The study of discourse-pragmatic features such as *well, I mean, you know,* etc. has not traditionally fallen under the remit of variationist sociolinguistics. Variationist interest in these features was only generated by the growing recognition in the 1980s and 1990s that they carry social meaning, perform indispensable functions in social interaction, and constitute essential elements of sentence grammar (Dines 1980; Schiffrin 1987; Traugott 1995). Yet despite a growing body of evidence showing that discourse-pragmatic features, like features in other levels of linguistic structure, evince orderly heterogeneity and a capacity for change, discourse variation analysis is still at an ‘elementary stage’ (Macaulay 2002: 298). In this talk, I will discuss some of the challenges variationist study of discourse faces in its endeavour to advance beyond its current embryonic state. I will argue that in order to progress towards a comprehensive theory of discourse variation and change, it is necessary to (i) develop a uniform method of data analysis which ensures comparability and generalizability, (ii) explore in more detail the social as well as the internal distribution of discourse variables, (iii) systematically examine patterns of variation as well as change in discourse, and (iv) broaden the research focus to a wider and more diverse range of discourse-pragmatic features.