



Parenthetical you know as a marker of (im)politeness

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PART I

YOU KNOW: (IM)POLITENESS MARKER IN NATURALLY OCCURRING SPEECH?

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In naturally occurring English, the discourse marker *you know* often appears in a parenthetical or final position, uttered as a comment clause, at a key moment of speech in progress

It feels sometimes like we're (...) another state\ of America\ doesn't it\ i mean and err you know (...) there is the (...) we had the (...) kingdom in Rome and now we've got another one in the US (BBC, 31/07/2009).

You know is not employed here as a verb of knowledge but as an argumentative discourse marker used in interaction. Being parenthetical, S. Fitzmaurice considers that *you know* operates as a fixed expression.¹

“[...] the verb phrases, *you see* and *you know* [...] behave as fixed or ossified, unanalyzable expressions when they operate as comment clauses or parentheticals [...]”

You know could also be tackled from the angle of politeness strategy. According to Erman.²

Examples of markers with a hedging function include *I think, I guess, you know, sort of, kind of*. Examples of approximators include *or something, and*

¹ S. Fitzmaurice, “Subjectivity, intersubjectivity and the historical construction of interlocutor stance: From stance markers to discourse markers”, *Discourse Studies* 6/4 (2004), p. 431.

² B. Erman, “Pragmatic Markers Revisited with a Focus on *You Know* in Adult and Adolescent Talk”, *Journal of Pragmatics* 33 (2001), p. 1341.

all this, and everything, and all that, and so on and so forth, etc. Through approximators the speaker gives the listener/s “a rough but sufficiently exact idea about a certain state of affairs for the general purpose of the conversation”, as I have suggested elsewhere (cf. Erman, 1995: 144). As hedges and approximators the markers clearly have a face-saving function.

This quotation underlines the hedging function of *you know* and its face-saving dimension. Since it enlists the hearer's support and is based on shared knowledge, could we not consider that it belongs to positive politeness? Brown and Levinson give the following definitions:

[Positive politeness] is oriented toward the positive face of H [the hearer], the positive self-image that he claims for himself. Positive politeness is approach-based; it ‘anoints’ the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects, S [the speaker] wants H's wants [...]³

[Negative politeness is defined as] redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded. It is the heart of respect behaviour [...]⁴

Should we then tackle *you know* in the field of negative politeness or positive politeness? Quite often, it is possible to replace *you know* by *you see*. According to G. Ranger,⁵ *you see* “is not in itself a marker of politeness, but [...] the operations of which *you see* is the textual trace lend themselves to strategies including impoliteness (an FTA) as well as negative and positive politeness”. In a sub-chapter entitled “negative politeness”, Graham Ranger shows that *you see* helps the speaker to “redress a potential imposition by providing his co-speaker⁶ with an independent argument p2 in support of p1”.⁷ *You know* seems to operate very much in the same way, since it moderates insufficiently supported assertions that are potential FTA's. We will quote G. Ranger:

Although typical FTA's are orders, criticism etc I consider that insufficiently supported assertions can also potentially constitute FTA's in that they require

³ P. Brown & S. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 70.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 129.

⁵ G. Ranger “You see” in *Lexis, Special Issue 2: Theoretical Approaches to Linguistic (Im)politeness*, 2010: 129
<http://lexis.univ-lyon3.fr/spip.php?article154>

⁶ We will use indifferently co-speaker, co-utterer or addressee.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 126.

the co-speaker to accept a given representation on the strength of the locutor's authority alone.⁸

The first utterances we have given, along with those to come, could be dealt with in the same way. *You know* is not so much a positive polite speech act as a tool to moderate a face-threatening act, since the knowledge in the main clause is not shared or built together with the addressee but imposed on him.

Our question is the following: is the discourse marker *you know* a genuine address to the hearer, does it really provide the co-speaker with an independent argument? We believe that any sense of real address is illusory and we will refer to the environment in which it occurs to show this. The analysis of the combination of the markers surrounding *you know* will lead us to think that this hedge is a fake address, a form of mock politeness, making it possible to impose a consensus by presenting it as agreed upon. *You know* can constitute a powerful linguistic tool, playing on politeness to partly subvert it.

Hence, the issue of (im)politeness will be at stake and we will be using the theoretical framework presented by M.A. Morel and L. Danon-Boileau⁹ to question and tackle the apparent address to the co-utterer. Does *you know* really address the co-speaker or is this address a mere illusion?

The theoretical framework we will be using presents a model of prosodic constraints in French. We do not aim at using this model on English to the full, since this would raise methodological issues. More precisely, we will discard some of its macro-syntactic reading, but will still adopt its enunciative implications.¹⁰

Within naturally occurring French and within the complexity of the context, M.A. Morel and L. Danon Boileau refer to the shape and level of the fundamental frequency (F0) in order to analyse the relation between the speaker ("énonciateur", utterer) and addressee ("coénonciateur", co-utterer). They divide the pitch range within levels, namely the high and low levels of the range of a speaker. A rising intonation at a high level corresponds to an address to the co-utterer whereas a falling intonation

⁸ Ibid, p. 126.

⁹ M.A. Morel & L. Danon-Boileau, *Grammaire de l'intonation: l'exemple du français* (Paris: Ophrys, 1998).

¹⁰ This is very much in keeping with J Szlamowicz's theoretical framework as it is developed in his thesis:

J. Szlamowicz, "Contribution à une approche intonative et énonciative du rôle des ligateurs dans la construction du discours en anglais oral spontané"; thesis submitted at Paris III, 2001.

indicates an ego-centred utterance (“énoncé égocentré”) and tends to bring the speech act to a close. Their enunciative reading of intonative shapes can be applied to the study of English.

Along with this prosodic dimension, their approach is embedded in macro-syntactic concerns, speech acts being structured in syntactic units as follows: preamble + rheme + postrheme¹¹ like “Tu vois moi j’crois (préambule) qu’ c’est pas comme ça qu’ça doit marcher (rheme) la société (post-rheme)”. These units have recurrent intonative features: the preamble has a rising intonation signaling that the frame of the utterance is shared with the co-utterer; the rheme starts from a high level and then follows a falling modulation. The post-rheme comes after the rheme and partly reproduces its intonation in as much as it shows a rather abrupt fall to finally reach the lowest pitch range. It indicates that the utterance has come to a close and is not to be challenged.

The syntactic dimension of this theory cannot be fully transposed to English, since the relative weight of themes and rhemes are totally different. Still, some features can still be kept. In fact, we are particularly interested in the equivalent in English of the post-rheme and have already studied it in the context of tag questions. *You know* appears in a syntactic context that seems to have something to do with post-rhemes. That will be the point made in II-c.

1. *You know*: when shared knowledge is at stake

Dealing with the politeness marker *you know* is a central consideration of J. Szlamowicz’s doctoral thesis¹² as well in B. Le Lan’s research¹³ that is partially translated into English in her article “Orchestrating conversation”.¹⁴ The relation to the addressee is a matter of concern for both. Firstly, we shall deal with their respective approaches.

¹¹ M.A. Morel & L. Danon-Boileau, *Grammaire de l’intonation: l’exemple du français* (Paris: Ophrys, 1998), p.21.

¹² J. Szlamowicz, “Contribution à une approche intonative et énonciative du rôle des ligateurs dans la construction du discours en anglais oral spontané”, thesis submitted at Paris III, 2001.

¹³ B. Le Lan, “Les marqueurs de structuration de la conversation en anglais spontané contemporain: le cas de *well* et *you know*”, thesis submitted at Paris IV (2007).

¹⁴ B. Le Lan, “Orchestrating conversation: the multifunctionality of *well* and *you know* in the joint construction of a verbal interaction”, *Connectives as Discourse Landmarks*, A. Celle & R. Huart Eds, John Benjamins Publishing Company (2007).

Neither study considers utterances where the verb can be conjugated in different tenses and require a direct object. They both deal with the fixed structure, most often reduced, that still remains rather close to its original meaning and can have numerous locations. We'll translate J. Szlamowicz on this matter.¹⁵

We notice a difference between the question *do you know*, the verb form *you know*, likely to give multiple constructions and the fixed structure *you know*. It can be considered as a connective since it does not indicate that the addressee's viewpoint is required but takes part in the construction of speech.¹⁶

The two authors have their own interpretations of the scope of *you know*, as far as the relation to the co-utterer is concerned. Barbara le Lan follows Mc Carthy (1998: 111), Schrifin (1987), Aijmer (2002). Quoting Ostman,¹⁷ B. Le Lan¹⁸ says:

“[when using *you know*], the speaker strives towards getting the addressee to cooperate and/or to accept the propositional content of his utterances as mutual background knowledge”.

According to what B. Le Lan argues in her article “Orchestrating conversation”.¹⁹

¹⁵ In this chapter, we will quote those two linguists. J. Szlamowicz's thesis is written in French. We will suggest translations while giving the original version in the footnotes. B. Le Lan's article targets *you know* more than her thesis does, since her thesis deals with *you know* among other hedges. The article being in English, we will quote her remarks word for word.

¹⁶ Translated from J. Szlamowicz, “Contribution à une approche intonative et énonciative du rôle des ligateurs dans la construction du discours en anglais oral spontané”; thesis submitted at Paris III, 2001, p. 260.

“Notre constat est qu'il y a une différence entre la question *do you know*, la forme verbale *you know*, susceptible de constructions multiples, et le syntagme figé *you know* qui est un ligateur et en tant que tel n'est pas l'indice d'une sollicitation du point de vue de l'autre mais un adjuvant de la construction du discours.”

¹⁷ J.O. Ostman, *You Know: a Discourse Functional View* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981), p. 17.

¹⁸ B. Le Lan, “Orchestrating conversation: the multifunctionality of *well* and *you know* in the joint construction of a verbal interaction”, *Connectives as Discourse Landmarks*, A. Celle & R. Huart Eds, John Benjamins Publishing Company, (2007), p.107.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107-108.

And the ultimate goal of the speaker's turn is ... "you", that is the hearer's understanding of and sympathizing with what s/he says. This "you" is interesting in more than one respect, because in referring to the hearer in his/her own discourse, the speaker may very well mentally adopt the hearer's exterior stance from his/her oral production in "stepping out" of it, which is another way of gaining a view of it.

You know is more explicit than *well* in its appeal to the hearer's attention and sympathy [...]. As an ex governing clause, *you know* signals that the speaker is taking a kind of bird's eye view at a particular moment of his own oral production in order to submit a unified semantic whole to the addressee.

J. Szlamowicz's analyses also take their inspiration from Schrifin's approach:

In keeping with Schrifin's approach, we can indeed say that the use of *you know* allows the speaker to solicit the addressee's sympathy through various pragmatic situations. When the addressee already knows what is going to be said, it is a means to "anooint" his face -- to quote the metaphor used by Levinson and Brown. ("I do not take you for a fool, you must already know that") and one's own ("I'm not repeating myself, I know that you know"). When he does not know, it is a way of indicating that he should know it.²⁰

But considering *you know* for its intonative pattern in the length and complexity of naturally occurring passages rather than isolated utterances, he partly drifts away from D. Schrifin's analyses. It is the address to the addressee or rather the lack of genuine address to the addressee as well as the fact that no response is elicited that is at the core of J. Szlamowicz's concerns. On *you know* he comments:

²⁰ Translated from J. Szlamowicz, "Contribution à une approche intonative et énonciative du rôle des ligateurs dans la construction du discours en anglais oral spontané": thesis submitted in Paris III, 2001, p. 260. "On peut certes dire avec Schrifin que la mise en place de *you know* sert à capter une bienveillance du co-locuteur avec des arrières plans pragmatiques variés. Quand le co-locuteur sait déjà ce qu'on va dire, c'est une manière de ménager sa face ("je ne te prends pas pour un imbécile, tu dois déjà le savoir") et la sienne propre ("je ne me répète pas, je sais que tu sais"). Et quand il ne le sait pas, c'est une façon de signaler qu'il devrait le savoir."

If we wanted to paraphrase the way the speaker positions himself, we would be in the presence of a speech act indicating with *you know* that “you may or may not know, but I set up my utterance as if you knew”.²¹

By taking into account the prosody around *you know*, he notes that this hedge occurs without any modulation or prosodic salience. Having shown this recurrent feature, he establishes *you know* as an ego-centred marker through which “l’énonciateur se signale comme seul maître de son discours” (the utterer presents himself as the only one in control of his speech).²²

In most utterances of *you know*, this marker does not genuinely indicate a gap in the consensus gained, as there can be no divergence. The enunciative value of *you know* exists therefore on another level. With *you know* the speaker gives his utterance the perspective of shared knowledge or shared viewpoint and [...] this position is taken for granted by the speaker.²³

B. Le Lan’s approach of *you know* as a marker appealing to the addressee’s attention and J. S Szlamowicz’s interpretation are mainly contradictory. This can easily be understood with the following analysis by Ostman who underlines the dual meaning of *you know*. Regarding utterances such as “You know, ma’am, if you weren’t a lady, I’d punch you right in your face,” she says²⁴:

You know is the chief mitigator of the otherwise rude effect that the utterance could have. The speaker does strive to get the message across even though it might not be a nice message. That is, in power-semantic terms the speaker’s propositional content indicates that he does obviously not want to be regarded as ‘inferior’, but his use of *you know* (‘with polite connotations’) softens it down and even gives a paradoxical flavour, which perhaps makes it even more effective as a threat.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.259: “Si l’on voulait gloser le positionnement de l’énonciateur, on se trouverait précisément face à une parole marquant par *you know* que “tu sais ou tu ne sais pas mais moi je construis mon énoncé comme si tu savais.”

²² *Ibid*, p. 261.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 261: “Dans la grande majorité des occurrences de *you know*, ce marqueur ne signale en fait pas fondamentalement un écart de consensualité acquise, il ne saurait y avoir de divergence. La valeur énonciative de *you know* se situe donc sur un autre plan. Avec *you know* l’énonciateur donne comme horizon de sens à son énoncé la perspective d’un savoir partagé ou d’un point de vue commun et [...] ce positionnement est considéré par l’énonciateur comme acquis.”

²⁴ J. O. Ostman, *You Know: a Discourse Functional View* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981, p. 21.

The potential contradictions between Le Lan's and Szlamowicz's interpretations are not specific to *you know* but are part and parcel of fixed expressions. Regarding the latter, L. Perrin says:²⁵

Set expressions have a dual, or rather ambivalent, meaning, having both an original constructed meaning that we call "ascendant", built on the application of rules that are still partially active, and an emerging lexical meaning, called "descendant".²⁶

Thus, in its emerging lexical meaning, we can consider that *you know* indicates shared knowledge and enlists a reaction from the co-utterer. This is in keeping with Mc Carthy,²⁷ Schrifin (1987), Aijmer (2002) and Le Lan (2007). Still, another interpretation can be grasped, the emerging lexical meaning enabling an interpretation in which *you know* would not necessarily be an address to the co-speaker or seek the approval of the addressee but would rather have another function that we are going to investigate.

Within naturally occurring speech, this ambivalent meaning can be partly subversive. That is what J. Szlamowicz writes about *you know*:

It comes as no surprise to find [it] in argumentative, illustrative, polemical and descriptive contexts: the utterer facilitates for himself the process of communicating his argumentation by indirectly stimulating the sympathy of the co-utterer. The utterer presumes the addressee's immediate capacity to understand the content of his speech, a means not to win him over, but, to the contrary, to avoid any possible disagreement. This is the case in argumentative and polemical contexts, but more widely, *you know* anticipates the introduction of a shared viewpoint. However this viewpoint is that of the utterer and is not necessarily shared: it is by acting as if it

²⁵ L. Perrin, "Figement, énonciation et lexicalisation *citative*" in *Le figement linguistique: la parole entravée*, ed. J.C Anscombe & S. Mejri (Paris: H. Champion Editeur, 2011), p. 81-94.

²⁶ Translated from L. Perrin, "Figement, énonciation et lexicalisation *citative*" in, *Le figement linguistique: la parole entravée*, J.C. Anscombe & S. Mejri ed. (Paris: H.Champion Editeur, 2011), p. 82. "Les expressions figées ont une signification bifaciale, ou plutôt ambivalente, relevant à la fois d'un sens construit originel que L. Perrin appelle *ascendant*, fondé sur l'application des règles encore partiellement actives, et le sens lexical émergent, appelé *descendant*."

²⁷ M. McCarthy, *Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 111.

were shared that the utterer tries to place himself on common ground with the co-utterer.²⁸

We are particularly interested in the indirect requirement that we find in the expression “indirectly stimulating the sympathy of the co-utterer”. We consider that this discourse marker is partly subversive in as much as it plays on politeness to impose a viewpoint, to influence the addressee by forcing his agreement. This is where the ambivalence of the marker lies. If we study what *you know* combines with, we notice that the context contributes to an ego-centred use of the discourse marker. Addressing the co-speaker is not an issue here?

2. Towards a context dependent solution: *you know* in colocation with ego-centred markers

Now that the ambivalence of the discourse marker has been established, we consider that we need to study more closely how the co-speaker is addressed by looking in detail at the various linguistic parameters in context. Indeed, intonative data, markers, syntactic locations, all work together to give *you know* an ego-centred dimension.

Thus, we will first account for intonation. This will contribute to showing that the discourse marker corresponds to a fake address to the other. The politeness at stake corresponds to a strategy whereby the utterer apparently calls for shared knowledge to better impose an ego-centred viewpoint.

²⁸ Translated from J. Szlamowicz, “Contribution à une approche intonative et énonciative du rôle des ligateurs dans la construction du discours en anglais oral spontané”; thesis submitted in Paris III, 2001, p. 274: “Il n’est donc pas surprenant de [la] trouver dans des contextes argumentatifs, illustratifs, polémiques, descriptifs: l’énonciateur se facilite le processus de communication de son argumentation en réclamant de manière détournée la bienveillance du co-énonciateur. L’énonciateur lui attribue d’emblée une capacité de compréhension de son discours, ce qui est une façon non pas de le gagner à sa cause [...] mais au contraire de ne pas prendre en compte une éventuelle adversité. C’est vrai dans les contextes argumentatifs et polémiques, mais plus largement, *you know* prélude à la mise en place d’un point de vue partagé. Or ce point de vue est celui de l’énonciateur et n’est pas à priori partagé, c’est en faisant comme s’il l’était que l’énonciateur tente de se mettre sur un plan commun au co-énonciateur.”

2.1. The prosody of *you know*

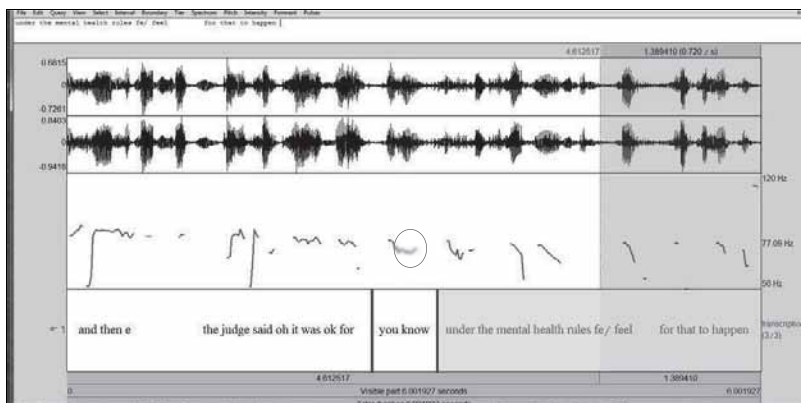
If we consider the use of *you know* in spontaneous English, we can confirm J. Szlamowicz's approach. The intonation of parenthetical *you know* is non-salient, as J. Szlamowicz notes in his corpora. More than that, *you know* tends to be reduced, and has a falling tone. This is what the following utterances illustrate, since they all show the same intonative pattern²⁹.

So it's actually still it is very sweet / but / tastes very sour if you get what I mean. And that's what gives the, the you know the the popping flavour I suppose if you get if that's the right words. (BBC, *This is England*, 23 Sep 2006, 09:58 am)



And then e the judge said oh it was ok for you know under the mental health rules fe/ feel for that to happen (Corpus, Intonational Variation in English, http://www.phon.ox.ac.uk/old_IViE)

²⁹ In this introductory passage, we will just give screenshots from PRAAT to illustrate the recurring intonation of *you know* since a full analysis can be found in Szlamowicz's research.



These two utterances (analysed with PRAAT) just give an illustration of a recurring pattern, whereby *you know* is non-salient. What we notice is that the discourse marker has a clearly falling tone, the utterer avoiding and neutralising any feedback from the co-speaker. This confirms what J. Szlamowicz says, and corresponds to what M.A. Morel and L. Danon-Boileau describe as follows:

Variations of F0 at a high level correspond to an appeal to the addressee, and consideration of the co-utterer, whereas the variations at a low level correspond to a self-centring or an ego-centred attitude.³⁰

The prosody of *you know* also confirms Ostman's analysis:³¹

Th[e] use of *You know* is primarily a speaker-oriented, Face-Saving *you know*: by using the declarative *you know*, the speaker does not want to be argued against. He does not anticipate a challenge from the addressee, nor does he want to be challenged.

Along with the prosody of *you know*, which J. Szlamowicz has already studied, we would like to account for the different markers that combine³²

³⁰ Translated from M. A. Morel & L. Danon-Boileau, *Grammaire de l'intonation: l'exemple du français* (Paris: Ophrys, 1998): "[...] les variations de F0 en place haute traduisent un appel à l'autre, et une prise en compte de la coénonciation, alors que les variations en place basse marquent un repli sur soi, une attitude égocentrée."

³¹ J. O. Ostman, *You Know: A Discourse Functional View* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981), p. 22.

with *you know*. Dealing with prosody is a first way of studying the discourse marker from a non-segmental perspective. It is a first step toward an integrated approach. *You know* can also be studied through the ways it combines with other markers, in as much as they all converge toward the same ego-centred value.

2.2. *You know* in collocation with ego-centred markers

2.2.1. *You know* & *sort of* / *kind of*

In parenthetical positions, *you know* often collocates with *sort of* or *kind of*, both being approximators and hesitation markers. This is what Erman³³ notices:

Another important modal function is to relieve the speaker from being completely committed to the truth value of the proposition in question, i.e. they function as hedges and approximators. The hedging and approximating functions are indeed quite close. Examples of markers with a hedging function include *I think*, *I guess*, *you know*, *sort of*, *kind of*.

The British National Corpus reveals many utterances where *you know*, *kind of* and *sort of* collocate. We shall just quote those where the combination is particularly repetitive:

JYN 1596 Yeah fine erm but as I say it's just sort of you know kind of minor layout changes, that's all I was suggesting

JYN 423 erm you know kind of er call that a first draft and then sort, you know, sort of try and sort of go through the books again and stick a few references in to back up the points you've made so you can see it relates to other people's evidence erm trying to go through it again and knock out the well you know what I mean kind of statements and, and, you know, you can gradually sort of make the er grad you know sort of but again it's, it's, it's one of these processes that I find, you know, you need to go through again and again and again to sort of get it er get it together erm so erm

We could also quote: JYN 200, JYN 421, JYN 450, JYN 451, JYN 809. Those occurrences confirm that *you know* works hand in hand with

³² This combination of markers is in the spirit of many of the papers given at the research day that took place in Paris VII (CLILLAC, Institut Charles V, 01/04/2011, "Combinatoire de marqueurs en anglais oral").

³³ B. Erman, "Pragmatic Markers Revisited with a Focus on *You Know* in Adult and Adolescent Talk", *Journal of Pragmatics* 33 (2001), p.1341.

other hedges. The attested presence of *you know* in a hedging strategy places it under the face theory and gives it a face-saving function, as the quotation from Erman³⁴ recalled in the introduction suggested. We will now try to better picture the linguistic environment of *you know*.

2.2.2. *I & you know: ego-centred markers*

The BNC shows 112 occurrences where *you know* closely collocates with *I*, and the collocation *I you know* is particularly recurrent at key moments of speech in progress.

In the following examples, we find *you know* in a syntactic position where it operates a transition between an ego-centred remark (*I mean*) and another passage where the co-utterer is addressed directly.

FYB 624 I mean it's been a helpful conversation, erm you know I'm not I you know you persuaded me, rightly or wrongly, that it's not that much of an issue in in our fellowship, but it's something that we do always need to be aware of.

In addition to this syntactic transitional role, other utterances reveal how much *I* and *you know* are interrelated.

D97 186 Well yeah I I've I've whether he well I mean if, if he's gonna do this seven page thing then I you know I you can look at it two ways.

Here, beyond the different hesitations, the context indicates that *you* is not 'the ultimate goal of the speaker's turn'³⁵ (Le Lan 2007: 107) and that the utterer is concerned about himself. The following examples confirm the ambivalence of *you know*, being both a mock address to the co-speaker and a firm positioning of *I*.

F7A 352 And I you know should be and I hope am alerting you to areas where er you know we are falling short.

FY8 185 Er well I think the experience that I gained of the the kind of erm living situation erm because I you know we underwent the same kind of difficulties.

In both occurrences, the utterer's position is at stake. Apparently, the utterer calls for the sympathy of the addressee (*you know we underwent the same kind of difficulties*). But the goal seems to be to present his own situation and viewpoint (*I should be, I hope, I think*). That is confirmed in

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1341.

³⁵ B. Le Lan, "Les marqueurs de structuration de la conversation en anglais spontané contemporain: le cas de *well* et *you know*"; thesis submitted at Paris IV (2007), p. 107.

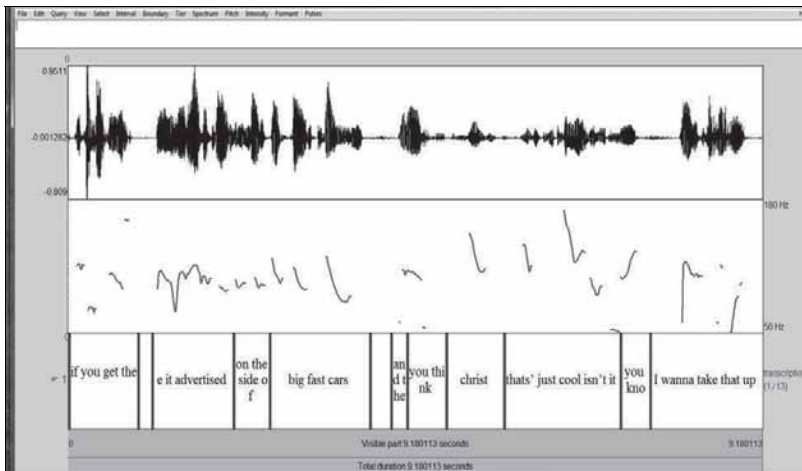
both cases by the use of *we*, a pronoun with which the utterer remains central

We could question whether a collocation with *I* can be revealing, in as much as *I* is very common in spontaneous speech. Still, we have shown here examples that are recurrent utterances where *you know* backs up a view point that is imposed by *I* and does not genuinely request shared knowledge with the addressee.

2.2.3. *You know and question tags with a fall:*

Listening to naturally occurring English, we have noticed the recurring use of *you know* after tag-questions. That is the case in the following utterance:

If you get the e it advertised on the side of big fast cars and then you think Christ that's just cool isn't you know I wanna take that up (Corpus, Intonational Variation in English, http://www.phon.ox.ac.uk/old_IViE)



The prosody is most interesting. Without a precise intonative analysis, we might think that the tag invites confirmation of the statement *that's just cool*, that *you know* operates in the same way and confirms a reading whereby the opinion of the addressee is requested. Still, we have shown (Gaudy, 2000) that tags with a fall only pretend to take the addressee's viewpoint into account but in fact compel the addressee to accept a statement. Far from being addresses to the co-speaker, they are indeed very constraining. Here, the intonation shows the unexpected realisation of

you know in as much as it does not reproduce that of the tag. With its modulation, *you know* does not confirm or reassess the tag. Hence, it does not reiterate the loop inherent in a type of utterance that avoids any real intervention of the co-speaker. We notice a slight rise in *you know*, which could potentially contradict the recurring falling pattern that we have presented. But here, we have to underline the intonative context in which the utterance occurs. First, *you know* appears after the tag that we characterised as an ego-centred marker and which enforces the utterance to encourage or even compel agreement from the addressee (Gaudy, 2000). On a syntactic level, it comes after a “post-rheme” (Morel, 2000) that indicates that the utterance has come to a close. Hence, it cannot reinitiate any interaction with or address to the co-utterer. So, we consider that it is a unit whose purpose is to signal a syntactic link. *You know* makes it possible for the utterer to continue speaking, to reinitiate his phrase and prevents the other person from taking his turn to speak. It is uttered between two syntactic units (*That’s just cool, isn’t it* and *I wanna take that up*) and it allows the speaker to restart without being interrupted, even if he has already come to an end. We would like to draw a parallel between the continuing pattern that stands out in phonetic terms and the continuing role that *you know* shows in this syntactic environment. The prosodic unit that *you know* creates is a connective, not just within one discourse unit but at the interface between two syntactic units that it binds together. The utterance is hence partly reinitiated while still remaining on an ego-centred mode. We could consider *you know* as an inter-clause continuing unit.

This type of collocation for *you know* is rather common and the BNC presents many more occurrences (HUX 124, FUH 230, HUX 94, HYY 200, J86 126, KCF 3175, KDM 3988). Let us now consider the following one:

HUX 83 Yes I think you know I mean democracy if I use that word is supposed to be er by the people for the people isn’t it you know but I mean I’m always amazed. (BNC, Conversation)

In this extract from the BNC, several elements converge. From the previous occurrence we can infer that *isn’t it* is most likely to have a falling tone and to enforce the utterance. What is said in the superordinate clause (*democracy—be supposed to be by the people for the people*) is not a matter of debate but is presented as a matter of fact. *You know* does not appeal to the co-utterer and *you* is most likely to be generic. Nor does it give rise to any interaction as is shown by the presence of *I mean* that follows directly afterwards and makes it possible for the utterer to give his own view point. Hence, if we go by the intonation of the previously

analysed utterance, we can say that *you know* functions as a link, as a continuing marker, neutralising the gap between two units without losing the upper hand in the conversation. Very much like an approximator, *you know* turns out to be a mere cog and it generates a syntactic link that is central to sentencehood. This is far from any polite dimension.

It is also interesting to notice that *you know* can sometimes replace what could be a tag. The following three sentences can illustrate this:

KBG 3467 Gone grey, you know?

KBW 19626 I don't know if all the pieces are there cos I only just noticed, you know

KCG 1112 you can guarantee it she goes to shops about eleven o'clock, she don't come back till one because she's been talking on shops, that's her routine, you know?

Such utterances must not be mistaken with real questioning such as in:

KBW 3607 What are those things in your ears, do you know?

The first three occurrences show that *you know*, in its final position as a tag, is rather versatile in its capacity to reassess the predicative link of the superordinate clause. It could be replaced by the meta-marker *ain't* (Gaudy, 2008), plus a personal pronoun in any of the three occurrences (*ain't they/ ain't it*). The point with the fixed marker *you know* is that it functions whatever the personal pronoun might be. The second utterance shows that capacity. What does it reassess? Is it *I don't know* that corresponds to a case of neg-raising in the main clause? Is it the main predicative link, that is to say *all the pieces-be there*, or is it *I -just notice+ed*? The lack of variation of the personal pronoun in this fixed unit makes *you know* totally versatile and a good tool to play on the scope of the tag. Hence, the addressee can choose the predicative link that is reassessed, but does not have the scope to argue over its content. All in all, what is at stake here is that *you know* can ensure a predicative link as well as play on the predicative scope. The address to the co-utterer is a mere illusion since *you know* is indeed a tool indicating that the utterance has come to a close. The predicative link is thereby enforced and any challenge to it is avoided.

If we consider *you know* for its syntactic dimension, the fact that it collocates with tags with falling tones, and even sometimes replaces them, makes it a post-rheme. This syntactic position is that of an enforcing unit, one that is not exposed to any challenge from the addressee, one that carries viewpoints that are not shared but imposed. This recurring

syntactic position confirms that *you know* functions as an ego-centred marker. Under the guise of politeness, it is indeed a constraining tool which compels the addressee to reassess the content of the preceding clause.

Conclusion

Our purpose has been to investigate the allegedly face-saving marker *you know*. Most linguists have agreed in saying that the use of *you know* corresponds to shared knowledge between the speaker and the addressee. This gives it a face-saving function. More precisely, this would make it a politeness marker. But J. Szlamowicz, by underlining the recurrent non-modulated and non-salient intonative tone that the fixed structure follows, steers away from the consensual reading of *you know*. According to him, the address to the co-speaker is not at stake when using *you know*. Indeed, it is from the ossification of the structure that the ambivalence of the marker arises. We could take into account the original meaning of the structure and consider that *you know* solicits a reaction from the co-speaker. But we could also consider the emerging lexical meaning to underline that the fixed marker is fully anchored in an ego-centred context and that politeness is not the issue.

Many elements converge to show that the use of *you know* is not aimed at polite interaction: its falling intonative tone, the contextual prominence of *I*, the upper hand of the utterer seeking no genuine interaction and the common collocation with tags. It is indeed a tool for the speaker to impose his point of view on the co-speaker. The latter might be present as a target for persuasion but his opinion is not enlisted and the address is not genuine.

This marker, whose phonetic realisation can reach an almost complete reduction, is not anchored in politeness. The utterer may not be fully aware of it, but he uses the ambivalence of the discourse marker to impose an argument without calling for shared knowledge. Under the guise of politeness, *you know* is rather subversive. It forces agreement, which makes it a coercive tool if not a forceful marker that thereby drifts away from politeness.

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