

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE MARKER 'NU' IN RUSSIAN
AND KAZAKH: PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS AND LINGUISTIC ADAPTATION

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1.0 Introduction

With a particular focus on the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ as it is employed in both Kazakh and Russian contexts, the aim of this study is to examine the modifications that may take place when discourse markers are borrowed from one language into another. Discourse markers

(DMs) are essential to language because they manage interactions, structure speech, and transmit nuanced meanings. Language contact and interaction in multilingual societies frequently results in the borrowing of these pragmatic particles, which later may change their original functions and pattern of usages in the target language. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the spectrum of usage of the borrowed discourse marker in Kazakh is different from that of its native use in Russian.

The discourse marker 'nu' in Russian which can be used to indicate hesitation, encourage introspection, or soften instructions in conversation, was examined for this specific linguistic occurrence. 'Nu' makes a strong argument for considering the effects of borrowing because of its extensive usage and adaptability in Russian. The comparative research questions that guides this study are:

What are the primary discourse functions of "nu" in Russian?

How is "nu" used in Kazakh conversational contexts?

Are there differences in the function and frequency of "nu" between the two languages?

The study's premise is that while the discourse marker 'nu' in Kazakh conversations may preserve some of its original functions from Russian, but it may also have developed some new or context-specific uses that do not exist in its original Russian context. This potential shift can be caused through the process of pragmatic borrowing, where 'nu' has undergone functional adaptation and innovation within the Kazakh linguistic context.

To address this question, a corpus-based study has been conducted and conversational analysis was the main part of the research strategy. The examined data was from the Russian

National Corpus-Spoken Corpus, which has over 14 million words. In order to determine how the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ is used in its original Russian context, 50 ‘nu’ samples were extracted with the filters of the corpus which only concentrate on cases where ‘nu’ occurs alone rather than in conjunction with other particles. There were only 40 Kazakh data collected from the “Multimedia Corpus of Spoken Kazakh Language” and “Almaty Corpus of Kazakh” due to the relatively small size of those corpus.

In order to show that Kazakh speakers employ the borrowed Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ in a broader manner, the attention was drawn to the differences in the ways that the DM ‘nu’ is used in Russian and Kazakh contexts through this comparative analysis. These results would lend credence to the theory that not only the prevalent uses of ‘nu’ have been borrowed as a result of language interaction between Kazakh and Russian, but also its innovative functional range has developed in Kazakh contexts. This study shall add to broader concerns on the effects of language contact on pragmatic aspects in multilingual cultures by examining how discourse markers constrict in function or adapt when adopted across languages.

2.0 Literature Review

Discourse markers are linguistic elements found exclusively in spoken language that serve many pragmatic purposes, primarily functioning to structure and organize discourse. Despite their significance, they are often small and go unnoticed by speakers. According to Redeker’s (1991) definition of “discourse operators (discourse markers)”, that is, “Discourse markers are words— such as conjunctions, comment clauses, or interjections – which are used primarily to draw the listener’s attention to a specific type of connection between the upcoming statement and the immediate context of the conversation.”

Therefore, Discourse markers (DMs) are also able to facilitate coherence in spoken communication. Lenk (1998) emphasized their pragmatic function, describing DMs as verbal tools that help interlocutors establish not only local coherence but also global coherence in conversations. Coherence, in this context, is not inherent to the text, but a thing that arises from dynamic negotiations between speakers and listeners, as they mutually influence and interpret each other's contributions to the discourse which they share.

Redeker's (1991) definition also aligned with Lenk's (1998) view, considering DMs as expressions which can signal linkages between utterances, thus aiding comprehension and these markers can operate on local and global levels. While Schiffrin (1987) highlighted the discourse markers as "bracket" units that structure talk and maintain local coherence, Lenk (1998) emphasized their broader role in connecting non-adjacent discourse segments such as earlier topics or (external) background knowledge.

Discourse markers' functions are not only strictly related to the formal pragmatic ones but can also interact with repair functions or disfluency functions. For example, Crible and Pascual (2020) highlighted the interaction between DMs, repairs, and repetitions in multilingual contexts. Their study demonstrated that DMs are integral to managing conversational flow, particularly in moments of hesitation or clarification, thereby enhancing global coherence. This interplay underscored the flexibility of DMs, as they adapt to context-specific needs. Similarly, Lenchuk and Ahmed (2022) examined evaluative expressions in Russian discourse, revealing that assessments, as a subset of DMs, allow speakers to assert knowledge and align or disalign stances. These studies collectively demonstrated that DMs are fundamental to conversational coherence, bridging both linguistic and pragmatic elements.

After the basic understanding of what are discourse markers and what type of functions they serve. We can now take a look at the studies for English alternatives for Russian DM ‘nu’, that is, the English DM ‘well’, ‘uh’ or ‘um’.

In English, ‘well’ functions as a prominent DM, frequently used to mark speaker perspectives or introduce shifts in conversation. John (2015) examined ‘well’ as a prefatory marker that mainly privileges the speaker’s point of view, signaling that the forthcoming utterance aligns with the speaker's preferences or circumstances. This marker can indicate agreement, disagreement, or neutrality, depending on its context, thereby contributing to the negotiation of interpersonal relationships in the discourse.

Sometimes, ‘nu’ can be also translated as ‘uh’ and ‘um’ as disfluency markers. Clark and Tree (2002) delved into hesitation markers such as ‘uh’ and ‘um’, which overlap with DMs in their function of organizing speech. They argued that these markers (‘uh’ and ‘um’) are deliberate linguistic choices, signaling minor delays while maintaining conversational flow and the attention of the audience. By conceptualizing, formulating, and articulating their speech, speakers use these markers (‘uh’ and ‘um’) to manage their cognitive load and ensure clarity in communication. Although these hesitation markers differ from traditional DMs like ‘well’, their roles in structuring discourse and managing interaction can reflect the broader utility of such linguistic elements in facilitating smooth interaction.

There are also many existing studies which focus on investigating the functions of ‘nu’ in its original Russian native contexts. The Russian DM ‘nu’ exhibits a wide range of functions, as explored by Bolden (2016). It can serve as a prompt for action, a marker of disjunction, or a signal of emotional or evaluative stances. Bolden emphasized ‘nu’s’ role in urging addressees to

produce relevant responses or in marking transitions between discourse segments. Bolden also argued that there are some other functions such as: expressing displeasure, disagreement, refusal, reservation; word searching and expressing impatience. Similarly, Kuosmanen and Multisilta (1999) categorized 'nu' as a multifunctional particle that can mark 4 different kinds of transitions, which are turn transitions, topical shifts, situational changes, and informative transitions in Russian conversations. These functions investigated by the researchers highlighted the 'nu's' versatility as a tool for managing discourse coherence across multiple levels.

Zemskaja (1979) and Vasilyeva (1972) also examined the emotive and structural functions of 'nu', noting its frequent usage as a filler or boundary marker. For instance, 'nu' often appears in narratives to conclude segments or signal transitions. It may also appear in moments of word searching or to convey impatience. This study also underlined the adaptability of 'nu' in diverse conversational contexts, contributing to its prominence in spoken Russian.

The borrowing of DMs is a common phenomenon in multilingual settings, often arising from sustained language contact. Language contact is a linguistic phenomenon when speakers of different languages interact regularly, often resulting in linguistic influence. A common outcome of language contact is borrowing—the adoption of words, structures, or patterns from one language into another. It is worth mentioning that borrowing can not just include lexical items (such as nouns and verbs), but also phonetic patterns, or even discourse markers. For example, Spanish-English bilingual speakers have been shown to borrow discourse markers like 'so' and 'like' in conversation (Torres, 2002).

It can be argued that the investigation of Russian discourse marker borrowing 'nu' into neighboring languages holds a strong fascination and great meaning for Kazakh linguistics and

for contact linguists because it can demonstrate the evolutionary and adaptive processes languages undergo through contact. In addition, it is believed that the incorporation of the term "nu" into Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek languages stands as a direct outcome resulting from Russian linguistic dominance affecting Central Asian tongues along with other post-Soviet languages because Kazakh and Russian languages have been in contact for a long time due to historical and political reasons, Kazakh speakers had made frequent code-switching and then finally have borrowed the Russian discourse marker 'nu' and use it on a daily basis. I argue that the process that will be examined will show conformity with broad patterns of discourse marker borrowing that numerous studies (such as Torres, 2002; Maschler, 2003) have recorded in multilingual settings. While the borrowed marker retains fundamental operations from its source language, it undergoes semantic and pragmatic shifts caused by structural constraints and cultural influences inherent in the recipient language.

Torres (2002) argued that using DMs from another language should be considered as borrowing. She investigated the integration of English DMs into Puerto Rican Spanish, using Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language-Frame Model to distinguish between borrowing and code-switching. She argued that DMs are prone to borrowing due to their role as free forms, which link propositions without filling lexical gaps. Over time, borrowed DMs may displace native markers, as observed in German-American bilinguals, where English markers 'like'; 'because' and 'but' have replaced their German counterparts (Salmons, 1990). Similarly, Brody (1987, 1995) documented the use of Spanish DMs in Mayan narratives, where they coexisted with native markers or gradually replaced them. This process reflected a shift from code-switching to borrowing, indicating changes in speaker competence and linguistic preferences.

It is argued that borrowing linguistic elements from one language to another language can lead to semantic or pragmatic changes due to the target language's cultural specialty. For example, the study conducted by Maschler (2003) explored the functions' difference of 'nu' into Israeli Hebrew from its original source language Russian, the researcher first identified 'nu's' common functions in urging action, developing topics and showing impatience, and then discovered the 'nu's' unique functions in providing tonal cues; this function is absent in the Russian context. This study highlighted how borrowed DMs adapt to the pragmatic norms of the target language, that is, the target language often acquires new nuances while retaining core functions from the source language. These findings demonstrated the fluidity of DMs in contact scenarios and has given me strong evidence for my hypothesis.

In addition, the Auer and Maschler's (2016) edited volume "NU/NA: A Family of Discourse Markers Across the Languages of Europe and Beyond" stands as a foundational study for my research because they also examined discourse marker borrowing through comparative analysis of 'nu' and its equivalents across numerous languages. This scholarly investigation examined how the Russian particle 'nu' preserved its original functions as a conversational turn management tool and a tool of maintaining discourse coherence in other target languages while developing the new functions such as Reconfirmation function of 'nu' in Polish and Upper Saxonian German, this function involves an epistemic stance, signaling the speaker's degree of certainty or affirmation. The idea that discourse markers can easily enter borrowing processes gained validation through the DMs' inherently low semantic content, which operates alongside their significant pragmatic functions.

One of the most notable is Daniel, Knyazev, and Dobrushina's work on bilingualism in Central Daghestan (2017), which showed a case of 'nu' borrowed into non-Russian language

contexts. Their research documented that how ‘nu’ from Russian is used in Dagestan where people usually consider Avar, Archi and Lak as their first language. Their findings implied that ‘nu’ still functions in many of its core Russian contexts, but sometimes ‘nu’ would be adapted to meet local discursive norms by replacing native markers. This is also consistent with Maschler’s (2003) observation on ‘nu’ in Israeli Hebrew, where additional pragmatic meanings different from those in Russian context were attributed to it.

The studies reviewed above revealed a consistent theme which can provide a strong reason and theoretical background for my study of function differences between Russian and Kazakh: DMs are crucial for managing conversational coherence and facilitating interaction, and discourse markers, when borrowed, may develop new functions in its target language from its original source language. While Lenk (1998) and Schiffrin (1987) provided primary and foundational insights into the local and global functions of DMs, subsequent research, such as Bolden (2016) and John (2015), expanded on these concepts by examining language-specific markers like ‘nu’ and ‘well’, arguing that ‘nu’ primarily functions to show a prompt for action or a marker of disjunctions and its English alternative ‘well’ plays an important role in inserting the speaker’s opinion. The borrowing of DMs across languages, as discussed by Torres (2002) and Maschler (2003), further underscored DMs adaptability in different language and significance in multilingual contexts, that is, functions of DMs in multilingual context may vary from its previous ones.

A key implication of these findings is the need to consider both linguistic and cultural factors when analyzing DMs. The functions of ‘nu’ in Russian, for instance, differ from its uses in Israeli Hebrew, reflecting cultural perceptions of discourse and interaction. Similarly, the integration of English DMs into other languages can highlight the impact of sociolinguistic

contact on language change. These insights have practical applications in pragmatic language study and help this paper to strengthen its main hypothesis: With regard to Kazakh, the borrowing of ‘nu’ seems to follow a similar path in progression. In this case, Kazakh speakers often employ ‘nu’ in situations where it marks turn-taking or introduces responses. However, Kazakh speakers, after borrowing the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’, made a change in its primitive usages at the same time.

3.0 Methodology and Data

Description For Research Method:

In order to successfully conduct the research project, it was decided to conduct a corpus study in order to answer the main research question, that is, whether there are differences between the ways of discourse markers ‘nu’s’ usages in contexts of Kazakh-based conversations and Russian-based conversations. The chosen corpus for Russian discourse markers study was the “Russian National Corpus-Spoken Corpus” which consists of 14,554,052 words of Russian. In this corpus, filters were set at first for the discourse marker ‘nu’, and as a result, there were 154,524 samples shown. However, it doesn't mean that all of the samples can be taken to sort out the ‘nu’s’ discourse functions in conversations as it has been also found that there were some very common combinations of discourse markers ‘nu’ with other participles or discourse makers such as ‘a’ or ‘что’(what), the combinations of ‘nu’ and other discourse markers should be considered as a separate research topic and genre as they have many distinct pragmatic functions other than the pure ‘nu’ pragmatic functions. Therefore, before categorizing the functions of ‘nu’, there was a need to sort out the samples with ‘nu’ only and delete those samples which

were with combinations as it has been decided that the primary focus is on the discourse analysis for the discursive functions of the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ only.

The data of Kazakh was retrieved from the “Multimedia Corpus of Spoken Kazakh Language” which consists of at least 10.000.000 words of collected data, at least 1.000.000 words of transcribed data, and at least 200.000 words of fully annotated natural speech. With the aim of discovering the unique patterns of Kazakh speakers utilizing the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ in Kazakh conversations, all of the occurrences of ‘nu’ were planned to be collected because of the limitation of the size of corpus (it was considered as relatively small compared to the Russian corpus). Another utilized Kazakh corpus was the “Almaty Corpus of Kazakh”, which is an oral corpus of Kazakhs and it is also relatively small in size, at the moment the size of the corpus is more than 40 million words. The filter set was also ‘nu’ and the results showed about 53 samples. However, most of the samples which contained ‘nu’ was not related to the Russian DM ‘nu’ but the ancient Kazakh meaning of ‘forest’. Therefore, only few samples were gathered from this corpus. The data collection process and the function distribution process was the same with the Russian one.

At first, the plan of the number of collected data for Russian usage of ‘nu’ and Kazakh usage of ‘nu’ were 100 and 100 samples, respectively as it can be efficient to compare the difference in functional usages in each language and the comparable results would be relatively reasonable. However, due to the limitation of the Kazakh corpus sizes, only 40 samples of the usages of ‘nu’ in Kazakh contexts were collected in total. In order to make the sample size of Russian conversations and Kazakh conversations to be comparably equal, it has been decided to randomly chose the 50 Russian samples to do the comparative conversational functional analysis, that is, to assign each sample to a functional category and this led to a need of having a

list of categorization of primary functions of ‘nu’. (The function distribution process of Kazakh samples was the same with the Russian ones.)

Before starting the categorization, the Dobrovolsky’s (2017) article and others previous studies (which have been well analyzed in the literature part of this research paper) had been carefully read and they had been regarded as strong theoretical supports, then a list of most used functions of Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ had been created and the list contains 12 functions in total. It is also worth mentioning that the Russian and Kazakh samples were translated into English in order to analyze the pragmatic functions of each ‘nu’. The list created consists of the following 12 functions:

#	Function	Example
1	Prompting for Information (Request or Inquiry)	– Ну? Ну? (Nu? nu?)
2	Encouraging Action (Imperative Use)	– Ну, давай плясать! (nu, let’s dance!)
3	<i>Expressing Emotional Reaction</i>	– Ну и гроза! (Nu+i, What a storm!)
4	Expressing Agreement or Reluctant Concession	– Ну, ладно. (Nu, okay.)
5	Introductory or conclusion remark	Ну, наступил вечер, Ну, словом... В начале реплики в значении ‘итак, наконец’: (Nu, evening has come, Nu, in a word... At the beginning of a line in the meaning of ‘so, finally’:)
6	Overcoming Communicative Difficulty (Hesitation, Choice)	– Ну... пять раз. (Nu... five times.)
7	Reference or Emphasis	– Это же Марат! Ну в

	(Discourse Structuring)	параллельном классе учился! (That's Marat! Nu, he studied in the parallel class!)
8	Reassurance or Diffusion of Tension	– Ну, ну, не переживай. (Nu, nu, don't worry.)
9	Adding details	– Он приехал вчера. Ну, с женой и детьми. (He arrived yesterday. Nu, with his wife and kids.)
10	Strengthening Argumentation: Emotional appeal Pleading	– Ну пожалуйста, дай мне шанс! (Nu, please, give me a chance!)
11	Strengthening Argumentation: Reasoning appeal	– Ну потому что я был занят. (Nu, because I was busy.)
12	Beginning of comments or response	– Ну, я так не думаю. (Nu, I don't think so.)

After creating the list, it was then decided to keep an open mind towards collecting data which contains the combinations of the DM 'nu' and the other discourse marker 'и' because it was found that the third function of 'nu' in the table—"*Expressing Emotional Reaction*" mostly appear in the form of 'nu' plus 'и', and this phenomena has made it reasonable to consider the function of 'nu' plus 'и' equal to one of the function of 'nu' alone.

In addition, it should be noted that not all of the functions listed above are expected to appear in the collected samples in both Kazakh and Russian and the list has remained open to adding newly identified functions which were not initially listed for both Kazakh and Russian.

In the end of the analysis, it was designed that there would be a comparison carried out: one that is between the functions of 'nu' in Kazakh and Russian conversations in order to prove

the hypothesis that Kazakh speakers use ‘nu’ in broader ways, which means that they not only borrowed the most common usages of the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ but also adapted culture specific functions of the Russian DM ‘nu’ .

Design:

Research Designed Visualized in Table:

Russian DMs		Kazakh DMs	
nu	Functions	nu	Functions
	A b c d		A b c + x y z

Comparison
Russian ‘nu’ vs. Kazakh ‘nu’

Note: Since the whole research is based on the discourse analysis, there is no need for using the technical instruments such as Rstudio for conducting the analysis.

4.0 Functions of ‘NU’ in Russian Context

As the discourse marker "nu" in Russian is a highly versatile linguistic element, it can help the speakers to fulfill a wide array of pragmatic functions. In addition, its adaptability allows speakers to not only manage conversation flow and express emotional attitudes but also structure discourse effectively. Based on the categorization created by me and supported by

Dobrovolsky's (2017) previous work, there were many different categorizations for the functions of the Russian DM 'nu'. However, the most frequent functions of 'nu' can be divided into twelve primary categories based on my analysis: 1. Prompting for Information (Request or Inquiry); 2. Encouraging Action (Imperative Use); 3. Expressing Emotional Reaction; 4. Expressing Agreement or Reluctant Concession; 5. Introductory or Conclusion Remark; 6. Overcoming Communicative Difficulty (Hesitation, Choice); 7. Reference or Emphasis (Discourse Structuring); 8. Reassurance or Diffusion of Tension; 9. Adding details; 10. Strengthening Argumentation: Emotional appeal/Pleading; 11. Strengthening Argumentation: Reasoning appeal and 12. Beginning of comments or response.

Firstly, it is found that 'nu' often serves as a prompt for information, it usually helps the speakers to urge the interlocutor to provide further details or respond quickly when the interlocutor hesitated to provide further sentences or information. Therefore, this function frequently appears in conversational contexts as a form of request or inquiry and in the context where an immediate answer is expected. For instance, in the conversation below:

Speaker 1: “А знаешь почему?”

Speaker 2: “Ну? Ну?”

Speaker 1: Continue to provide further details...

The first speaker asked, “А знаешь почему?” (Do you know why?) and the second speaker responded by saying Ну? Ну? (Nu? Nu?) to urge the speaker 1 for further elaboration. In these types of cases, in general, this minimal marker can signal the speaker's desire for

additional information and at the same time, it can keep the conversation active and flowing. There is a thing that needs to be paid attention to, that is, in the function of “A prompt for information”, ‘nu’ tends to appear in the duplicated form (nu+nu) but it can also appear in the form of a single ‘nu’ only such as:

Speaker 1: “А знаешь почему?”/ And do you know why?

Speaker 2: “Ну?” / Nu?

Secondly, ‘nu’ is commonly used to encourage actions or can be combined with other verb phrases to make imperative statements. In these cases, the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ can convey the urgency or impatience of the speaker indirectly. For example, when a speaker says:

“Ну, пошли уже!” (Nu, let’s go already!)

‘Nu’ in this specific case plays a role in intensifying the directive “Let’s go already!” and it functioned to indirectly show the impatience of the speaker, thereby pushing the listener to act. Therefore, this type of usage and function can reflect the discourse marker ‘nu’s’ ability to influence the listener’s behavior and expedite the decision-making process of the listener.

Another significant function of ‘nu’ is to express emotional reactions, such as surprise, irony, admiration, or irritation. This emotive role can be illustrated by the following example:

“Ну и гроза!” (‘Nu’+’i’/ What a storm!) .

In this kind of instance, it can be seen that a speaker commented on the weather to show his/her shockness by making a combination of the DM ‘nu’ and the other particle ‘i’, this type of pattern of use also functions to add an evaluative emotional layer to the speaker's own words.

It is also interesting to note that "nu" also serves to express half agreement or to function as a marker to indicate reluctant concession. This kind of usage and function is especially evident when the speakers agree with hesitation or resignation in some circumstances. For example, the phrase “Ну, ладно” (Nu, okay) is usually used in the circumstances where the speaker does not want to fully agree with the interacter’s previous message, ‘nu’ in this type of situation often signals the speaker's underlying reluctance.

It is also found that the DM ‘nu’ frequently appears at the beginning or end of conversational turns and thereby facilitating the flow of dialogue, in other words of saying, ‘nu’ can also be an introductory or concluding remark between different speech segments, with this function, ‘nu’ will have the ability to frame statements or signal transitions to different topics within the same discourse. An example of this function is the phrase:

“Ну, словом” (Nu, in a word...)

In this case, ‘nu’ was a conversational marker indicating a close in the previous mini topic and a shift towards concluding the current interaction and it also may probably lead to moving to the next small topic in the same discourse.

In situations of communicative difficulty, ‘nu’ can function as a remark which helps the speakers to manage their hesitations or give speakers time to make word searching for the following speech. This function can be illustrated by the following short interaction:

Speaker 1: “Сколько раз вы были в Астане?” (how many times have you been to Astana?)

Speaker 2: “Ну... пять раз” (Nu... five times)

While the speaker 1 asked speaker 2 “Сколько раз вы были в Астане?” (how many times have you been to Astana?), there is a pause marked by ‘nu’, indicating that there was a little momentary struggle in speaker 2 to recall or decide. Such usages typically allow the speakers to maintain conversational continuity while organizing their thoughts.

It is also worth mentioning that the discourse marker ‘nu’ also plays a structural role by referring to prior information or emphasizing a key point which exists in the previous context. That is, ‘nu’ also works as a reference marker. For example, in the context:

“Это же Марат! Ну в параллельном классе учился!” (That’s Marat! Nu, he studied in the parallel class!)

This appearance of ‘nu’ reinforced the speaker’s reference to earlier information, that is, the person’s name Marat. Therefore, it can be argued that this type of usage of the DM ‘nu’ can highlight its role in organizing discourse structure and drawing attention to significant content in the upper context.

‘Nu’ can also function as a tool for reassurance or to diffuse the tension in emotionally charged situations. For example, the phrase “Ну, ну, не переживай” (Nu, nu, don’t worry) can demonstrate how the marker ‘nu’ helps in reducing the stress of the other speaker in the conversation and thus successfully provide comfort to the interlocutor. It should be also noted that this kind of function usually appears in a duplicated form, that is, the form of (nu+nu). In

this form, ‘nu’ is especially useful to mitigate emotional tension and foster a more supportive conversational atmosphere.

The 9th function of ‘nu’ is that ‘nu’ helps to add details to the previous message. It can be shown evident in the following sentence:

“Он приехал вчера. Ну, с женой и детьми” (He arrived yesterday. Well, with his wife and kids)

In this sentence, the speaker first stated that a man arrived at some place and then utilized the DM ‘nu’ to introduce additional information or a clarification that he arrived that place with his wife and kids. By this, it can be assumed that this type of usage of ‘nu’ works to provide further elaboration related to the previous utterance.

The 10th and the 11th function of ‘nu’ are very similar in the way that they both use the DM ‘nu’ to strengthen the arguments of the speakers. However, it has been decided that they belong to different categories as the 10th function of ‘nu’ is strengthening argumentation through emotional appeal or pleading while the 11th function of ‘nu’ is strengthening argumentation through reasoning appeal.

For example, using ‘nu’ can enhance the emotional intensity of an argument or plea, thereby strengthening the speaker’s position. In the sentence:

“Ну пожалуйста, дай мне шанс!” (Well, please, give me a chance!).

Here, the application of ‘nu’ added emotional weight to the plea and argument: “give me a chance”, and thereby ‘nu’ efficiently made the speaker’s request more compelling and urgent.

Strengthening the argumentation through reasoning appeals is another different story: in such cases, utilizing ‘nu’ helps to add logical emphasis or to introduce justifications and explanations. In the following example:

Speaker 1: “Почему ты не пришел на мой день рождения?” (Why didn't you come to my birthday party?)

Speaker 2: “не смог, ну, я был занят.” (I couldn't, nu, I was busy)

The speaker 2 first answered the speaker 1’s question by arguing “I couldn’t go to your birthday party” and then strengthened this argument by introducing ‘nu’ to derive the logical emphasis that the speaker 2 was busy at the time when the speaker’s 1 party was held.

Finally, the last categorized function of the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ was a signal of beginning personal comments or responses. This sort of application of ‘nu’ often marks the start of a reply and at the same time, it can prepare the listeners for what follows. However, from another perspective, it can also be viewed that this sort of usage is more like an empty word to some extent.

Overall, ‘nu’ in Russian discourse is a multifunctional, powerful and flexible linguistic tool and it demonstrates its critical role in many aspects. It can be argued that this categorization which contains 12 functions of ‘nu’ forms a comprehensive framework for comparing how ‘nu’ functions in Russian and Kazakh contexts, and at the same time helps to find out both shared and unique uses across these languages.

4.1 The Most Frequent Functions of ‘Nu’ in Russian: Beginning of Comment or Response

When responding to a variety of questions, ‘nu’ usually comes first in the answering utterances. It can not only give the speakers a chance to collect their thoughts and prepare a response to start but also allow the speakers to express their own viewpoints or preferences regardless of the anticipated or presumed responses by the use of the DM ‘nu’ at the beginning of a response. In the example below, Borisov used ‘nu’ at the very beginning of his turn in response to a direct question from the host:

[Шустер, муж, журналист] А что вас там не устраивает?

[Борисов, муж, предприниматель] Ну / во-первых / нам удалось убедить снять ограничения по верхней планке численности работающих.

[Шустер, муж, журналист] Правильно. То есть у вас разногласия / что считать малым предприятием.

[Беседа на телевидении С. Шустера и С. Борисова, НТВ, «Герой дня» (2002)]

Translation:

[Shuster, man, journalist] What don't you like about it?

[Borisov, man, entrepreneur] Nu / first of all / we managed to persuade them to lift the upper limit on the number of employees.

[Shuster, man, journalist] That's right. So you have disagreements / about what is considered a small enterprise.

[Interview on television between S. Shuster and S. Borisov, NTV, "Hero of the Day" (2002)]

In this case, the DM ‘nu’ acted as a soft preface to Borisov’s answer so that it helped manage the transition between turns smoothly and signal the readiness to respond while buying a brief moment to frame the reply. Secondly, ‘nu’ here did not just indicate that an answer is

beginning but indicated that the speaker steered the response in their own preferred direction, as seen in Borisov's choice to enumerate his points ("во-первых...").

Although the lexical meaning of ‘nu’ here was minimal or even empty, its interactional role is rich. By marking the boundary between turns and providing a slight buffer, ‘nu’ functioned to remark the speaker’s following response.

4.2 The Most Frequent Functions of ‘Nu’ in Russian: Reference or Emphasis (Discourse Structuring)

Another frequent and pragmatically salient use of the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ is in reference or emphasis functions. It helps to structure discourse by guiding the listener’s attention, signaling elaboration, or returning to a relevant topic. In these cases, ‘nu’ often appears in mid-turns and it usually marks a moment of reorientation—either by emphasizing a forthcoming point or by prompting the listener to attend to a clarification or continuation.

№ 1. Настя/ смотри / я просто так никогда не нападаю. Она/ наоборот / смелая / что она так сказала / она ни к кому не подлизывается / видно / девчонка смелая. Но я с ней решила поговорить / ну / интересный человек / и она начала себя вести / как больная. Она неадекватная.

№ 2. Нет / ну смотри / всё-таки хорошо / что пришла эта девчонка. [Беседа участников реалити-шоу «Дом-2», ТНТ (2005)]

Translation:

Speaker 1: Nastya, look, I never just attack anyone. She, on the contrary, is brave to have said that. She doesn’t suck up to anyone, clearly, she’s a brave girl. But I decided to talk to her, well, she’s an interesting person, and then she started behaving like she was sick. She’s inadequate.

Speaker 2: No, well, look, it’s still good that this girl came.

In this utterance, the speaker 1 used the DM ‘nu’ as a pivot between narrative segments. The speaker 1 first provided a background (“She’s a brave girl; I decided to talk to her”) and then used ‘nu’ to introduce an evaluative comment that turned the direction of the discourse to the

prior little context that “she’s a brave girl”. Here, ‘nu’ emphasized the assessment “she’s an interesting person” and positioned it as a kind of explanatory elaboration or reflective stance.

№ 1. Настя/ смотри / я просто так никогда не нападаю. Она/ наоборот / смелая / что она так сказала / она ни к кому не подлизывается / видно / девчонка смелая. Но я с ней решила поговорить / ну / интересный человек / и она начала себя вести / как больная. Она неадекватная.

№ 2. Нет / ну смотри / всё-таки хорошо / что пришла эта девочка. [Беседа участников реалити-шоу «Дом-2», ТНТ (2005)]

Translation:

Speaker 1: Nastya, look, I never just attack anyone. She, on the contrary, is brave to have said that. She doesn’t suck up to anyone, clearly, she’s a brave girl. But I decided to talk to her, well, she’s an interesting person, and then she started behaving like she was sick. She’s inadequate.

Speaker 2: No, well, look, it’s still good that this girl came.

The ‘nu’ in the response of the second speaker ‘Нет / ну смотри / всё-таки хорошо / что пришла эта девочка.’ contributed to global coherence by getting rid of speaker 1’s comments that “She’s inadequate” and linking Speaker 2’s statement to the overarching discussion while reframing it. Speaker 2 countered the past tense critique presented by Speaker 1, and introduced a relatively positive perspective in the present tense. Therefore, this ‘nu’ signaled a shift in focus (from negative to positive) while ensuring the response remains tied to the shared discourse theme (the evaluation of the girl mentioned in the conversation).

Across both examples, the DM ‘nu’ functioned as a discourse structuring tool as they supported the coherence and the cohesion in talk and thereby helped the speakers to manage turns, signal relevance, and foreground certain information.

4.3 The Most Frequent Functions of ‘Nu’ in Russian: Reluctant Concession

This pragmatic function means that in some circumstances, the speakers agree to something or accept a turn of events but often do so with hesitations, reservations, or slight resistance. And importantly, this type of usage is not a direct denial or refusal, but rather a soft or face-saving way to yield in interaction.

№ 2. А ты думаешь / я уже закончил? Ну рассказывай тогда.

№ 1. Нет / давайте вы сначала.

№ 2. Я? Ну хорошо.

[М. Задорнов. Беседа на радио с М. Задорновым (2001)]

Translation:

№ 2. Do you think / I'm done? Well, tell me then.

№ 1. No / you start first.

№ 2. Me? Nu Okay.

[M. Zadornov. Radio interview with M. Zadornov (2001)]

In this interaction, Speaker 2 initially deflected responsibility for continuing the conversation and perhaps expected the Speaker 1 to take the lead. However, when it became clear that the turn is being given back to the speaker 2, the speaker responded with a phrase ‘Ну хорошо’ (“Nu okay”), where ‘nu’ marked a hesitant acceptance because once the phrase was without the presence of ‘nu’---“хорошо” (“okay”) would sound more enthusiastic. Therefore, by prefacing with the DM ‘nu’, the speaker signaled a slight reluctant resistance and a subtle emotional shift which the speaker 2 was conceding under minor social pressure and expectations from the speaker 1.

4.4 The Most Frequent Functions of ‘Nu’ in Russian: Encouraging action

[Катя] Читает на экране Бупси?!

[Денис] Денис. Чувак/ она повисла / чувак. А знаешь почему?

[Артём] Артём. *Ну?*

[Денис] Денис. Потому что ты балбес.

[Артём] Артём. Потому что ты/ перл волосатый / рядом сидишь.

[Катя] Катя. [Праздный разговор молодых людей, Московская область (2005)]

Translation:

[Katya] Reading from the screen: "Boopsie?!"

[Denis] Denis. "Dude, it froze. Dude. Do you know why?"

[Artem] Artem. "Well?"

[Denis] Denis. "Because you're an idiot."

[Artem] Artem. "Because you're a hairy pearl sitting right next to me."

[Katya] Katya. [Casual conversation among young people, Moscow Region (2005)]

The ‘nu’ in this context appeared in Artem's one-word response to Denis: “Hy?” (“Nu?”). Here, ‘nu’ functioned as a discourse marker to explicitly request further information. At first, Denis posed a rhetorical question (“Do you know why?”), which implicitly invited a response and continuation of Artem. Then, the Artem used ‘nu’ to prompt Denis to elaborate and this had effectively signaled his expectation for more details and an explanation.

This kind of usage of the DM ‘nu’ demonstrated its role in sustaining conversational flow by encouraging the speaker to provide additional information. It is very short but yet powerful, as it conveys interest and readiness to listen without the need for a full question.

4.5 The Most Frequent Functions of ‘Nu’ in Russian: Overcoming Communicative Difficulty (Hesitation)

In spontaneous speech, speakers frequently encounter moments where they need time to think, recalibrate their thoughts, or emotionally process a response before continuing. In such cases, the discourse marker ‘nu’ plays a key role in overcoming communicative difficulties.

[Шнур, муж, певец] Я тоже не молчу. Мне кажется / вообще никто не молчит. Sex Pistols-они молчат / но в то же время они слышны.

[Ведущий, муж] Москва и Московская область / например / тебя не слышат.

[Шнур, муж, певец] Ну... это мои финансовые убытки. Всё это забудется / "Ленинграда" вообще не будет в контексте современной шоу-бизнес-массовой культуры. К этому нужно относиться спокойно. Нужно быть фаталистом / недаром мы в японском ресторане сидим. Не будет" Ленинграда "-и бог с ним / будет что-то другое.

[Беседа с рок-музыкантами в ресторане «Японский городской» (2003)]

Translation:

[Shnur, man, singer] I am not silent either. It seems to me / no one is silent at all. Sex Pistols - they are silent / but at the same time they are heard.

[Host, man] Moscow and the Moscow region / for example / do not hear you.

[Shnur, man, singer] Nu... these are my financial losses. All this will be forgotten / "Leningrad" will not exist at all in the context of modern show business-mass culture. You need to take this calmly. You need to be a fatalist / it is not for nothing that we are sitting in a Japanese restaurant.

There will be no "Leningrad" - and God bless it / there will be something else.

[Conversation with rock musicians in the restaurant "Japanese policeman" (2003)]

In this specific context, ‘nu’ preceded a pause and it signaled a brief disruption in fluency. However, it is important to know that this pause is not accidental but pragmatically meaningful, because it can reflect the speaker's momentary search for appropriate phrasing, tone, or even emotional readiness to deliver a possibly sensitive or personal statement (e.g., acknowledging financial loss). In addition, the trailing ellipsis (...) in the transcript visually reinforced the hesitation so as to make the overall judgment for the function of the DM ‘nu’ adequate.

5.0 Functions of ‘NU’ in Kazakh Context

After analyzing the whole dataset of Kazakh samples, it is found that the pragmatic usages of the borrowed discourse marker ‘nu’ in Kazakh contexts reveal both the retention of several core functions from Russian and the emergence of contextually unique functions shaped by Kazakh conversational norms. In other words, it was found through corpus-based analysis that while six functional categories overlapped with those identified in the original Russian contexts, there are four newly emergent categories specific to Kazakh contexts. This indicates that while pragmatic borrowing occurs, local sociolinguistic environments can play a significant role in reshaping and extending discourse marker usages in the target language.

The following six categories show functional continuity of the DM ‘nu’ from Russian to Kazakh contexts. From this phenomenon, it can be suggested that these uses of ‘nu’ have been pragmatically borrowed without significant modification:

1. Beginning of Comment or Response:
2. Strengthening Argumentation:
3. Overcoming Communicative Difficulty (Hesitation):
4. Reference or Discourse Structuring:
5. Encouraging Action:
6. Expressing Reluctant Concession

However, as mentioned above, the Kazakh use of the DM ‘nu’ has exhibited four novel functions which were not previously documented in the Russian pragmatic use of the ‘nu’, they are functions of: 1. Rephrasing the previous message with concession; 2. Rephrasing the previous message without concession; 3. Signaling the Acceptance of Information; 4.

Introducing new things. These innovations can be believed to represent adaptations to Kazakh discourse strategies, especially in how speakers manage clarification, concession, and topic progression.

The first new function of the DM ‘nu’ in Kazakh is to function as a device to rephrase or reformulate a previously stated idea while signaling a degree of concession. For instance, after making a strong claim, speakers may soften or adjust their previous messages by beginning the next utterance with the DM ‘nu’ and then introducing a re-phrased sentence with concessions, which usually happens in the adverbs of the phrase. The example in the following can demonstrate the idea in a more clear way:

“Barlygy boldy dep oılaǵanmyn, Nu, aytpaqshym, barlygy emes.”

(I thought everything was done, Nu, actually, not everything.)

Here, the speaker first made a strong argument saying that he/she finished EVERYTHING, but then the speaker utilized the DM ‘nu’ to introduce a revision of the initial assertion and to convey the willingness to reevaluate, that is, the speaker did not finish everything but most of the work.

The second newly developed function of the DM ‘nu’ is that: Rephrasing the Previous Message without Concession. Distinct from the above, this function is much more easier to understand as it allows the speakers to clarify or rephrase without backing down or conceding any part of their original point. This type of pattern of use of the DM ‘nu’ functions more as pure reformulation signals than an interpersonal strategy of softening. In order to illustrate the concept in details, the example below is made:

“Ol qaýdan bilsin, nu, jaqsy, bəlki biletin sıǵar.”

(He wouldn't know that, nu, fine, maybe he does know.)

The speaker first stated that a person wouldn't know about a certain thing but then completely re-phrased the prior information by using 'nu' and then saying that the person may do know some information. The use of the DM 'nu' here only signals a correction or a clarification rather than any concession in degree.

The third new function of the DM 'nu' in Kazakh-based contexts is to signal the acceptance of information. In conversations where a speaker wants to acknowledge, accept, or process what the interlocutor just said, the 'nu' can serve as a minimal response token that expresses such acknowledgments. Note that this differs from mere agreeing or conceding, as it may not imply evaluation at all. For instance:

Speaker 1: “Ol ketti bugin.” (He left today.)

Speaker 2: “Nu...” (Nu...)

The 'nu' in the utterance of the second speaker does not evaluate or question the statement made by the first speaker, but it simply signaled the listener's mental processing and acceptance.

The last innovative way of how the DM 'nu' is used in Kazakh context is: the function of introducing new things. It should be aware that this new category is functionally different from the category “Adding Details” observed in the Russian context, where 'nu' helps to introduce

information that expands on or clarifies the previous utterance. In contrast, in the Kazakh context, the DM ‘nu’ is used to introduce new things that break with the previous discourse and shift attention to a new and unrelated topic. That is, the most distinctive point of the 4th new function of ‘nu’ in Kazakh is its role in initiating entirely new topics or ideas that are not directly linked to the preceding discourse.

The addition of these four new categories is not only grounded in systematic corpus analysis, but also supported by cross-linguistic comparison. That is, throughout the entire dataset of Kazakh samples, it has been noticed that these functional patterns consistently emerged and were distinctly different from the known uses of the DM ‘nu’ in Russian contexts. In addition, to ensure the validity of this claim, several Russian native speakers were consulted regarding these newly identified usages. Fortunately, their feedback confirmed that such functions—particularly signaling acceptance without evaluation, rephrasing with or without concession, and introducing entirely unrelated topics—are highly unusual or even sound unnatural in Russian discourses. They also commented that although the Russian DM ‘nu’ is very multifunctional in Russian, it would not be used in the ways observed in Kazakh conversations. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that these four new functions represent genuine innovations within the Kazakh pragmatic system, which may be shaped by the local communicative norms and interactional needs. The observed systematic patterns of the usage of ‘nu’ in Kazakh context and the results from consulting Russian speakers helped to affirm the adaptive nature of pragmatic borrowing and the creative potential of discourse markers once they are embedded in a new linguistic environment again. Therefore, these findings helped to prove the hypothesis of this paper.

5.1 Overlapping Functions of ‘NU’ in Kazakh and Russian Contexts

5.1.1 Kazakh Usages of ‘Nu’ Overlap with Russian: Hesitation

In the following excerpt, the discourse marker ‘nu’ is used in a moment of spontaneous evaluation and it functioned as a hesitation marker—a role well-documented in Russian conversational usage.

Ы-ы мен салыстырмаушы едім. Өйткені, әрқайсысы бір бөлек кезең. Мен, мысалға, “Хабарда” істеген жұмысымды, ну, “3-ке” бағалап, “Астана” арнасындағыны “4-ке” бағалап, “Аптадағы” жұмысымды “5-ке” бағаламаймын.

Translation:

I wouldn't compare. Because each is a different period. For example, I would rate my work at "Khabar", nu, as "3", my work at "Astana" as "4", and my work at "Apta" as "5".

The speaker utilized the DM ‘nu’ in the middle of the-sentence, a place just before giving a subjective evaluation, so the occurrence of this ‘nu’ interrupted the syntactic flow, however, the speaker mentally prepared the next part of his utterance at the same time. By this, it can be assumed that, in both Kazakh and Russian languages, this function of ‘nu’ not only bridges cognitive pause and verbal expression but also conveys the signals to the listener that the speaker is still processing and has not yet completed the utterance.

5.1.2 Kazakh Usages of ‘Nu’ Overlap with Russian: Encouraging Action

The following excerpt is from Әбдіжәміл Нұрпейісов’s novel “Қан мен тер” (Blood and Sweat, 1973), this example demonstrated the discourse marker ‘nu’ used in Kazakh to encourage immediate action and this function is closely paralleling to one of its established functions in original Russian contexts.

-Ол құдықтар қайда? Ну, жаныңның барында айт!

- Осы араның балықшылары көміп тастаған.

- Балықшылар?

- Иә, тақсыр, балықшылар. Ақтың әскері келе жатыр деген хабарды естіп әдейі істеп отыр.

«Қан мен тер» 3-ші кітап «Күйреу» Әбдіжәмил Нұрпейісов 1973

Translation:

-Where are those wells? **Nu**, tell me when you are still alive;!

- The fishermen of this place buried them.

- The fishermen?

- Yes, sir, the fishermen. They did it on purpose, having heard the news that the White army was coming.

"Blood and Sweat" Book 3 "Kuyreu" Abdizhamil Nurpeisov 1973

In this specific example, the DM ‘nu’ preceded a direct command so that it added a sense of urgency and emotional force to the imperative (“tell me”). In addition, the ‘nu’ functioned as a motivational prompt which aimed to intensify the demand for action here. In Russian, such uses of ‘nu’ are very common in imperatives like “Ну, скажи!” or “Ну, пошли уже!”, where the application of ‘nu’ amplifies the directive by embedding urgency. It is interesting to notice that the Kazakh usage shares the same type of emotional layering and this must suggest that the borrowed DM ‘nu’ retain not only its syntactic position (before verbs) but also its interactional functions.

5.1.3 Kazakh Usages of ‘Nu’ Overlap with Russian: Beginning of Comment or Response

Speaker 1: бауырсағым қалай болды деймін?

Speaker 2: аа

Speaker 2: **Hy** күшті маған ұнады

Translation:

Speaker 1: I said how was my bauyrsaq?

Speaker 2: Аа

Speaker 2: **Nu**, great, I liked it

This example demonstrated how Kazakh speakers pragmatically borrowed not just the form but also the function of the Russian DM ‘nu’, integrating it seamlessly into the rhythm and structure of native discourse. In this conversation, the speaker 1 asked a direct question “How was my bauyrsaq?” and expected feedback from the speaker 2 but the Speaker 2 responded with a brief (“Aa”) indicating the missed hearing of the speaker 1’s speech. Then the speaker 1 repeated the question and the speaker 2 provided a more elaborated response starting with the Russian DM ‘ny’.

The use of ‘ny’ in Speaker 2’s reply served not only to signal the start of a response after a question but also to cue the speaker 2’s subjective stance, emphasizing that the answer reflects his/her personal taste and judgment (“I liked it”).

5.2 New Functions of ‘NU’ in the Kazakh Context

5.2.1 New Functions of ‘NU’ in the Kazakh Context: Rephrasing the previous message with concession

ламинат төсе берейік, өзіміз не қыламыз ғой, бережно

let's lay laminate, we will do that ourselves, carefully

##

ну шама келгенше, мы кухню всегда линолеум делаем

nu, trying our best, we always lay linoleum in the kitchen

In this exchange, the speaker initially proposed a course of action (laying laminate) with a high degree modification “carefully”. Then, after a small silence, the speaker continued his

speech by using the DM ‘nu’, it softly challenged and revised the initial suggestion that laying the laminate CAREFULLY by offering an alternative view and habitual practice (“trying our best”). Therefore, it can be argued that the use of ‘nu’ here functioned not only to signal a shift in perspective, that is, not as a contradiction but as a gentle counterpoint but also it maintained the interactional harmony while expressing a discrepant preference.

In addition, this type of pragmatic role, “rephrasing with concession” demonstrated that the DM ‘nu’ in Kazakh has adapted the local communicative norms where indirectness and collaborative tone are valued and this kind of function also reflected the functional broadening of borrowed discourse markers beyond their original scope.

5.2.2 New Functions of ‘NU’ in the Kazakh Context: Rephrasing the previous message without concession

In the following emotionally charged conversation, the DM ‘nu’ is used to rephrase a previous message without implying disagreement or concession. This is a distinct pragmatic function which is not prominent in its original Russian usages of ‘nu’.

No. 1 Сол кезде, "Мақпал, смотри. Идет какой-то процесс суставной» деп маған айтты. Давай, ты сдашь вот эти, вот эти анализы"

No. 2 Ладно, Сәуле апай.

No. 1 Алып алдым да, неге бара салдым, жаңағы анализ тапсыруға. Кешке жакын менің балам уже жүрмей жатты ғой, ну, процесс қалай жылдам болды, иә?

Translation:

No. 1 At that time, (she said) "Machpal, see. There is some articular process going on. Come on, you hand over these (and) these analyses"

No. 2 Okay, Saule aunt.

No. 1 I took it and went to the where, to take analyze. My child is already not walking at evening, nu, how quickly the process went, yeah?

In the sample, speaker 1 Saule first reported a critical observation about her son's condition—his inability to walk by evening in 1 day due to joint illness. Then, she used the Russian DM 'nu' to transition into a rephrased interpretation: “how quickly the process went, yeah”. This type of usage of 'nu' deepened and intensified the previous utterance while at the same time it linked the concrete observation with a meta-commentary of the situation.

5.2.3 New Functions of 'NU' in the Kazakh Context: Signaling the Acceptance of Information

In the excerpt from Соңғы парыз (The Last Duty) below, it can be argued that the borrowed Russian 'nu' served as a response marker which signals the acceptance or cognitive acknowledgment of new information.

Speaker 1: Сосын, былай.. . сізге сәлем бере кетейін деп.. . Жеңгей қайда? Үйде ме?

Speaker 2:– Ол кісі қазір үйден гөрі дүкенде көбірек жүреді.

Speaker 1: – **Ну**, түсінем. Қалай, жеңгей.. . былай, қуатты ма?

Соңғы парыз Әбдіжәмил Нұрпейісов 1999

Translation:

Speaker 1: And then, like this.. . I wanted to say hello to you.. . Where is sister-in-law? Is she at home?

Speaker 2: – She's more at the store now than at home.

Speaker 1:– **Nu**, I understand. How is, sister-in-law ... in general, is she well?

The Last Duty Abdizhamil Nurpeisov 1999

The speaker 1 asked for the location of the sister-in-law and the speaker 2 provided the answer that “She's more at the store now than at home”. However, speaker 1 only began his speech by saying “Nu, I understand” and did not challenge the answer provided by the second speaker. In addition, the placement of 'nu' before “түсінем” (“I understand”) made it clear that 'nu' is not merely a filler, but part of a functional pragmatic formula: Nu + verb of

understanding/agreement. Therefore, the ‘nu’ here functioned much like “well” or “okay” in English when one absorbs and acknowledges what’s been said and it can reflect comprehension, and acceptance of a previously unknown or unexpected fact. Not surprisingly, this sort of usage is rare in Russian contexts because “ну” at the start of an utterance more often introduces hesitation, concession, or structural guidance in the Russian discourses.

5.2.4 New Functions of ‘NU’ in the Kazakh Context: Introducing to new things

Speaker 1: Мынаны кара, капталында да жазуы бар

Speaker 1: look at this jeans, it has a text on the side too

Speaker 2: Иә. Ну, вроде джинсылар сондай қазір мода сияқты

Speaker 2: Yes. Nu, jeans like these one are the trend now, maybe

Speaker 1: не то чтобы мода, Но киеді

Speaker 1: not the trend itself but people wear it

Speaker 2: иә

Speaker 2: yes

In this conversation, ‘nu’ was used to introduce new information in response to a prompt. The borrowed Russian DM ‘nu’ was used by the Speaker 2 in the statement, “Ну, вроде джинсылар сондай қазір мода сияқты” (Nu, jeans like these one are the trend now). Its function can be analyzed as introducing new information because the 2 interactors were just discussing the jeans which have a text on the side and the speaker 2 suddenly inserted a new information that that type of jeans are in trend.

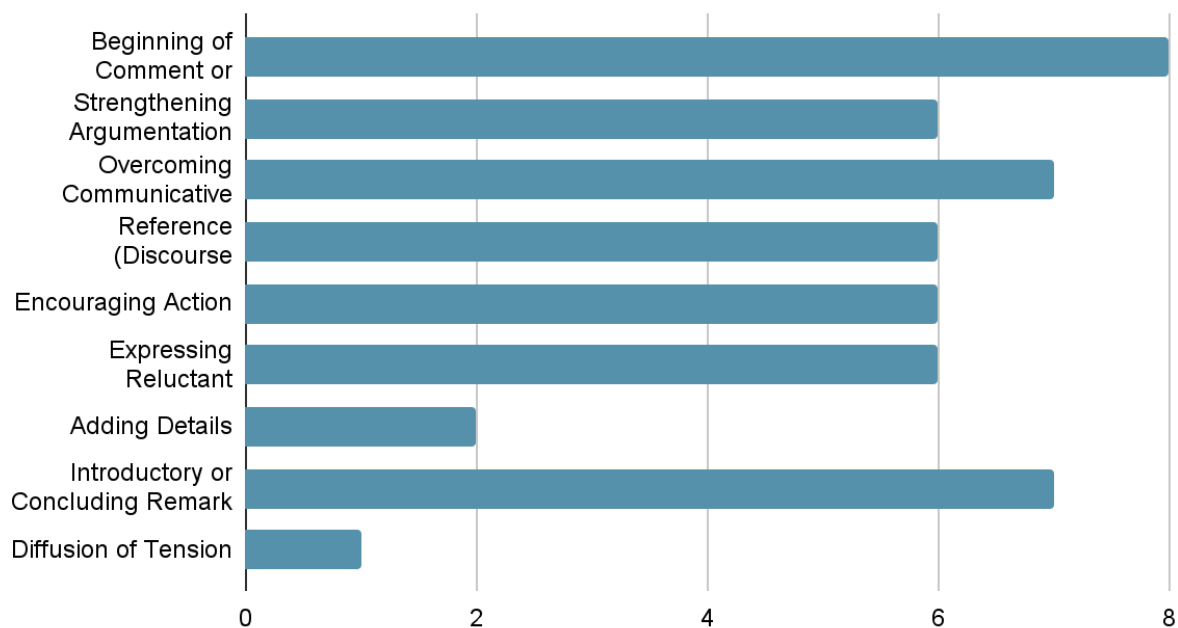
6.0 Results

A total of 50 tokens of the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ were extracted from the Russian conversational corpus, while 40 tokens were collected from Kazakh conversations. In general, it can be argued that Kazakh usages of the DM ‘nu’ have different patterns and pragmatic extensions in the Kazakh context as there were both notable overlaps and significant divergences observed in the distribution of functional categories across the two datasets.

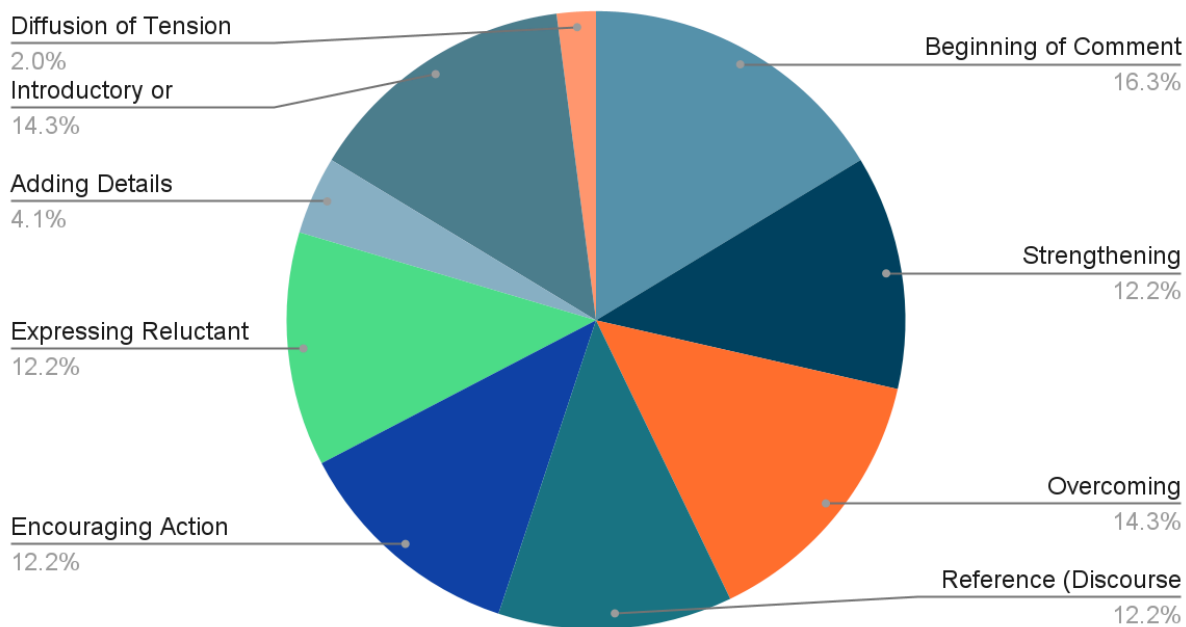
The Functional Distribution of the DM ‘nu’ in Russian Contexts are as follow:

Function s	Beginnin g of Commen t or Respon se	Strengthe ning Argumen tation	Overco ming Comm unicati ve Difficul ty (Hesitat ion)	Referen ce (Discou rse Structu ring)	Encour aging Action	Express ing Relucta nt Concess ion	Adding Details	Introduct ory or Concludi ng Remark	Diffusion of Tension
Number s	8	6	7	6	6	6	2	7	1
Percenta ge	16.3 %	12.2 %	14.3 %	12.2 %	12.2 %	12.2 %	4.1 %	14.3 %	2%

Functions of 50 Russian 'nu' Tokens in Bar Chart



Functions of 50 Russian 'nu' Tokens in Pie Chart

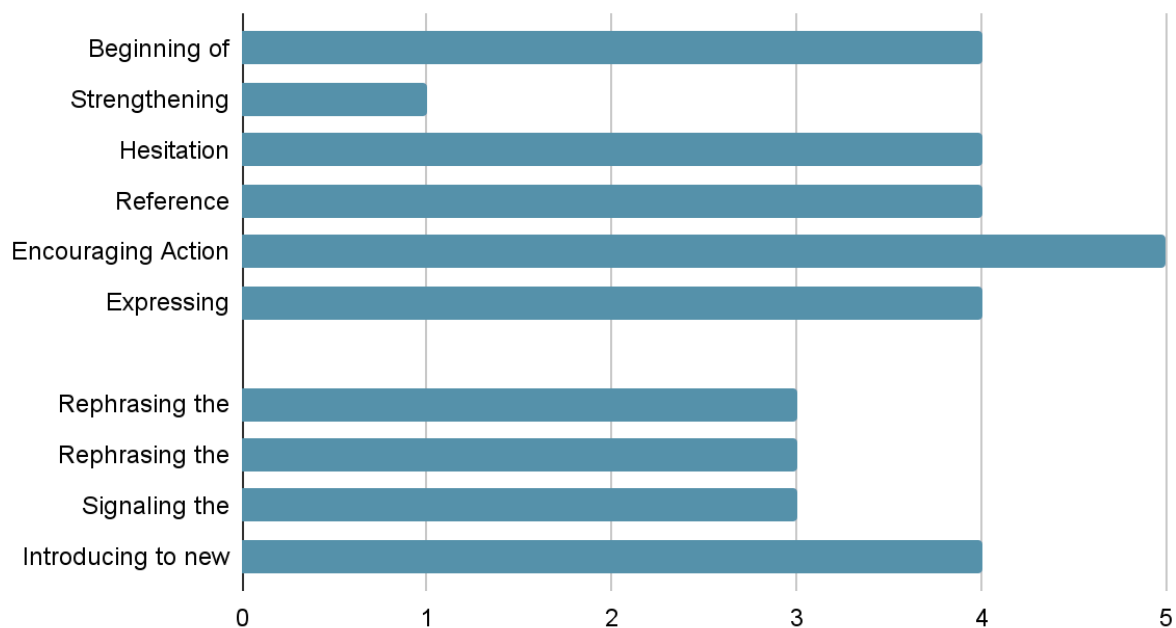


In the Russian dataset, the most frequent functions of ‘nu’ include Beginning of Comment or Response (16.3%), Diffusion of Tension (14.3%), and Adding Introductory or Concluding Remarks (14.3%). These are followed closely by Hesitation (14.3%), Strengthening Argumentation (12.2%), Reference Structuring (12.2%), Encouraging Action (12.2%), and Reluctant Concession (12.2%). Less commonly, ‘nu’ is also used for Adding Details (4.1%) and Diffusion of Tension (2%). The relatively even distribution across multiple pragmatic functions illustrated the multifunctionality of ‘nu’ in Russian discourses.

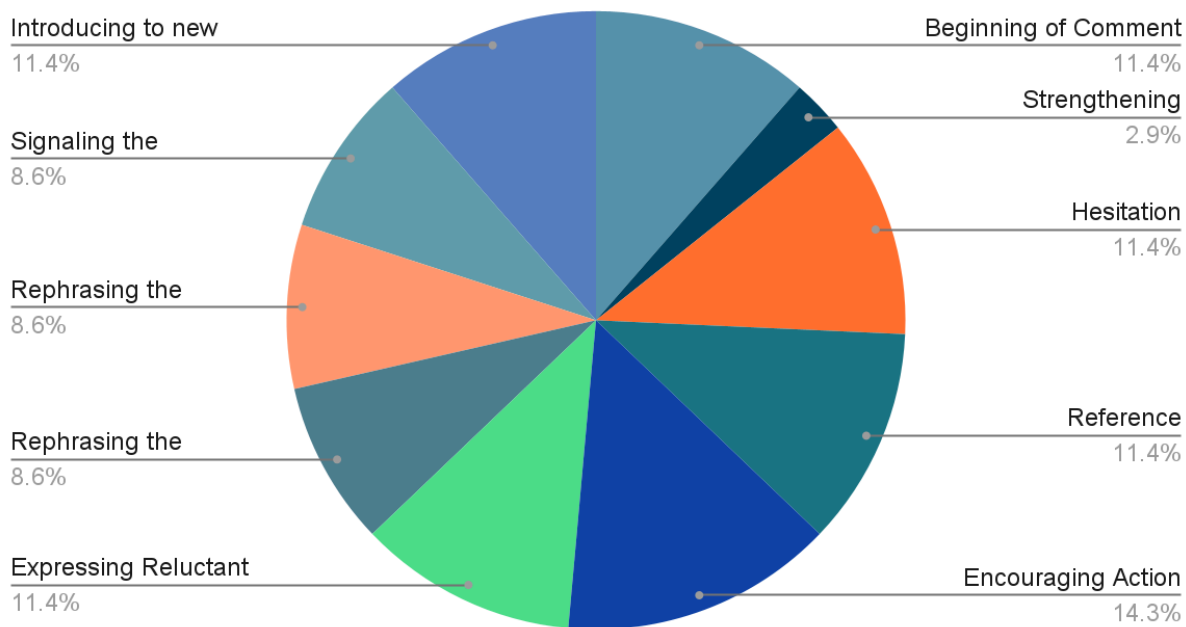
The Functional Distribution of the DM ‘nu’ in Kazakh Contexts are as follow: (Newly developed Functions are in blue)

Functions	Beginning of Comment or Response	Strengthening Argumentation	Hesitation	Reference	Encouraging Action	Expressing Reluctant Concession	Rephrasing the previous message with concession	Rephrasing the previous message without concession	Signaling the Acceptance of Information	Introducing to new things
Numbers	4	1	4	4	5	4	3	3	3	4
Percentage	11.4 %	2.9 %	11.4 %	11.4 %	14.3 %	11.4 %	8.6 %	8.6 %	8.6 %	11.4 %

Functions of 40 Kazakh 'nu' Tokens in Bar Chart



Functions of 40 Kazakh 'nu' Tokens in Pie Chart



In Kazakh conversations, the DM ‘nu’ demonstrated both functional overlaps and innovations. Among the 40 tokens, six categories matched the core Russian functions: Beginning of Comment or Response (11.4%), Strengthening Argumentation (2.9%), Hesitation (11.4%), Reference (11.4%), Encouraging Action (14.3%), and Reluctant Concession (11.4%).

However, there were four new functions emerged that are unique to Kazakh discourse, comprising a substantial portion of the total usage:

Rephrasing the Previous Message with Concession (8.6%)

Rephrasing the Previous Message without Concession (8.6%)

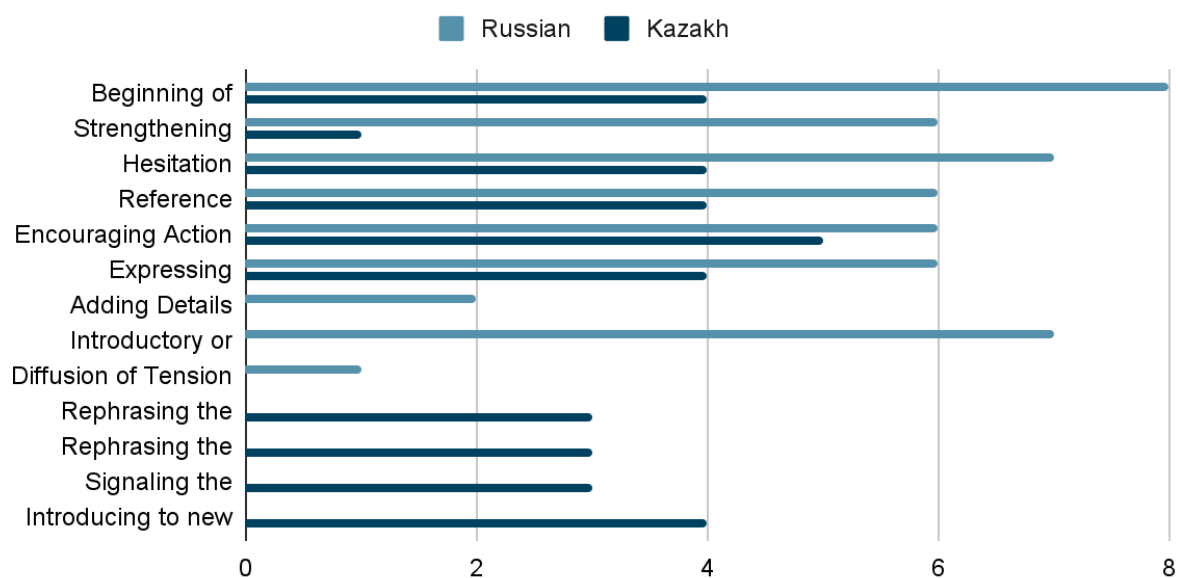
Signaling the Acceptance of Information (8.6%)

Introducing New Things (11.4%)

These novel uses showed how the DM ‘nu’, while borrowed from Russian, has undergone pragmatic expansions to suit the Kazakh communicative contexts.

The comparison of the functions of Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ in Russian and Kazakh contexts are as followed:

The comparison of the functions of 'nu' in Russian and Kazakh contexts



Function	Russian (n=50)	Kazakh (n=40)
Beginning of Comment or Response	8 (16.3%)	4 (11.4%)
Strengthening Argumentation	6 (12.2%)	1 (2.9%)
Overcoming Communicative Difficulty (Hesitation)	7 (14.3%)	4 (11.4%)

Reference / Discourse Structuring	6 (12.2%)	4 (11.4%)
Encouraging Action	6 (12.2%)	5 (14.3%)
Expressing Reluctant Concession	6 (12.2%)	4 (11.4%)
Adding Details	2 (4.1%)	—
Introductory/Concluding Remark	7 (14.3%)	—
Diffusion of Tension	1 (2%)	—
New: Rephrasing w/ Concession	—	3 (8.6%)
New: Rephrasing w/o Concession	—	3 (8.6%)
New: Signaling Acceptance	—	3 (8.6%)
New: Introducing New Things	—	4 (11.4%)

In another easier visual format:

Function	Russian	Kazakh	Notes
Beginning of Comment or Response	✓	✓	Shared core function in both languages
Strengthening Argumentation	✓	✓	Present in both; may vary in emotional vs. logical emphasis
Hesitation / Overcoming Communicative Difficulty	✓	✓	Functions as a filler or to indicate pause/choice
Reference / Discourse Structuring	✓	✓	Used to refer to prior discourse or highlight information
Encouraging Action	✓	✓	Imperative tone; prompts the interlocutor
Expressing Reluctant Concession	✓	✓	Signaling hesitant agreement
Adding Details	✓	✗	Observed in Russian; no confirmed counterpart in Kazakh
Introductory or Concluding Remark	✓	✗	Found in Russian discourse; not prominent in Kazakh
Diffusion of Tension	✓	✗	Used to soften situations in Russian
Rephrasing with Concession	✗	✓	Kazakh-specific; reformulates a prior message with mitigated stance
Rephrasing without Concession	✗	✓	Kazakh-specific; repeats or rewords with no hedging
Signaling Acceptance of Information	✗	✓	Kazakh-specific; marks uptake or understanding of new input
Introducing New Information	✗	✓	Kazakh-specific; initiates a shift to a new topic or idea

By observing the tables above, it seems that while both corpora demonstrated that the DM ‘nu’ served core pragmatic functions like structuring discourse, managing responses, and expressing stance, the Kazakh context revealed adaptive uses of ‘nu’ in functions that are not characteristic of Russian. These tables also made evident that while approximately 65.6% of ‘nu’ usages in Kazakh retained original Russian functions, the remaining 34.4% (14 out of 40) innovative applications of ‘nu’ underscored the influence of local discourse norms and interactional strategies.

7.0 Discussion

As the results showed, the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ not only aligned with prior research on its roles in structuring discourse and managing conversational coherence but it also exhibited a broader range of pragmatic functions. In addition, the assumption that Kazakh speakers would not only have inherited the most prevalent applications of the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’, but also adapted language specific functions of the borrowed DM ‘nu’ was also supported by the results. These expanded pragmatic roles of borrowed discourse markers in the target language demonstrated the ability of discourse markers to adjust to new linguistic and cultural settings.

While this study offered valuable insights into the functional range and adaptation of the Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ in Kazakh spoken discourse, there were still some significant limitations arised when examining the DM ‘nu’ in Kazakh context. Firstly, because of the limited availability of data and the challenges of working with underdeveloped Kazakh corpuses, only 40 instances of ‘nu’ in Kazakh contexts were collected, the limited sample size raised the concerns about representativeness, as the data may not capture the full spectrum of ‘nu’s’ usages across different Kazakh-speaking contexts, communities and registers, the findings may lack generalizability. Therefore, I argue that a broader and more representative dataset would likely yield a deeper understanding of how ‘nu’ functions across different speakers, dialects, and communicative contexts in Kazakh.

Despite the limitation of the not fully developed Kazakh corpus, the study still presents an important finding: ‘nu’ has been integrated into the Kazakh lexicon and is actively used by

native Kazakh speakers. This suggests that ‘nu’ is not a simple case of code-switching but rather a fully borrowed discourse marker with distinct functional roles in Kazakh discourse.

The second limitation lies in the exclusive reliance on oral (audio-only) corpora. Ideally, a multimodal corpus—incorporating video, prosodic annotation, and contextual cues—would have been used for this kind of discourse analysis because discourse markers like ‘nu’ are often accompanied by visual and prosodic features which play a critical role in conveying their more nuanced pragmatic function. However, there was also a reason why the multimodal corpus was not selected at first, the video material in such multimodal corpus was mainly cuts from movies and documentaries and it is very significant to note that the speeches in such genre are mostly not spontaneous and therefore lack of the value of researching.

Nevertheless, the absence of visual and prosodic features in the current dataset still restricted the interpretive depth and led to ambiguity in functional categorization in some cases.

For example, in the utterance 2:

[№ 1] Вот давайте поговорим об этом событии. Не могли бы Вы своими словами объяснить / зачем государство проводит перепись населения?

[№ 2] Ну / для того чтобы узнать / какое...

[№ 1] Let's talk about this event. Could you explain in your own words / why the government conducts a census?

[№ 2] Nu / in order to find out / what...

It was unclear whether the DM ‘nu’ was functioning as a marker of hesitation, or a marker of beginning a comment/response, or both. If the conversation was in multimodal settings, intonation or accompanying gestures might have clarified the speaker’s intent.

Therefore, it is significant to consider which type of corpus should be used in the future studies.

8.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Kazakh usage pattern of the borrowed Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ presented both a continuation and a transformation of its Russian counterpart. While six functions are shared, the emergence of four new functions—especially those involved in rephrasing, information acceptance, and introducing unrelated new topics, underlined that the borrowed elements are not simply copied from source language but are reanalyzed and embedded into the host language’s unique interactional logic. Most importantly, these findings aligned with Maschler’s (2002) argument that borrowed discourse markers do not simply replicate their source-language roles but are adapted to meet the communicative and cultural needs of the target language.

The emergence of new functions of the borrowed Russian discourse marker ‘nu’ in Kazakh indicated that discourse markers are not merely passive linguistic imports from the process of language contact but are active participants in shaping discourse in multilingual settings.

Lastly, I suggest that future research should focus on expanding the corpus of naturally occurring audio and video data for both Russian and Kazakh. This would help to clarify subtle functional shifts and better account for multimodal elements that influence the use of discourse markers. Additionally, I also advise that more attention should be paid to the frequent co-occurrence of ‘nu’ with other discourse markers, as combinations may represent yet another layer of pragmatic adaptation.

9.0 Bibliography

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[Chat GPT 3.5](#)

10.0 Appendix

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IPiOoc_Ry_iB_TN2ROkvIo0SQA1ISZdclM_Cpv54r3c/edit?usp=sharing