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The function and importance of discourse markers in political discourse

Abstract

Discourse markers are generally defined as linguistic expressions of different lengths, which carry pragmatic and propositional meanings. They are used to combine clauses or to relate sentences and paragraphs to each other. They appear in both written and spoken language to facilitate the discourse, and to indicate a speaker`s attitude to what he is saying. As linguistic items, discourse markers have important functions in discourses of various styles and registers.
Through any political text, discourse markers play an important role as a cohesive device in conveying the intended message. As a tool, language is used to achieve political aims and discourse markers are a vivid part of this tool to indicate the speaker`s attitude towards the audience. Taking into consideration this fact, this paper aims at identifying and analyzing the functions and the importance of discourse markers through political discourses in Albania.

Keywords: *discourse markers, political discourse, pragmatics, textual, interpersonal.*

Introduction

Language and politics are closely related to each other because the doing of politics is constituted in language. Politicians make use of language since it is considered as a resource, which is drawn up on to achieve socio-political goals. Political activity does not exist without the use of without the use of language and the doing of politics is constituted in language (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002, pp. 2-3). The relationship between language and politics stems from the fact that language can be thought of as a resource, which is drawn up on to achieve socio-political goals. Van Dijk (1997, p. 12) observes that each speech delivered by a politician is a realization of his intention and has its own function. As a result, for politicians, language is a very important tool used to achieve something.

The aim of this paper is to analyze different Albanian political speeches according to the viewpoint of discourse markers, as a crucial element of discourse analysis and pragmatics. Firstly, there will be given several definitions of different linguists about discourse markers as well as the role they play in discourse analysis. Secondly, they will be analyzed within the context of Albanian political discourse by following Hyland and Tse`s (Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal., 2004) classification of discourse markers into: textual and interpersonal ones. Finally, it will be concluded with the functions and role that discourse markers play in the practical cases of political discourses in Albania under analysis.

Political discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis may be broadly speaking, defined as the study of language viewed communicatively and/or of communication viewed linguistically. Any more detailed spelling out of such a definition typically involves reference to concepts of language in use, language above or beyond the sentence, language as meaning in interaction, and language in situational and cultural context. ((Schiffrin, Approaches to discourse., 1994, pp. 20-39) (Cameron, 2001, pp. 10-13)

Discourse analysis not merely as a "method", like content analysis, but as a new (also theoretical) cross-discipline in its own right, a discipline in which also political science is involved. So, what exactly is "political discourse"? Indeed, the vast bulk of studies of political discourse are about the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels. Politicians in this sense are the group of people who are being paid for their (political) activities, and who are being elected or appointed (or self-designated) as the central players in the polity. Despite this fact, politicians are not the only participants in the domain of politics. From the interactional point of view of discourse analysis, there should also be included the various recipients in political communicative events, such as the public, the people, citizens, the 'masses', and other groups or categories. That is, once politics and its discourses are located in the public sphere, many more participants in political communication appear on the stage (Verba, 1993, pp. 460-461).

The opinion of Chruszczewski (2002, pp. 70-76) is that by directing presidents speeches (texts) into the desired direction, the texts can quite often manipulate a large number of recipients. According to Chruszczewski language used in speeches is undoubtedly expected by the audience and that professional politicians select specific phrases in order to persuade and influence receivers.

Definitions and Hayland and Tse`s classification of discourse markers.

Traditionally, some of the words or phrases that were considered discourse markers were treated as "fillers" or "expletives": words or phrases that had no function at all. Now they are assigned functions in different levels of analysis: topic changes, reformulations, discourse planning, stressing, hedging, or back channeling. Those functions can be classified into three broad groups: (a) relationships among (parts of) utterances; (b) relationships between the speaker and the message, and (c) relationships between speaker and hearer (Swan, 2005, p. xviii).

According to Lynn and Zic (Lynn & Moder, 2004, p. 117), in linguistics, a discourse marker is a word or phrase that is relatively syntax-independent and does not change the meaning of the sentence, and has a somewhat empty meaning, while, Swan (2005, p. 13) defines a discourse marker as "a word or expression, which shows the connection between what is being said and the wider context." To him, it is something that first, connects a sentence to what comes before or after and second, indicates a speaker's attitude to what he is saying. Thus, discourse markers can be defined as linguistic expressions of varying length, which carry pragmatic meaning and can facilitate the discourse.

Hyland and Tse (2004, pp. 156-177) mention that discourse marker categories are intrinsically and ultimately interpersonal, and one of their main aims is to persuade the reader. They classify discourse markers into the functional headings of interpersonal and textual markers.   Textual discourse markers refer to the organization of discourse.   They also fulfill a persuasive function and attain a persuasive effect, while the interpersonal reflects the writer's stance towards both the content of the text and the potential reader.
Hyland and Tse (2004) sub classify textual discourse markers into seven categories which are:

1.Logical markers: are markers which express semantic and structural relationships between discourse stretches, and help readers interpret pragmatic connections, which are:

> **A**. Additive (and, furthermore etc.). The marker "and" has both cohesive and structural roles; structural because they link two (or more) syntactic units such as clauses, phrases or verbs, and cohesive because the interpretation of the whole conjunctive utterance depends on the combination of both conjuncts. Also, "and" can precede support units of talk (explanation, evidence and clarification to previous units). It can also have a pragmatic effect in the sense that it indicates a speaker's continuation. ((Schiffrin, Discourse Markers. , 1987, p. 150).

Such reform, due to its importance and impact, demands minimally a political consensus and as a optimal a constitutional consensus and a public involution. (Rama, kryeministria.al, 2014)

> **B**. Adversative (but, however, while, yet, though etc.)

However, *you should bear in mind this is a new era; this is the era of the Renaissance of State Police. (Rama, Deep reform in education system, 2014)*

C. Conclusive relationships (finally, in sum etc.) present in the text.

Concluding, I am hoping that the opposition is going to think about this process once again (Rama, Orientimi ynë, interesi publik dhe jo politika e përbaltjes, 2014)

D. Causatives (so, because, as a result). According to Schifrin (1987:330), "because" is used by the speaker to indicate a relation of 'cause and result'.

*This is why I did not mention our Business Climate reform in the above list of structural reforms, **because** it deserves special mention. (Rama, EBRD, Rama: Government, partner to all who do business in Albania, 2014)*

E. Sequencers: are markers which indicate particular positions in a series and serve to guide the reader in the presentation of different arguments in a particular order (in the first place, secondly).

Second, it is of great importance for the concept of the Rule of Law, that means the functioning of the Rule of Law and of the regarding institutions. (Nishani, 2012)

F. Reminders: are markers that refer back to previous sections in the text in order to retake an argument, amplify it or summaries some of the previous argumentation.   (as...said).

*Because **as I said**, in Albania we have many "EU certified" laws prepared with a lot of assistance. (Rama, Acting and Enacting for Next Generation Europe, 2013)*

G. Topicalisers: are markers that explicitly indicate some type of topic shift to the reader so that the argumentation can be easily followed such as: (now). Schiffrin (1987:241) claims that "now" is used to indicate the upcoming shift in talk, or when the speaker wants to negotiate the right to control what will happen next in talk.

Now, it is clear that at hearing so much swearing, so many curses, so much nonsense, all those who are part of that world, the world of crime, do not feel alone at all. (Rama, We restored confidence of citizens in police forces, 2014)

H. Code glosses: are markers that explain, rephrase, expand or exemplify propositional content. Overall, they reflect the writer's expectations about the audience's knowledge or ability to follow the argument (that is, in other words, for instance).

***This is** why I did not mention our Business Climate reform in the above list of structural reforms, because it deserves special mention. (Rama, EBRD, Rama: Government, partner to all who do business in Albania, 2014)*

I.   Illocutionary markers: are markers that explicitly name the act the writer performs through the text (I hope to persuade, I back up this idea)

***I am hoping to persuade** the opposition to join the reforming process. (Rama, Orientimi ynë, interesi publik dhe jo politika e përbaltjes, 2014)*

J. Announcements: are markers, which refer forward to future sections in the text in order to prepare the reader for prospective argumentation. (next, then)

***Next,** we must admit, it is of great importance for the concept of the Rule of Law. (Rama, Orientimi ynë, interesi publik dhe jo politika e përbaltjes)*

Hyland and Tse (2004:156-177) sub classify interpersonal markers into five main categories which are:

1. Hedges: are markers, which refer to markers that withhold full commitment to the statements displayed in the text. From a linguistic point of view, epistemic verbs (may, might, would), probability adverbs (perhaps, maybe) and epistemic expressions (it is likely, it is probable) have been analyzed as hedges.

It would not have been better than this at least for school students. (Rama, Deep reform in education system, 2014)

2. Certainty markers: are markers that express full commitment to the statements presented by the writer (undoubtedly, of course, naturally, in fact, you know). (Schiffrin, Discourse Markers. , 1987, p. 268) maintains that "y'know" has two discourse functions: a marker of meta knowledge about what speakers and hearers share, and a marker of meta knowledge about what is generally known. It is also used to indicate a situation in which the speaker knows that the hearer shares some knowledge about a particular piece of information.

The fact is - and you know it very well – that today we are facing the consequences of such shortsighted politics. (Rama, Deep reform in education system, 2014)

3. Attributors: are markers that perform a double function in the text. They refer explicitly to the source of the information (as the Prime Minister indicated), or at the same time using these references of authoritative value with persuasive goals . (Schiffrin, Discourse Markers. , 1987, p. 268)

As the Prime Minister had claimed, new reforms had to be implemented. (Basha, Rilindja Demokratike, 2014)

4. Attitude markers: are markers which express the writer's affective values towards the reader and the content presented in the text. Linguistically, these markers can adopt the following form:

A. Denotic verbs: (must, have to ...) Regarding the administrative reform, I have to repeat that such reform, due to it's importance and impact. (Basha, Rilindja Demokratike, 2014)

B. Attitudinal adverbs: (surprisingly, strangely...)

Surprisingly, after all the efforts to pass a consensual law on the Public Administration, Rama not only tried to disrupt the consensus, but is still not implementing the Constitutional Court verdict. (Bylykbashi, 2014)

C. Adjectival constructions: such as (it is difficult, impossible. ...)
It is clear that at hearing so much swearing, so many curses, so much nonsense, all those who are part of that world, the world of crime, do not feel alone at all. (Rama, We restored confidence of citizens in police forces, 2014)

D. Cognitive verbs: such as (I think, I believe...) I **think** it could not have been better than this at least for school students. (Rama, Deep reform in education system, 2014)

5. Commentaries. These markers help to establish and maintain rapport with the audience by means of rhetorical questions is this right attitude?), direct appeals (dear reader, you), personalization (I, we, me, my feelings). Personalizers, contribute to the development of a relationship with the reader. A relationship that, ultimately, may convince or not but that is inherently persuasive (Schiffrin, Discourse Markers. , 1987, p. 268).

We have, **as you must have heard,** rampant corruption, which drains a lot of energy and financial sources (Rama, Acting and Enacting for Next Generation Europe, 2013).

Functions of discourse markers.

Discourse markers have two fundamental functions: the discoursal function and the interpersonal function. First, "the textual or discoursal function" refers to signal relations between prior, present and subsequent discourse, marking off one text unit from another or linking discourse units further apart (Aijmer, 1996, p. 210). The "interpersonal function" helps in expressing speaker or writer stance. For example, "Sentence openers" can paint a picture in the reader's mind and grab their attention by drawing them into the composition.

Apparently, pragmatic meaning is defined by Schiffrin (2006:315-338) especially in relation to discourse markers as the recurrent use of a certain marker to convey communicative meaning. She also adds that pragmatic meaning is dependent upon the relational functions that markers develop in the respective text or context of use. (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 326) describes the contribution of discourse to coherence as follows: "discourse markers provide contextual coordinates for utterances: they index an utterance to the local contexts in which utterances are produced and in which they are to be interpreted."

The general idea in Relevance Theory is that the linguistic form of a sentence or an utterance (i.e. propositional representations) potentially gives rise to a number of possible interpretations. Thus, the hearer's task then is to find the most relevant interpretation in the given context ((Wilson & Sperber, 1986, p. 50) (Blakemore, 1992, p. 150)) points out that "discourse markers guide the hearer in this task by constraining the number of possible interpretations." Therefore, they "encode instructions for processing propositional representations," which Blakemore also terms "encoding procedural meaning."

Blakemore (1988, pp. 183-195) defines discourse markers in terms of their function in establishing connectivity in discourse. Here, connectivity could be understood as either coherence or cohesion, which marks text connections at different levels. Moreover, she refers to coherence as a cognitive notion, which represents the hearer's integration of the received information into the larger representation of a text. This way, it implies the structural connection between different units of a text as well as between different texts.

Conclusions.

There may be concluded that a political phenomenon becomes tangible and discussable only after it has been expressed in words. Taking into consideration the fact that politics evolves alongside the discourse in general, and the political discourse in particular, priority is given to language. Politician make use of language since it is considered as a resource in accomplishing their main goals: persuading the audience and making them believe that their ideology, beliefs or propaganda is the best choice being offered. Discourse markers, due to their important role and functions analyzed throughout the paper, are considered as the most efficient way of awarding coherence to a text or speech. They also contribute in facilitating the discourse, making it more comprehensible and clearer for the audience.

According to their classification into: textual and interpersonal and their further sub classifications there can be agreed that all kinds of discourse markers contribute to the good managing of political discourses. Therefore, political leaders make use of discourse markers to convey their messages correctly, to influence the hearers emotionally and psychologically, and to modify their convictions and feelings.

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