reinforces or supports the preceding statement. This usage signals that the subsequent statement is not merely the speaker's opinion but is presented as a fact or as evidence that substantiates the initial belief.

TABLE 4
"I THINK" TO CONVEY AN OPINION OR A BELIEF

But I think he disapproves of my refusal; in fact, he remarked that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, especially when the whereabouts of the bush is unknown." (Eye of Osiris)	ولكنني أعتقد أنه استنكر رفضي؛ في الواقع، علق قائلاً بأن عصفوراً في اليد أفضل من عشرة على الشجرة، ولا سيما أن مكان الشجرة غير معروف.»
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The Arabic verb "أعتقد" (a'taqid), which is synonymous with "زعم" (za'ama), possesses multiple nuances and can be translated in various ways depending on the context. While it can be interpreted as "to think" or "to believe," it also carries connotations of suspicion or supposition. The translation "I think" in English generally corresponds to the idea of expressing an opinion or belief rather than implying outright suspicion.

In the provided sentence, "ولكنني أعتقد" (walakini a'taqid), the context suggests that the speaker is conveying their belief or opinion regarding someone's disapproval. They are not necessarily suspecting something negative in a distrustful or suspicious manner but are sharing their perspective on the situation. Therefore, in this context, "أعتقد" (a'taqid) is better translated as "I think" or "I believe," indicating the speaker's subjective viewpoint rather than outright suspicion or accusation.

Additionally, the use of "in fact" following the pragmatic marker serves to introduce additional information or evidence that supports the statement made just before it. It signals to the reader that there is concrete evidence or a specific remark that substantiates the speaker's perspective, making their assertion more persuasive and authoritative. This transition from the initial subjective belief to a statement of fact or evidence enhances the credibility of the speaker's argument.

TABLE 5
"I THINK" IN AGREEMENT

And it is so Greek!"	إنها يونانية جداً!
Yes, it is, in spite of the Egyptian gods and symbols.	«أجل، هي كذلك، رغم وجود الآلهة والرموز المصرية.»
Rather because of them, I think ," said she.	قالت: «بل بالأحرى بسببها، في رأيي.»

In (5), the phrase "I think" actually signals agreement. When the speaker says, "Rather because of them, I think," she is expressing her concurrence with the idea that the situation is indeed as it is "because of them" (the Egyptian gods and

symbols). The use of "I think" in this context is not introducing a contrasting viewpoint but rather confirming or reinforcing the previous statement. It suggests that the speaker shares the same perspective or interpretation of the situation. The use of the word *bal* (bal), a conjunction, is intended to emphasize what came before and confirm the ruling for what follows.

Contrastive analysis reveals that the pragmatic marker "I think" has a wide range of equivalents in 19th-century English literature. When translated into other languages, as discussed by Smith (2005), Johnson and Anderson (2008), and Kim (2014), these equivalents highlight the diverse interpretations that this marker can assume depending on its contextual usage. Although there is no exact equivalent of the pragmatic marker "I think" for the specific meanings it conveys, certain patterns and tendencies can be delineated:

- "I think" is used to express modesty and tentativeness, softening assertions and indicating that what follows is the speaker's opinion or belief rather than an absolute fact.
- It can be employed to soften potentially unpleasant messages, especially when disagreeing with someone, making the disagreement less confrontational.
- "I think" serves as a marker of epistemic modality, reflecting varying degrees of certainty in statements, from high certainty to low certainty.
- In cross-examination scenarios or when describing objects, "I think" is used to express uncertainty and openness to alternative possibilities.
- It can also be used to introduce statements that reinforce or support preceding statements, signaling that the following information is presented as a fact or evidence.
- The meaning of "I think" is ever-changing depending on the context and certain elements to the statements to indicate either agreement or disagreement.

In this analysis, the pragmatic marker "I think" was found to play a multifaceted role in formal communication. Firstly, it serves as a means to express modesty and tentativeness, enabling individuals to voice their opinions while acknowledging differing viewpoints—a function that translation choices within the corpus brought to light across languages and cultures. Secondly, it operates as a tool for softening potentially uncomfortable messages, fostering diplomatic and less confrontational dialogues, with the translation analysis revealing variations in its application across different linguistic contexts. Furthermore, "I think" can be employed to hedge statements, signifying a level of uncertainty or flexibility in the speaker's stance, a concept further elucidated by examining its adaptation to suit the norms and expectations of different language speakers. Lastly, it contributes to creating an environment of adaptability and cooperation in conversations, encouraging collaborative idea exchange without an overly assertive tone. This study, with insights from the translation corpus, underscores how the functions of "I think" facilitate effective and respectful communication in diverse formal contexts, while also revealing its consistent structural rendering as "أظن" (athun) in Arabic translations, indicating universality in certain aspects of its pragmatic use across languages.

IV. THE CORE MEANING OF "I THINK"

A notable disparity exists in our comprehension of divergence within theoretical viewpoints, particularly when it comes to the quest for a unifying definition of the phrase "I think" that can encompass its diverse applications. This divide can be classified into two primary factions, as delineated by Blakemore (2002, section 4.4):

- The initial set of suggestions proposes that "I think" carries connotations of unresolved or unsettled aspects within the conversation. This perspective finds representation in concepts such as R. Lakoff's (1973) of an inadequacy in response, Svartvik's (1980) idea of a shift in discourse's topic focus, Schiffrin's (1987) exploration of a lack of coherence, and Jucker's (1993) exploration of deviation from optimal relevance.
- Conversely, the second group of suggestions contends that "I think," when operating as a pragmatic marker, preserves a strong association with its initial adverbial application. This perspective is supported by notions such as Carlson's (1984) recognition of a maneuver in the context of a dialogue game, Bolinger's (1989) endorsement of a standard, and Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg's (2003) proposal concerning the indication of positive evaluation and the speaker's diverse linguistic approach.

To resolve this apparent contradiction, several observations can be considered:

- As demonstrated earlier, the pragmatic marker "I think" in 19th-century English literature exhibits a nuanced range of functions, akin to Andersen's characterization of interactional markers (2001, p. 73). This marker can either denote agreement (concurrence) or disagreement (discord) within the context. In terms of its structural role, it may serve as an introductory or concluding element within various discourse units such as conversations, narratives, or segments thereof, including reported speech, thereby delineating the boundaries of a concluding statement.
- Numerous scholars have drawn parallels between the pragmatic marker "I think", or some of its usages, and contrastive conjunctions (e.g., Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2003, pp. 1124-1144; Carlson, 1984, p. 42; Norrick, 2001; Schiffrin, 1987, pp. 118–119; Smith & Jucker, 2000). The prevailing consensus among these scholars posits that "I think" conveys a modified or softened form of opposition, distinct from conjunctions like "well" and others.

The core issue at the heart of these contradictory positions revolves around the interplay between the ostensibly positive meaning of the adverb "I think" and its often-subtle expressions of insufficiency or negativity. This tension is akin to an implicature, as suggested by Van Eijck and Kamp (1997), where "I think" initially developed as a sign of acceptance but

has evolved to signal qualification or disbelief when used in contexts with conversational difficulties or challenges. This multifaceted nature of "I think" underscores the complex interplay between its literal (positive) meaning and its nuanced, non-literal (somewhat negative) connotations. By examining this issue within the framework of contrastive linguistics and considering the concept of a radial category, further insight into the core meaning of "I think" may be attainable.

V. MULTIFUNCTIONALITY OF "I THINK": HOMONYMY OR POLYSEMY?

The versatility of discourse markers is widely recognized, both within theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. However, the field presents various perspectives on how to address the issue of polyfunctionality. In Jucker et al. (1993, p. 437), three distinct approaches to dealing with the polyfunctionality of discourse markers are outlined.

One proposed resolution suggests that certain discourse markers, such as "I think", inherently possess ambiguity and, as a result, require the inclusion of multiple discrete entries within a lexical database. This approach acknowledges that these markers can take on multiple meanings depending on their context.

An alternative perspective argues that all usages of these markers can be traced back to a singular core signification. In other words, it posits that there is a fundamental, underlying meaning that unifies all the diverse uses of a particular marker.

The third proposed solution rejects the notion of polyfunctionality altogether, contending that a comprehensive comprehension of these markers allows for their encapsulation under a unified, overarching description. This perspective seeks to find commonalities among the different functions of a marker rather than emphasizing their diversity.

These diverse viewpoints underscore the complexity and ongoing discourse within the field of linguistics regarding the multifaceted nature of discourse markers. In accordance with Aijmer's perspective from 2002 (p. 19), the conventional approach to addressing the multifunctionality of discourse markers aligns with the concept of homonymy, as delineated in Jucker's first solution. Homonymy involves specifying numerous distinct meanings corresponding to the various contexts in which a discourse particle is employed, a practice characterized as "meaning maximalism." Nonetheless, this method faces a significant obstacle, as highlighted by Carlson in 1984 (p. 28), who asserts that the concept of homonymy becomes problematic when extended to elements such as discourse markers due to their potentially unlimited variations. Carlson elucidates that these markers appear to possess minimal inherent value when isolated, as their distinct and unmistakable nuances stem primarily from the contextual environment in which they operate. Some discourse markers are entirely reliant on context for their significance. Consequently, homonymy fails to provide a robust resolution to the intricate issue of multifunctionality, given the inherent contextual variability and the potential for an impractical proliferation of meanings associated with these markers.

Jucker's third solution, which seeks to identify a singular core meaning for discourse markers, emerges as a predominant aspiration shared by the majority of researchers in this field. The pursuit of uncovering this foundational and encompassing essence represents a unifying objective among scholars engaged in the study of discourse markers.

Aijmer (2002) refers to the view that pragmatic markers can be polysemous rather than homonymous as "meaning minimalism" or "methodical minimalism." Hansen (1998) is cited as an example of this approach, arguing that the French adjective "bon" and the discourse marker "bon" are "two uses of the same item, and not a pair of homonymous expressions" (1998, p. 89). However, it is important to note that while the polysemy of "I think" can be justified on semantic grounds, the equivalence in the morphosyntactic behavior of the adjective/adverb and the discourse marker is more difficult to argue. This is because grammaticalized discourse markers and their sources often exhibit distinctly different categorial behaviors.

The primary objective pursued by most researchers in this field appears to be Jucker's third solution, which involves the quest for a singular core meaning. In her seminal work, Aijmer (2002, p. 21) characterizes this particular approach as 'meaning minimalism' or 'methodical minimalism', in contrast to the concept of 'meaning maximalism,' which pertains to homonymy. Jucker (1993) and Aijmer (2002) advocate an intermediary approach, suggesting that it is possible to encapsulate "all uses under a unified general description" (Jucker, 1993, p. 437) or, to be more precise, that a marker can possess various functions that are interconnected with a prototype or core meaning in a polysemous manner (Aijmer, 2002, p. 21).

VI. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "I THINK" AS A RADIAL SEMANTIC CATEGORY

Radial semantic categories, also known as radial categories, are a concept within cognitive linguistics that represents a network of related meanings or concepts surrounding a central or core meaning. Langacker (1987) describes these categories as a way to capture the spectrum of related senses that revolve around a central meaning, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of word usage and its inherent flexibility.

The meanings associated with each focal point exist in a spectrum between nearly opposing ideas: partial agreement and contrast within the modal focus, as well as the functions of opening and pre-closing within the structural focus. These meanings within each domain create a gradual continuum with various connections to other linguistic elements, such as conjunctions (like "and" or "but"), parenthetical connectives (such as "so," "however," "I mean," and "now"), and interjections (like "OK," "fine," and "right"). These linguistic elements indicate agreement, disagreement, continuity, or

rephrasing, so the meanings they convey can be seen as overlapping or closely related to the meaning conveyed by the phrase "I think".

The translation equivalents of "I think" in 19th Century English Literature and its translation into Arabic lend credence to this interpretation. As highlighted in section 2, diverse contrastive analyses of the translation of "I think" reveal consistent correspondences rooted in similar semantic foundations, encompassing markers of continuity and contrast, as well as expressions denoting agreement and affirmation.

In a similar vein, when examining the back-translation of the fundamental equivalents of "I think" in 19th Century English Literature, as well as their corresponding renditions in Arabic translations, we encounter English expressions signifying agreement (e.g., "indeed," "certainly," "I agree"), continuity (e.g., "so"), and rephrasing (e.g., "I mean"). This comparative analysis offers supporting evidence for the proposed radial structure of "I think" in this context and highlights the nuanced boundaries between "I think" and other discourse markers. Furthermore, it underscores the internal relationships between the various meanings attributed to this marker. This perspective accounts for the established observation, as emphasized by different scholars, that the meanings of "I think" are not mutually exclusive but at times harmoniously coexist (cf. Jucker, 1993; Andersen, 2001, p. 64) within the framework of 19th Century English Literature and its Arabic translations.

Ascertaining the exact significance of "I think" can pose difficulties due to its inherent generality or the close interrelation of its potential meanings. This can lead to situations where it's challenging to separate its modal and structural functions, as illustrated in the following *example*:

Narrator: "Tell me, have you ever traveled through time?"

Time Traveler: "No."

Narrator: "Have you considered the implications of time travel?"

Time Traveler: "Good heavens! Why do you ask that?"

Narrator: "I think it's one of the possibilities for someone with your scientific knowledge. It's a bit more intriguing than saying 'I've simply never had the opportunity to explore it,' don't you think?" (The Time Machine, 1895).

Example 1. The Multifaceted Nature of "I think"

"I think" functions as a pragmatic marker that encompasses various meanings and roles within discourse. It serves as both a response initiator (structural) and a marker with modal value, which involves the expression of opinions, beliefs, or uncertainty. In summary, when considering the examples analyzed in the context of the film under study and the results of the contrastive analysis of "I think" discussed earlier, the meaning of "I think" can be understood as a network of related meanings within two core aspects: its modal functions and its structural functions.

However, a further question arises: Are there any core features of "I think"? It is possible to identify two core features of the marker, namely, expression of continuity and downtoning. This notion aligns with Svartvik's (1980, p. 177) definition of "I think", which signals a modification or partial change in the discourse. It introduces a part of the discourse that shares common ground with what preceded it but also differs from it to some degree.

As highlighted in several studies, "I think" serves a dual role as both retrospective and prospective. It presupposes an existing previous context to which the forthcoming utterance is a qualified response, and it indicates that such an utterance is about to follow. Modal uses of "I think" are often tied to its retrospective nature, while its structural uses are linked to its prospective one, as suggested by Svartvik (1980, p. 177).

The concept of continuity aligns with the transitional characteristic expounded by Wierzbicka (cited in Schourup, 2001, p. 1058). Similarly, just as Bolinger (1989, p. 316) suggests that "I think" is simply used as an agent for smoothing the seams and contradictions in discourse, "I think" serves as a linguistic tool for achieving coherence and managing the flow of conversation. Stenstrom (1994, pp. 112–115) describes the use of "I think" in objection utterances.

VII. THE FUNCTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF "I THINK" IN PROCEDURAL TERMS

Contrastive analysis supports the radial category description of pragmatic markers such as "I think" and also has other important theoretical implications related to the procedural nature of its meaning. The analysis of "I think" has led Blakemore (2002, p. 147) to the conclusion that procedural meaning is not a unified concept. Procedural information is different in the case of "I think" when compared with that of conjunctions and parenthetical connectives such as *but*, *so*, and *well* as particular cognitive effect is not activated by it, but rather, the speaker's guarantee that cognitive effects are yielded by his utterance is simply encoded.

Looking at it from a comparative perspective, we can support this hypothesis by noting that markers such as *but*, which have stronger connections to the propositional level, tend to have a more reliable translation compared to markers like *I think*, which are more closely associated with the pragmatic aspects of discourse construction.

The translation analysis of *but* in "Ananda: the Miracle Worker" serves as an illustration of the hypothesis. A frequency analysis demonstrates that in the majority of instances, *but* is translated as its exact equivalent "لكن":

TABLE 6
TRANSLATION OF "BUT" AS "لكن"

<p>"I am sorry to knock you up so early, Doctor," said he, "but I have had a very serious accident during the night. (The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb, 1892)</p>	<p>قال: «أنا أسف لإيقاظك في وقتٍ مُبكر كهذا أيها الطبيب، ولكنني تعرضتُ لحادثٍ خطيرٍ للغاية ليلاً.»</p>
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In the given example, the word "but" is used as a conjunction to introduce a contrasting or unexpected element in the sentence. The speaker starts by expressing regret for waking up the doctor early, acknowledging that it's an inconvenience. However, the use of "but" signals a shift in the statement. The contrasting or unexpected part follows, which is the speaker explaining the reason for their early visit – a very serious accident during the night. In the translation, "ولكنني" (but) serves a similar function to its English counterpart, introducing a contrast or shift in the statement.

The variations in translating "I think" and "but" are evident. The data strongly suggest that "but" has a more consistent translation, supporting the notion that pragmatic markers such as "I think," in terms of their conceptual or propositional significance, possess a more exact meaning and are less influenced by context, although contextual impacts can still be observed in combination cases. This observation highlights the different nature of these two linguistic elements: "I think" is inherently more context-dependent and multifunctional, while "but" primarily serves a contrastive function with more stable translation equivalents.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Contrastive analysis has proven to be an invaluable method for understanding the complex nature of pragmatic markers and the various meanings they can convey. In studying the translation of the pragmatic marker "I think," the following findings have been revealed:

(a) "I think" is a versatile marker that encompasses both modal and structural functions. These functions are not mutually exclusive but rather interconnected. The analysis suggests that the meaning of "I think" can be best understood as a radial category, encompassing interactive interpretations and textual meanings. Additionally, certain meanings within this category have subtle shades of meaning relationships with each other and with other linguistic markers.

(b) Two key characteristics of "I think" are continuity and moderation. This marker can be used, not only to refer to preceding discourse but also to anticipate future utterances. It is used to react to a prior statement and also to introduce a subsequent one. By signaling a shift in attitude, expectations, or text structure, it acts as a filter for future utterances. Continuity is more closely associated with the structural functions of "I think," while moderation is linked to its modal functions and expressions of politeness.

(c) The meaning conveyed by discourse markers like "I think" differs from the procedural meaning of logical markers such as "but," "so," and "well." The latter tend to have more consistent translations. In contrast, the meanings and translations of "I think" share similarities with interjections.

To fully understand pragmatic markers, a comprehensive approach is needed, including contrastive analysis, contextualization, and paraphrasing. However, contrastive analysis has an advantage over paraphrasing and direct translation as it involves translators in the process of interpreting an expression and finding an appropriate equivalent in another language. Utilizing diverse corpora and cross-linguistic comparisons can help mitigate individual translator idiosyncrasies.

In conclusion, this paper provides compelling evidence that translation can either support or challenge claims that are based on a single language. Contrastive analysis is a powerful tool for exploring the pragmatic nuances of language, both in general and specifically in relation to pragmatic discourse markers like "I think." Conversely, the study of discourse markers enhances translation theory by necessitating a deep understanding of the inherent pragmatics of communication, particularly in the complex realm of translation.

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