



Module 7 – Communication Functions & Discourse Markers

Introduction

In this lesson, we'll look at what communicative functions are and how to sound more natural, organized, and fluent by using discourse markers, opinion phrases, and structures that emphasize important ideas. The goal of the lesson is to help you improve fluency, structure, and clarity in conversation.

What Are Communicative Functions?

Communicative functions are the purposes behind what we say—agreeing, asking, clarifying, emphasizing. Mastering these helps you interact more effectively in English.

Discourse Markers – Overview & Categories

Let's expand on discourse markers with more natural examples from conversations and presentations:

- **Adding:**
"I've already contacted the city council. In addition, I've started drafting the volunteer schedule."
"We need tools and materials. Moreover, we need community support."
- **Contrasting:**
"The park is a peaceful place. However, it lacks proper lighting."
"Some residents want a playground. On the other hand, others prefer a quiet seating area."
- **Cause and Effect:**
"The event was poorly advertised. As a result, attendance was low."
"The community responded positively. Therefore, we decided to expand the project."
- **Emphasizing:**
"Indeed, our neighborhood is full of talented gardeners."
"In fact, studies show that urban gardens can lower crime rates."



- **Rephrasing:**
"It's not just a place to grow plants. In other words, it's a place to grow community spirit."
"We need a shared goal. To put it differently, everyone should feel invested in the outcome."
- **Summarizing:**
"To sum up, a garden is feasible, beneficial, and supported."
"Overall, this project aligns with our values and long-term goals."

Use a variety of expressions to express yourself in conversations and discussions:

- **Neutral opinions:**
"From my point of view, the project is a valuable opportunity."
"As far as I can tell, most people would support the idea."
- **Strong agreement:**
"Exactly! I couldn't agree more."
"Absolutely, that's precisely what I was thinking."
- **Polite disagreement:**
"I see where you're coming from, but I'd argue the benefits outweigh the drawbacks."
"That's a fair point; however, I still believe the garden is a worthwhile investment."

These help maintain respectful and constructive communication, especially in group settings.

Speculating and Hypothesizing

Speculation is useful when you're not certain about a fact, or when you want to imagine possibilities:

- **Modal verbs for probability:**
"She must be the new coordinator—they mentioned someone was starting today."
"They could have forgotten about the meeting."
"You might want to double-check the schedule."
- **Conditionals for imagining scenarios:**
"If more volunteers join, we can finish the setup faster."



“If the funding doesn’t come through, we’ll need to scale back the plan.”
“If I had known about the grant, I would have applied last month.”

These structures add flexibility and depth to your language.

Emphasis with Cleft Sentences

Let’s look at a few more cleft sentence structures to highlight key information.

- **Wh-clefts:**
“What makes this project unique is the community involvement.”
“What we really need now is commitment from the members.”
“What she emphasized was the need for long-term planning.”
- **It-clefts:**
“It was during the last meeting that the idea was first mentioned.”
“It’s local families who will benefit the most.”
“It was the funding from the city that made the difference.”

These constructions help draw attention to the most important part of your message, making your speech clearer and more persuasive.

Combining Strategies

Advanced speakers often combine discourse markers with other strategies in longer stretches of speech. For example:

“In my opinion, the garden could transform our neighborhood. Not only would it provide fresh produce, but it would also promote social interaction. However, I understand some of you are worried about vandalism. That’s a fair concern. What I suggest is installing lights and encouraging community monitoring. To sum up, I truly believe this project will benefit all of us.”

Notice how the speaker:

- States an opinion,
- Adds supporting arguments,
- Acknowledges opposing views,
- Offers a solution,
- Ends with a summary.



This combination mirrors real-life conversations and presentations, making communication smoother and more effective.

Lesson reading 7: Presentation of the Community Garden Project – with Discourse Markers and Communicative Functions

Story Summary

This compelling story showcases Lisa's passionate presentation to her neighborhood association about creating a community garden project. The narrative demonstrates effective public speaking and persuasive communication as Lisa addresses concerns, responds to questions, and builds support for her proposal. Through her interactions with various community members, including skeptical neighbors like Mrs. Johnson and Mr. Chen, Lisa demonstrates how skilled communicators utilize discourse markers to organize their thoughts, connect ideas, and guide their audience through complex arguments.

The story illustrates how public speaking requires not just good ideas but also the ability to structure information clearly, acknowledge different viewpoints, and respond diplomatically to challenges. Lisa's presentation covers practical aspects of community development, including funding, maintenance, safety, and long-term sustainability. The neighborhood meeting setting provides an authentic context for understanding how discourse markers help speakers navigate discussions, express opinions respectfully, and build consensus in group settings. The story illustrates how effective communication involves not only presenting information but also listening to others, addressing their concerns, and finding common ground to achieve shared goals.

"The Community Garden Project"

Lisa stands before the neighborhood association, ready to present her proposal for a community garden. She's passionate about the project and has spent weeks preparing her presentation.

"Good evening, everyone. **First of all**, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight. **As you are aware**, our neighborhood has been discussing ways to **enhance** our community spaces. **In my opinion**, a community garden would be the perfect solution."

She clicks to her first slide. "**Let me explain** why I believe this project is important. **On the one hand**, we have this vacant lot that has been unused for years. **On the other hand**, we have residents who are interested in growing their own food but lack the space to do so."



Mrs. Johnson raises her hand. **"I see your point**, but I'm concerned about the costs. **As far as I'm concerned**, the association's budget is already stretched thin this year."

"That's a valid concern," Lisa responds. **"However**, I've researched funding options extensively. **In fact**, there are several grants available specifically for community garden projects. **Moreover**, local businesses have expressed interest in sponsoring the initiative."

She continues her presentation with confidence. **"Furthermore**, this project would bring multiple benefits to our neighborhood. **Not only** would it provide fresh produce for participants, **but it would also** create a space for people to meet and build relationships."

Mr. Chen looks skeptical. **"I tend to disagree** with the idea that everyone will participate. **What if** people lose interest after a few months?"

"That's an excellent question," Lisa acknowledges. **"Indeed**, maintaining long-term engagement is crucial. **That's why** I propose creating a structured program with seasonal activities and educational workshops. **To put it differently**, we need to make it more than just a garden – we need to make it a community hub."

She moves to her next point. **"In addition**, I've spoken with the Parks Department, and they're willing to provide technical support. **As a result**, we wouldn't need to hire expensive consultants. **What's more**, they can help us with soil testing and plant selection."

The discussion becomes more animated. Several residents share their thoughts, and Lisa listens carefully to each concern.

"I understand your worries about vandalism," Lisa says, addressing another question. **"Nevertheless**, I believe the benefits outweigh the risks. **After all**, when people feel ownership of a space, they're more likely to protect it."

"To be honest," says Mrs. Rodriguez, **"I'm not entirely convinced** about the maintenance aspect. **What happens** during winter months when nothing grows?"

"That's where creative programming comes in," Lisa explains. **"For instance**, we could host workshops on food preservation, composting, and indoor gardening. **In other words**, the garden would be active year-round."

As the discussion continues, Lisa notes the shifting mood. **"I can see** that many of you are warming up to the idea. **Obviously**, there are still details to work out, but **the important thing** is that we're having this conversation."



She concludes her presentation with passion. **"To sum up**, this community garden represents more than just a place to grow vegetables. **It's about** creating connections, promoting health, and building a stronger neighborhood. **What I'm asking** is for your support to move forward with a pilot program."

"All things considered," says the association president, **"I think** we should put this to a vote. **Does anyone else** have questions before we proceed?"

"Just one more thing," Lisa adds. **"Whether or not** we approve this project tonight, **I want to emphasize** that community engagement is what makes neighborhoods thrive. **In any case**, I'm grateful for your time and consideration."