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## **Discourse Markers in Political Interviews: A Contrastive Study of Persian and English**

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### **Abstract**

Due to the significance of multiculturalism in politics, and the central role linguistic devices play in organizing the political discourse, this text-based qualitative study was carried out to compare political interviews in the Iranian and English contexts to find out the probable similarities and differences in the use of discourse markers (DMs) between the two cultures. To this end, three sets of interviews were selected, and the DMs used in those interviews were identified and classified based on the framework proposed by Fung and Carter (2007). The results revealed that along with the similarities, some differences were present in the use of DMs among the interviewees. Such differences can be attributed to the cultural differences between the interviewees and their communicative purposes. The findings of the study help us understand the importance of DMs in organizing institutional discourse and intercultural inconsistencies that exist between Iranian and English-speaking politicians.

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## 1. Introduction

Political discourse, as Graber (1993; as cited in Ismail, 2012) believes, is the instance of social reciprocal action used as an influential tactful tool for the purpose of impressing the public. By the specific use of linguistic means, politicians can achieve their own political aims which are to shape people's thoughts and to convince them to act as they want. As Orwel (1946; as cited in Jalilifar & Alavi, 2011, p. 44) maintains, their language is "designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind".

Political interviews, as Sandoval (2010) claims, are a specific genre of political discourse in which, by using conventionalized ways, politicians reach the particular communicative intent of affecting and convincing the audience. According to Bhatia (2006), political interview is a type of social interaction involving close contact in which the role of interviewer is to inquire about political issues and the politician is expected to provide answer. Likewise, it has been stated that political interview is a genre in which the convergence of two culturally generated institutional discourses (discourses of the media and the politics) leads to the creation of meaning (Johansson, 2007).

In recent years, many researchers have dedicated their focus to investigating political interviews from different linguistic perspectives. For instance, Bramley (2001) examined the use of pronouns in the construction of "self" and "other" in political interviews. He concludes that in political interviews, pronouns are exploited by the politicians so as to construct the self and other. Chilton (2004) investigated the importance of linguistic structures in political discourse. His analysis showed how nominalization, agentless passives, and pronouns with ambiguous antecedents are used for implicit stating of political propositions without presenting a clear expression. Fetzer (2007) examined the linguistic realization of challenges in British and German political interviews from the general elections in Britain and Germany. She concluded that there are language and culture-specific dispositions for

negotiating, explicating, and contextualizing challenges.

A closer look at the literature reveals that many researchers studied the linguistic devices adopted by politicians in political interviews to achieve their communicative goals; convincing and persuading the audience (e.g., Bramley, 2001; Fetzer, 2008; Jalilifar & Alavi, 2011). One of the important linguistic devices used to organize the political discourse is discourse markers (DMs). DMs are crucial linguistic elements the functions of which are to link between different parts of the text and build coherence in the discourse (Blakemore, 2004).

Although, the significance of DMs in organizing a coherent discourse is generally acknowledged, very few studies seem to have examined exclusively the use of DMs in political interviews. Thus, this text-based contrastive study was conducted with the primary aim of investigating political interviews in both English and Iranian contexts to explore the cross-cultural similarities and differences in the use of DMs in such contexts. Moreover, since most of the studies in this area have focused on examining TV political interviews, and due to the fact that interacting with newspapers is still the daily activity of the majority of people, this study kept analyzed the interviews published in popular Persian and English newspapers hoping to shed light on the discursive aspect of the political genre.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Discourse Markers

Discourse markers (DMs) are one of the well-studied linguistic features; they have been the focus of many studies, gaining importance from the 70s onwards. However, there is no consensus on their definition and functions. Thus, researchers have approached the study of discourse markers from various perspectives. Fraser (1999, p. 946) defines DMs, with the exception of a few idiomatic cases, as "expressions drawn from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, or prepositional phrases, have the syntactic properties associated with their class membership, have a meaning which is procedural, and have co-occurrence restrictions which are in complementary distribution with their conceptual counterparts". In his study,

Fraser examined the grammatical status of DMs and considered DM as a linguistic expression whose meaning is fortified by the context; DMs show the relationship between the preceding and following expressions (Fraser, 1999). He also grouped DMs into four main categories of “topic change markers”, “contrastive markers”, “elaborative markers”, and “inferential markers”. Redeker (2000, 2006), on the other hand, advocated a functional approach to DMs. According to Redeker (1991, 2000), “a discourse operator is any expression that is used with the primary function of bringing to the listener’s attention a particular kind of relation between the discourse unit it introduces and the immediate discourse context” (as cited in Redeker, 2006, p. 3).

Schiffrin (1987) considers DMs as an extremely diversified set of expressions which mark “sequentially-dependent units of discourse”. She examined the way DMs enable discourse coherence, and based on the type of coherence they provide, she classified DMs into five separate planes:

- 1) Exchange structure which shows the patterns of turn taking between the participants;
- 2) Action structure, which represents the series of speech acts happening in the discourse;
- 3) Ideational structure, which signals the connection between propositions in the discourse;
- 4) Participation framework, which reflects how the participants build the relationship to one another and how they show their stance toward the expressions;
- and 5) Information state, which represents the progressive creation and arrangement of knowledge as it develops within the discourse (as cited in Fraser, 1999, p. 934).

According to Blakemore (2004), the term “discourse” reflects the fact that these expressions must be described beyond the sentence level, and by the term “marker” it is meant that their meaning should be analyzed in terms of what they intend to convey. In other words, DMs mark the relationship between the different parts of the discourse and are utilized to make connections within the discourse (as cited in Sandova, 2010). Hyland (2000) considers DMs as devices in

the writer’s hand to refer to a topic, change the topic, connect ideas, etc. in a text. From this perspective, DMs are metadiscourse markers aimed at making a cohesive and well-organized discourse which can interact with the readers (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Vande Kopple, 1985). It is worth pointing out that such linguistic devices are also employed in socio-cultural and socio-political occasions, such as political interviews as a means by which the speakers of a speech community convey information about various current affairs to the public, so that they can achieve their communicative goal(s) of convincing the audience.

## 2.2. Political Interviews

According to Sandova (2010), political interview is considered as a genre whose communicative purpose is to convince and persuade the audience. Similarly, it has been stated that political interview is a dialogical genre in which the institutional actors participate to give comments on a specific subject and their talk is managed by the media experts (Lauerbach & Fetzer, 2007). MacNair (2011, p. 25) believes there is now “... a relationship of mutual convenience and interdependence evolve between the politician and the media professional, as one strives to satisfy the other’s hunger for news while at the same time maximizing his or her favorable public exposure”.

Adopting the pragmatic perspective, the results of the studies on political interviews reveal that interview is a highly structured, rule-governed speech event. Both interviewer and interviewee follow a set of genre-specific rules, and there is a continual discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee to achieve these norms (Blum-Kulka, 1983; as cited in Bramley, 2001).

Kibrik (2013) maintains that each interview entails three roles: 1) the role of the interviewer is to address the questions which are of the audience interest, 2) the role of the respondent who is expected to provide an answer to the questions, and 3) the role of the presupposed audience, which is to direct the interviewer’s questions to the issues that are of their concerns. There are also common features shared in all types of political interviews. They have the argumentative

structure. They are in the form of questioning and answering. In all interviews, the interviewer is the spokesperson of the people. They ask challenging questions and represent the opinion of the audience. The role of the interviewee, on the other hand, is to express and to defend their standpoints (Lauerbach, 2007). As de Beus (2011) believes, the two parties are dependent in a way that journalists require politicians to provide them with government and political information, and politicians require news writers to obviate their needs which is to be exposed and seen publicly.

Along with these common features, MacNair (2011) identified five functions of the communication media: the first one is the monitoring function of the media which means that everything is clear for the audience. Second, the journalists need to have professional detachment and remain objective and neutral in the process of communication. The third function is that the media must provide an opportunity for the formation of political opinion. Fourth, the media must give publicity to political institutions. The last function of the media is its advocacy function, that is, media must provide the situation so that the politicians can articulate their programs to the audience. Furthermore, there are some conditions under which these functions can be performed. According to Habermas (1989), the political discourse which is spread around by the media, needs to be understandable to the audience. It is also required to denote the actual and honest intention of the politicians.

By reviewing the literature, it is evident that in the study of political interviews, researchers adopt different perspectives for the analysis of the political discourse. Such varied approaches set a framework through which the political discourse is analyzed. Bell and vanLeeuwen (1994) examined political interviews from a communication and media studies perspective. They emphasized the social context in which political interviews take place. They described political interview as a communicative event in which politicians “can be seen to speak ‘spontaneously’ and ‘intimately’ to the public” (as cited in Bramley, 2001, p. 8). Other studies looked at political interview from the pragmatic point of view. For instance, in the

study by Blum-Kulka (1983), it was revealed that the interviewer considered the responses of the interviewee as either supportive or unsupportive. The third approach investigates political discourse from an interactional viewpoint. This approach can be seen in the study by Greatbatch (1986) in which he examined the agenda shifting procedure during an interview and concluded that the interviewees used agenda-shifting procedure overtly or covertly, so that they could change the agenda proposed by the interviewer. Another approach used by the researchers as a framework for the analysis of media discourse is critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) maps three different analyzes on to one another: text, discourse practices of text production, distribution, and consumption and analysis of social/cultural practices. It differs from interactional approaches because it does not start from the text first but rather with political and social concerns. (Bramley, 2001, p. 9)

It is worth mentioning that by the development of institutional discourse and broadcasting, political discourse has gradually changed to be more unceremonious. According to Sandova (2010), conversationalization is considered as a change that happens as a result of using more informal words and expressions within the institutional discourse (Sandova, 2010). It has been stated that there is a tendency among politicians toward using more unofficial and popular language in order to be able to impress their audience (Sandova, 2010). Fairclough (1992) also maintains that conversationalisation is a progressive change occurring in the communicative style of the institutional discourse for the purpose of reducing the differences between community and private discourse (as cited in Simon-Vanderbergen, 2000).

### 2.3. Studies on Political Interviews

A number of studies on the linguistic aspects of political discourse have been studied following different perspectives. Simon-Vanderbergen (2000) investigated the function of “I think” as a parenthetical verb in political discourse and informal conversations. In her study, she referred to Urmson’s (1952) article

in which he considers parenthetical verbs as a class of verbs, such as “believe, guess, suppose”, whose function is to show the degree of trustworthiness attached to the statements (as cited in Simon-Vandenberg, 2000). The result of her investigation revealed that “I think” is used with different functions in political discourse and casual conversations. She mentioned that in political interviews, politicians use “I think” to express their opinion rather than their uncertainty. Furthermore, she concluded that politicians use “I think” in their talk to express their personalized attitude.

In another study, Bramley (2001) examined the use of pronouns in the construction of “self” and “other” in political interviews. He concluded that in political interviews, pronouns are being exploited by politicians, so as to construct the self and other. For example, the function of using “I” and “We” in political interviews is to create an acceptable image of self and the party. Politicians tend to use the pronoun “I” as they want to share their individual perspective and construct a good picture of themselves. Using “We”, on the other hand, implies the “collective and institutional identity.” It shows the politicians’ group or membership affiliation.

Sandova (2010) studied the speaker’s involvement in political interviews. She examined the linguistic means used to provide a higher level of involvement in political interviews. She explains although the genre of political interview as a formal discourse is considered to have a low involved, detached style, politicians make use of linguistic means in order to show involvement with their propositions for the aim of convincing and persuading the audience. Her study revealed that politicians tend to use phrases like “I think” and “I mean” which denote the subjectivity of the politicians and increase the degree of their involvement in the interview. She also investigated the use of two linguistic means, “boosters” and “hedges”, in political interviews. Based on the context of occurrence, boosters are classified as speaker-oriented, discourse-organizing, and hearer-oriented. Speaker-oriented boosters indicating higher degree of speaker’s involvement are used when politicians attempt to emphasize their viewpoints and convince the audience.

Discourse-organizing boosters are used to signal the important parts of the discourse and to help the public to understand the message of the speaker. Hearer-oriented boosters are used by the speaker as a means of reinforcing their position in front of the public. When it comes to hedges, it is believed that they are used by politicians to mitigate the illocutionary force of the utterances and to show some degrees of uncertainty in their expressions (Sandova, 2010). Furthermore, Sandova compared the discourse of female politicians with that of male politicians and concluded that female politicians are vague in presenting their viewpoints, while male politicians are to-the-point and clear in their expressions.

Becker (2007) conducted a mixed-method study to have a cross-cultural analysis of British, German and U.S. American interviewers’ questioning practices. The opening phases of nine national and international election night broadcasts were analyzed. She examined and cross-culturally compared the form and function of question-answer routines in political and expert interviews. The study showed that the choice of linguistic strategies was closely connected to the function of an interview within the overall context of the media event.

This study aimed at comparing political interviews published in Iranian and English newspapers in order to find the similarities and differences in the use of discourse markers (DMs) in such texts. This comparison was carried out in two ways. In the first place, the Persian political interviews published in Persian newspapers were compared with English political interviews published in English newspapers so as to compare the form and function of DMs used in such texts. Second, the political interviews published in Iranian newspapers in English were compared with those published in English newspapers in order to find out how often the DMs were used as a means of linking authors’ ideas with the primary function of bringing the readers’ attention to what they want to say. Hence, the study was intended to address the following research questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences in the use of discourse markers between Persian and English political interviews

published in Persian and English newspapers?

2. What are the similarities and differences in the use of discourse markers between English political interviews and the English version of Persian political interviews published in newspapers?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Materials

The corpus used in this study consisted of transcripts of 11 political interviews downloaded from the newspapers' websites (see Appendix). The interviewees were chosen from among the prominent political figures, such as Rouhani, Zarif, Obama, etc. from Iran and other countries. The selected published interviews were of three types: 1. Iranian political interviews published in Farsi newspapers, namely Iran, Shargh, Khorshid, and Jomhoori Eslami; the interviewees were Mr. Rafsanjani (Chairman of the Expediency Discernment Council of Iran), Mr. Salehi (Head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran), Mr. Alavi (Minister of Intelligence); 2. English political interviews published in English newspapers, namely New York Times and the Wall Street Journal; the interviewees were Mr. Obama (President of the US), Mrs. Clinton (Former US Secretary of State), Mr. Romney (Republican Party's nominee for the 2012 US presidential election), and Mrs. Ashton (Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the European Union); 3. Political interviews published in Persian newspapers in English language, namely Tehran Times and Iran Review; the interviewees were Mr. Zarif (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Mr. Rouhani (President of Iran), Mr. Khazaei (Former Ambassador of Iran to the United Nations), and Mr. Mozafari (the Ambassador of Iran to Albani).

#### 3.2. Data Collection Procedures

The first step in data collection was gathering sufficient samples of political interviews. Next, the transcripts of the full interviews were examined in terms of discourse markers (DMs). The interviews were selected from among the ones done between the years 2012 to 2014. Subsequently, the DMs were grouped and categorized based on the functions they had performed in the interview texts. In order

to classify the DMs, the framework proposed by Fung and Carter (2007) was adopted. The next step was to tally the DMs observed in each category and to provide numeric tables for each category in the framework. The percentage of each sub-category was then provided. The final step was to analyze data and compare and contrast the DMs to find out the similarities and differences in the use of DMs among the three groups of interviewees.

#### 3.3. Data Analysis

In order to address the aforementioned research questions, the samples of political interviews were analyzed qualitatively. In the first place, the DMs were classified based on Fung and Carter's (2007) multi-categorical framework. According to this functional classification, DMs are categorized as:

##### 1. Interpersonal category

- Shared knowledge: ok, oh, right, see, you see, you know, listen;
- Indicating attitudes: well, really, I think, obviously, absolutely, basically, actually, exactly, sort of, kind of, like, to be frank, to be honest, just, oh;
- Showing responses: ok/okay, oh, right/alright, yeah, yes, I see, great, oh great, sure, yeah

##### 2. Referential category

- Cause: because, coz;
- Contrast: but, and, yet, however, nevertheless
- Coordination: and;
- Disjunction: or;
- Consequence: so;
- Digression: anyway;
- Comparison: likewise, similarly

##### 3. Structural category

- Opening and closing of topics: now, ok/okay, right/alright, well, let's start, let's discuss, let me conclude the discussion;
- Sequence: first, firstly, second, secondly, next, then, finally;
- Topic shifts: so, now, well, and what about, how about;
- Summarizing opinion: so;
- Continuation of topics: yeah, and, coz, so

#### 4. Cognitive category

- Denoting thinking process: well, I think, I see, and;
- Reformulation/Self-correction: I mean, that is, in other words, what I mean is, to put it in another way;
- Elaboration: like, I mean;
- Hesitation: well, sort of;
- Assessment of the listener's knowledge about the utterances: you know

The frequency distributions of DMs in each category were then calculated manually and

the descriptive statistics were presented. Furthermore, based on the text-based contrastive analysis, the DMs used by the politicians in the three sets of interviews were compared and contrasted to see if there were differences and similarities.

#### 4. Results

The overall view of the DMs in political interviews gave the total of 2197 DMs used in 12 political interviews. Tables 1 to 4 show the percentages of different categories of DMs. The results are as follows:

**Table 1**  
*The Percentage of DMs in Interpersonal Category*

Categories of DM	English newspapers (EN)				Iranian newspapers in English (INE)				Iranian newspapers (IN)		
	Obama	Clinton	Romney	Ashton	Zarif	Rouhani	Khazaei	Mozafari	Rafsanjani	Salehi	Alavi
Interpersonal category											
Making shared knowledge	0.19%	2.8%	4.1%	2.2%	2.1%	5.2%	0%	0%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%
Indicating attitudes	7.5%	9.0%	4.1%	5.6%	14.5%	7.0%	8.3%	6.3%	2.2%	3.7%	13.0%
Showing Responses	1.3%	0%	0.5%	1.1%	0.7%	0%	0%	0%	0.3%	3.2%	0%
Total	10.8%	11.8%	8.9%	8.9%	17.0%	12.2%	8.3%	6.3%	5.7%	7.4%	13.0%

The first category of DMs, interpersonal markers, includes the DMs that mark shared knowledge, indicate attitude, and show response. DMs, such as “you know” are used to indicate that the speaker is aware of the fact that the hearer shares some knowledge about the information in the interview. It can be seen that within the subcategory of the “shared knowledge markers”, English politicians tend to use such markers more frequently in their talk: Obama 1.9%, Clinton 2.8%, Romney 4.1%, and Ashton 2.2%. Moreover, in the second group of the interviews, those published in the Iranian newspapers in English (INE), only two of the politicians used shared knowledge markers: Rouhani and Zarif with 2.1%, and 5.2%, respectively. However, the most frequent user of such markers was Rouhani with 5.2%. The third group, which refers to the interviews published in the Iranian newspapers (IN), displayed the least frequent use of shared knowledge markers: Rafsanjani, Salehi, and Alavi with only 0.3%, 0.5%, and 0.6%.

The second subcategory of the interpersonal markers is the DMs, such as “I believe”,

“absolutely”, etc. that are employed to express the politicians' personal attitude toward a subject. The analysis of data sets revealed that all the politicians used this kind of DMs. Zarif made use of the attitude markers more frequently than others with 14.5% frequency rate and Rafsanjani's talk contained the least attitude markers (2.2%).

The last subcategory, “showing response”, refers to the extent to which politicians use “yes, no, alright, etc.” as a response to the questions asked by the interviewer. The analysis showed that most of the politicians in this study did not use such markers in their talk. It seems they prefer to explain the subjects instead of giving short yes-no answers. Meanwhile, the result showed that Salehi's use of response markers (3.2%) was more than other interviewees' use of such markers.

Considering the total number of DMs used by the politicians in this study, it was revealed that Zarif was the first in the use of interpersonal markers (17%), followed by Clinton with 11.8%.

**Table 2**  
*The Percentage of DMs in Referential Category*

Categories of DMs	English newspapers (EN)				Iranian newspapers in English (INE)				Iranian newspapers (IN)		
Referential category	Obama	Clinton	Romney	Ashton	Zarif	Rouhani	Khazae	Mozafari	Rafsanjani	Salehi	Alavi
<b>Cause</b>	3.6%	5.6%	1.1%	5.6%	8.8%	3.5%	5.5%	0%	5.1%	6.4%	3.4%
<b>Contrast</b>	11.4%	7.9%	11.9%	19.1%	12.0%	5.2%	5.5%	4.7%	11.8%	11.7%	15.0%
<b>Coordination</b>	17.4%	24.8%	16.7%	19.1%	13.8%	33.3%	22.2%	53.9%	26.9%	25.6%	27.3%
<b>Disjunction</b>	3.2%	2.8%	2.9%	1.1%	2.4%	8.7%	5.5%	6.3%	1.6%	1.0%	4.1%
<b>Consequence</b>	9.5%	9.0%	1.7%	7.8%	8.5%	8.7%	5.5%	6.3%	13%	1.0%	0.6%
<b>Digression</b>	1.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2.1%	0.6%
<b>Comparison</b>	0%	0%	1.7%	3.3%	3.5%	0%	5.5%	1.5%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Addition</b>	1.3%	2.8%	2.3%	3.3%	2.4%	14.3%	5.5%	1.5%	20.1%	11.2%	10.2%
<b>Total</b>	47.5%	53.1%	38.9%	59.5%	51.9%	70.1%	55.5%	79.3%	70.5%	59.3%	61.6%

The overall view of Table 2 reveals that more than 50% of the DMs have been bunched in the referential category. Among them, Romney was the lowest in using referential markers (38.9%) and Mozafari (76.1%) gained the most percentage of referential markers.

The first subcategory is allotted to the markers which indicate the cause of events, such as “because” and “because of”. Among the interviewees, Salehi used this type of markers more frequently than the others, while Mozafari did not use cause markers at all. Within another subcategory, contrast markers like “but” were used to show that the speaker intended to say something which was in contrast with what was stated before. The result showed that all politicians used contrast markers in their talk. It was also shown that Ashton’s use of contrast markers were the highest among others (19.1%) and Mozafari employed the least number of such kind of DMs (4.7%).

As the result reveals, coordination markers were one of the most frequently-used DMs in the politicians’ talk. The dominant DM in this subcategory is “and” which is employed to add explanation and clarification to the subject. In comparison with the other politicians, Mozafari’s use of such markers was the highest (53.9%), and Zarif employed the least number of coordination markers.

The third row is allotted to the disjunction markers (e.g., or) which are used to show separation between events, or two available choices. As Table 2 shows, Rouhani used disjunction markers more frequently (8.3 %). The least number of DMs belongs to Ashton (1.1%). Besides, the result revealed that disjunction markers were used more often in the interviews published in the Iranian newspapers in English than those published in English newspapers and Persian newspapers.

Another subcategory within referential makers is the DMs that are indicative of the consequence of the events. The average of the values denoted that the interviews included in the Iranian newspapers in English used consequent markers more than the other two groups. The Iranian newspapers’ interviews showed the least number of consequent markers in politicians’ talk.

Digression subcategory was observed as the least frequently-used DMs in the referential category. Politicians used digression markers, such as “by the way” within the range of 0 to 2.1 % of the total referential markers.

Subsequently, the subcategory of comparison markers refers to the DMs, such as “similarly” and “like” that the speakers employ to compare two events in their talk. It is interesting to point out that the result showed that none of the interviews in (IN) used

comparison makers, and two other sets of interviews denoted that such markers were the least frequently-used markers in the politicians' talk. The result also showed that Khazae (with 5.5%) was the highest in using DMs that showed comparison.

On the contrary, in the last category of

additive markers, the result revealed that the interviews in the Iranian newspapers used additive markers like "also", "not only-but also", far more than the two other groups. Among the politicians' interviews in English newspapers and the Iranian newspapers in English, only Rouhani made frequent uses of additive markers (14.3%).

**Table 3**

*The Percentage of DMs in Structural Category*

Categories of DMs	English newspapers (EN)				Iranian newspapers in English (INE)				Iranian newspapers (IN)		
	Obama	Clinton	Romney	Ashton	Zarif	Rouhani	Khazae	Mozafari	Rafsanjani	Salehi	Alavi
<b>Structural category</b>											
<b>Opening/closing</b>	8.1%	3.3%	1.7%	0%	5.3%	5.2%	0%	1.5%	1.9%	5.3%	1.3%
<b>Sequence</b>	2.6%	4.5%	1.1%	0%	3.2%	0%	11.1%	0%	1.6%	3.2%	1.5%
<b>Topic shift</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Summarizing</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Continuation</b>	25.2%	24.2%	26.9%	20.2%	15.6%	12.2%	22.2%	15.8%	12.1%	16.5%	13.6%
<b>Total</b>	36.0%	32.2%	29.9%	20.2%	24.9%	17.5%	33.3%	17.4%	15.7%	25.1%	16.4%

Structural category includes the DMs that indicate the links and transitions between the topics. On the textual level, it contains subcategories of opening and closing of topics, indicating sequential relationships, and marking topic shifts. On the interactional level, DMs are used to signal continuation of the topic, and summary of the opinions (Fung & Carter, 2007).

Table 3 shows the percentage of the use of DMs in the structural category. For the opening/closing category, the result showed that Obama were the highest in using such markers in his talk, with 8.3%. It was evident that all the three groups used opening/closing markers, while in the Iranian newspapers political interviews, the use of such markers were slightly more than those used by the other two groups.

The second subcategory, sequence markers,

was employed by the speakers to indicate that they were entering new steps of their talk. The result of the analysis denoted that Khazae with 11.1% was the highest in using such markers; however, Ashton did not employ sequence markers at all. Other politicians made use of sequence discourse markers less than the other categories (they ranged from 1.1% to 4.5%). It should be noted that two subcategories of structural DMs indicating summarizing and topic shift were not used by any of the politicians in their interviews.

On the other hand, continuation markers, was another most frequently-used DMs among other subcategories. It could also be seen that native language politicians tend to use such markers more often than non-native Iranian politicians, and that the total number of structural DMs indicated that 30% of the DMs employed by politicians were allotted to the structural markers.

**Table 4**  
*The Percentage of DMs in Cognitive Category*

Categories of DMs	English newspapers (EN)				Iranian newspapers in English (INE)				Iranian newspapers (IN)		
	Obama	Clinton	Romney	Ashton	Zarif	Rouhani	Khazaei	Mozafari	Rafsanjani	Salehi	Alavi
<b>Denoting thinking process</b>	4.2%	0%	17.9%	3.3%	2.1%	1.7%	2.7%	0%	1.9%	0.5%	1.3%
<b>Reformulation</b>	0.6%	0.5%	1.1%	5.6%	2.8%	1.7%	2.7%	0%	1.6%	5.8%	3.4%
<b>Elaboration</b>	1.31%	2.2%	2.3%	0%	1.0%	0%	0%	0%	2.8%	1.0%	3.4%
<b>Hesitation</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Assessment</b>	0%	0%	0%	1.1%	0.3%	1.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	6.2%	2.8%	21.5%	10.1%	7.4%	5.2%	5.5%	0%	6.41%	7.4%	8.2%

Cognitive category refers to the DMs used to provide information about the cognitive state of speakers (Fung & Carter, 2007). In comparison with other categories of DMs, it was evident that a few of the DMs were used as the markers of cognitive process. The first subcategory belongs to the DMs used to denote the speakers' thinking process by using expressions such as "I think". Although, the interviewees employed thinking process markers with relatively low frequency, the result of the analysis showed that native English politicians excelled in using such markers. Besides, among all the interviewees, Romney's use of thinking process markers was salient (17.9%).

Reformulation markers, the next subcategory, are used to clarify the meaning of the expression or to repeat the previous utterances in other words for better understanding (Furko, 2013). Within this category, it was observed that reformulation was not a frequently-used marker, and the averages also denoted that English speaking politicians showed the lowest percentage in using such markers.

Subsequently, elaborative markers were used with the low frequency rate in the interviewees' talk, and such markers were also the least employed DMs in the interviews published in the Iranian newspapers in English. Furthermore, the subcategories of hesitation and assessment also displayed a low frequency rate, relative to the total number of DMs used by politicians in the interview.

## 5. Discussion

The highly frequent use of DMs by the interviewees in this study denotes that DMs are considered as a significant linguistic device used by both Iranian and English politician to achieve their political objectives. However, the results of the interview transcripts analysis revealed that there are some differences in the use of such markers by the interviewees in the study. One of the differences is the use of interpersonal DMs. The result showed that interpersonal DMs were more frequently employed in the interviews published in English newspapers and the Iranian newspapers in English than those published in Persian newspapers. It seems English interviewees and Iranian interviewees who present their statements in English put more emphasis on building interpersonal relationships with their interviewers. The use of interpersonal features in political interviews may be attributed to what Sandoval (2007) refers to as conversationalization in political discourse. "The lexical means which occur typically in informal discourse penetrate into institutional discourse and influence it" (Sandoval, 2007, p. 43). Sandoval believes that there is a tendency among politicians toward using more informal and democratic language in order to be able to impress their audience. For instance, in his interview, President Obama used the following statements:

*"Well, let me back up, Jackie".*

*“Now, I think there are probably going to be 15 different ways for you guys to ask me the same question”.*

It is worth mentioning that cultural preferences play a part in the discourse styles adopted by the English interviewees. As Lauerbach and Fetzer (2007, p. 23) maintain “the conversationalization of institutional discourse and especially of media discourse, which has been found to hold for the Anglo-American context (Fairclough, 1995), may not necessarily be found in other cultural contexts”. Likewise, considering Iranian politicians’ interviews published in English newspapers like Tehran Times, it seems that Iranian politicians tend to employ interpersonal markers in order to be compatible with this new trend in political discourse. Frequent use of “*I believe*”, “*We believe*” in Zarif’s talk may mark that he tries to create interpersonal style in his interview.

Examining the use of referential markers in the interview transcripts, the result showed the highly frequent use of referential markers in the interviews of all politicians in the study, which denotes the crucial role of such markers in creating a smooth and meaningful text. As it was stated by Ismail (2012, p. 1275), referential markers have the pragmatic function and they are “essential to the overall persuasive effect of the text”. However, some differences were observed in the frequency of using such markers in the interviewees’ talk. For example, Iranian politicians interviewed in the Persian language were higher users of additive markers, compared with two other groups. It seems that Iranian politicians prefer to build their talk by frequent use of additive markers such as “[ni:z نيز] and [haem هم]”. Whereas, in the interviews published in English newspapers and Iranian newspapers in English, the results indicated that politicians in those groups employed more consequent markers in their interviews. This result may once more support the idea that Iranian politicians tend to use DMs in a way that it becomes more consistent with English norms of using DMs. The findings for other types of referential markers were not conclusive and there were no meaningful differences between the three groups of interviewees in using such DMs.

The numerical results showed that except for markers of digression, which were rarely used by the interviewees, other types of referential markers were more or less present in all interviews; however, some politicians favored using special type of referential markers while others preferred the use of another type. Such differences in communicative styles between English and Iranian politicians can be thought as the presence of cross-cultural differences in English and Iranian contexts. As it has been mentioned (Hanks 1996; Ochs 1996; as cited in Lauerbach & Fetzer, 2007) in a speech community members are familiar with the proper ways of creating and conveying direct or implied meaning, about its discourse routines and genres, and about the socio-cultural situations in which they are used, so they need not be acquainted with the norms of other communities.

Subsequently, the analysis of sets of data revealed that within the structural category, none of the interviewees used markers signaling topic shift and summarizing in their interviews. It might be due to the fact that such markers are appropriate and more frequently used in monologic discourse, such as lectures in which the existence of different stages of talk obliges speakers to employ such markers to achieve coherence in their speech. The nature of the interview is dialogic in a way that the interviewer initiates the talk by posing a question and the interviewee is expected to provide a straightforward and to-the-point answer. As Kibrik (2013, p. 226) maintains, “an interview inherently implies three roles: interviewer, respondent, and presupposed audience; the interviewer asks questions on behalf of the audience, the respondent answers them; questions raised by interviewer must be of interest and relevance to the presupposed audience”. In contrast, the markers of continuation of talk were the second most frequently-used markers in the interviews. This type of DMs was present in all interviews almost to the same extent. The frequent use of continuation markers might denote that politicians are aware of the important role continuation markers play in creating a fluent and meaningful discourse in order to help audience to better understand the subjects they put forward.

The cognitive category, as Fung and Carter (2007) believe, represents the DMs which are used to signal the speakers' cognitive process. As the results showed, hesitation and assessment were the least frequently-used DMs in the interviews. This might be due to the fact that politicians tend to use the DMs that show their confidence and certainty in their approach; therefore, they can achieve their political aim which is persuading the audience. The reason for the low frequency of assessment markers can be due to the degree to which politicians need to involve the interviewer's knowledge in the discussion. In the following examples, it seems that both Rouhani and Ashton try to ascertain that the subject under discussion is clear and known to the interviewer.

*"You are aware that from 2003 to 2005, Iran had actually committed itself to the additional protocol."* (Rouhani)

*"Mr. Vucic, who has been an important, as you know, partner in this."* (Ashton)

For the markers of thinking process, the result showed that English politicians were the high user of such markers in comparison with the other two groups. Within this subcategory, "I/we think" was the most frequently-used marker. Holmes (1990; as cited in Furko, 2013) identified two functions of "I think" as expressing either uncertainty or certainty. However, it seems that politicians tend to use the latter function in their use of such markers. For example, in the interview with Romney, he was a high user of "I think" as the marker of cognitive process. In using this marker, it seems he displays a high degree of confidence and certainty in his talk:

*"I think people see him as a real straight shooter, who pulls no punches and tells it like it is, and I think the American people like that."* (Romney)

*".....with candidates who I think have the best prospects of getting the country on the right track."* (Romney)

Considering reformulate markers, the result of the analysis showed that all the interviewees, except one, tended to employ such markers in their talk. The purpose of using reformulation "I mean", as Swan (1997) argues, is to

"introduce explanations, additional details, expressions of opinion and corrections", while it can also serve as "a general-purpose connector of 'filler' with little real meaning" (as cited in Furko, 2013). Therefore, having such purposes in mind, it seems politicians tend to use reformulation markers to make sure their discussions are comprehensible by the audience so that they can move forward to persuade them.

Finally, according to the findings of the study, there were some inconsistencies in the use of elaborative markers. Elaborative markers were almost absent (only 1%) in the interviews published in the Iranian newspapers in English, whereas English politicians employed elaborative markers more frequently than other two groups. This inconsistency might be due to the politicians' personal preferences in using elaborative markers. Since one of elaborative markers is "for example", lack of availability of an appropriate example might be another reason that politicians did not use such a marker in their talk.

This study has brought into view DMs as a linguistic strategy which plays a significant role in organizing the political discourse. Adopting qualitative text-based contrastive analysis, this paper examined the use of DMs by English and Iranian politicians whose political interviews were published in Persian, English, and Iranian English newspapers. As with the overall findings of the study, the use of interpersonal markers by English language politicians supported the idea put forward by Fairclough (1992) and Sandova (2010) that the political discourse has undergone a change in style and it has become more informal. In addition, the results of the analysis of the interview transcripts showed that there are some similarities in the choice of DMs between Iranian politicians interviewed in English and English-speaking politicians. It can be concluded that Iranians tend to follow the English norms in their use of DMs. The findings of the study also unveiled that along with similarities, some differences are also present in the choice of DMs among the three groups of interviewees. Such differences can be attributed to the cross-cultural differences, indicating that each culture has the specific shared knowledge about the system of pragmatic principles and social practices.

The results of this study might be beneficial in understanding the pivotal role of discourse markers in organizing a cohesive and meaningful text. The findings might also help us understand the culture-specific norms and conventions that exist within the Iranian and English political domains. It also helps increase our intercultural understanding of the political genre in both Persian and English.

Like all research studies, this study suffers from some inevitable limitations. Finding appropriate political interviews serving the purpose of the study was a daunting task due to the inaccessibility of foreign newspapers. Therefore, it was preferred to use news websites to find the materials. In addition, most of the interviews had not been published in the form of real interviews, and they were mostly in the form of indirect quotations made by journalists. Since, the focus of the study was on the politicians' use of DMs, the materials were restricted to the interviews represented in the form of question and answer.

Further research in this area can investigate the influence of political positions as well as gender on the of speakers' use of DMs. Another topic for further study can be the exploration of the difference between TV and radio interviews. Unlike TV interviews, the interviewees on the radio know that they cannot make use of facial expressions and gestures, so they have to resort to linguistic means to express their intentions. Moreover, political interview can be examined from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA).

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### Appendix: Interviews

1. President Obama, interviewed by New York Times; published: July 27, 2013 (5549 words)
2. Hillary Clinton, interviewed by Michael R. Gordon and Mark Landler (New York Times); published: February 2, 2013 (2872 words)
3. Catherine Ashton, interviewed by the Wall Street Journal; published: February 4, 2014 (2169 words)
4. Mitt Romney, interviewed by Ashley Parkerjan (New York Times); published: 18, 2014 (2883 words)
5. President Rouhani, interviewed by Washington Post; published: 26 September, 2013 (1504 words)

6. Mohammad Javad Zarif, interviewed by Washington Post; published in Tehran Times: 17 December 2013 (4937 words)
7. Mohammad Khazaei, interviewed by Al-Monitor correspondents Barbara Slavin and Laura Rozen; published in Iran Review: July 10 2012 (937 words)
8. Abdolmajid Mozafari, interviewed by TIRANA; published in Tehran Times: 20 February 2014 (1350 words)
9. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, interviewed by Jomhuri Eslami; published: 16 Bahman, 1392, (4693 words)
10. Ali Akbar Salehi, interviewed by Iran; published: 23 Bahman, 1392 (3250 words)
11. Seyed Mohammad Alavi, interviewed by Khorshid; published: 14 Mordad, 1392 (2592 words)