Rhetorical Strategies and Political Persuasion:
An Analysis of Discourse Markers in Pita Limcharoenrat's Speeches in Four Election Campaigns

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were: 1. to investigate the types of discourse markers (DMs) utilized in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election of the general election of Thailand in 2023, 2. to analyze the frequencies of discourse markers used and 3. to explore the intended meanings conveyed in the speeches. In this study, theoretical framework of Swan (2005) which has twenty-one DMs lists were conducted to this study. There are speeches of election campaigns as the data which were shorter (speech1 and 2) and longer (speech 3 and 4). The quantitative data was collected by using twenty-one lists of DMs and analyzed the frequency of each DMs within four speeches. The qualitative data was conducted by exploration throughout the intended meaning of the speeches.

The findings of the study displayed as follow; 1. Fourteen of twenty-one types of discourse markers were utilized by Pita Limcharoenrat's speeches of four election campaigns. 2. The study founded DMs were less employed in shorter speeches than the longer. The study also revealed the categories of DMs "Concession and Counter Argument" had the highest frequency, appearing 19 times, followed by "Adding" and "Logical Consequence," which appeared 16 and 14 times, respectively. On the other hand, some categories of DMs, including "Similarity," "Contradicting," "Generalizing," and "Persuading," were not utilized, indicating that these types of markers were either not deemed necessary or not strategically

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chosen for these particular speeches. The data shown that the speaker employed discourse markers more frequently and diversely in longer speeches, using them to build complex arguments and maintain logical coherence. 3) The intended meaning of discourse markers was employed to range the structure of contents, contrast and emphasize the ideas, and concede and counter-arguing. As the result, the speaker employed DMs to straightforward and concentrated, often serving as simple transitional elements or basic connectors between ideas in shorter speeches. While the longer speeches, the speaker demonstrated a nuanced use of DMs to weave a complex narrative across various socio-political issues.

Keywords: Discourse Markers, Rhetorical Strategies, Political Persuasion

Introduction

The examination of discourse markers (DMs) in political speeches has long captivated scholarly interest, particularly within the realm of applied linguistics (Rasheed, 2019; Ali et al., 2020). DMs, linguistic tools that organize speech, guide through intricate arguments, and convey nuanced meanings, hold a crucial role in political discourse, significantly influencing speech effectiveness and persuasiveness, especially in high-stakes scenarios such as election campaigns (Abusalim et al., 2022).

In educational and political contexts, DMs emerge as pivotal linguistic devices shaping communication and aiding comprehension. Within the domain of English language teaching in Thailand, DMs have proven beneficial for non-native speakers, fostering coherent discourse construction, and enhancing reading and writing skills in second language acquisition (Srichanyachon, 2012; Alcon, 2007). In political discourse, politicians strategically employ DMs to emphasize points, facilitate topic transitions, and engage audiences, as evidenced across different cultures and political systems. Various studies shed light on the nuanced role of DMs in shaping political

narratives and influencing public opinion, spanning everyday English political discourse (Sukhovetska, 2021), contrasting political interviews between Persian and English (Zand-Moghadam & Bikineh, 2015), and the deliberative processes of democracy (Rotar, 2022).

The intricate political landscape of Thailand, marked by complexity and volatility, sets the stage for this study. The forthcoming 2023 pre-election period, a pivotal juncture for Thailand amidst governance structure changes, amplifies the significance of political speeches as a potent medium for politicians to articulate visions, garner support, and shape public opinion.

Pita Limcharoenrat, a prominent figure in Thai politics renowned for oratory skills, becomes the focal point of this research, aiming to contribute to existing knowledge by analyzing discourse markers in his pre-election speeches. This approach addresses a notable gap in the literature and introduces fresh perspectives on the role of linguistic elements in political discourse.

Sitting at the intersection of applied linguistics and political science, the study endeavors to contribute to both disciplines by examining how discourse markers structure speech, guide listeners, and convey nuanced meanings within a Thai political context. For political scientists, it provides a lens to scrutinize rhetorical strategies employed by politicians in a non-Western context (Mai, 2016), offering insights into how discourse markers influence public opinion, build credibility, and establish authority— crucial elements leading up to an election.

Furthermore, the study extends its implications to communication studies and media analysis in an era where speeches are widely disseminated through various media channels. Understanding the linguistic nuances of political discourse becomes essential for both the media and the electorate (Thuube & Ekanjume-Ilongo, 2017).

Objectives of Research

1. To investigate the types of discourse markers (DMs) utilized in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections

2. To analyze the frequencies of these discourse markers (DMs) in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections

3. To explore the intended meanings conveyed in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections through the functions of these discourse markers (DMs)

Research Methodology

Data Collection: A data card was designed to collect data on DMs based on Swan's DM list (2005). The lists of DMs are focusing and linking, balancing a contrasting point, emphasizing a contrast, similarity, concession and counter-argument, contradicting, dismissal or previous discourse, change of subject, return to the previous subject, structuring, adding, generalizing, giving examples, logical consequence, making things clear and giving detail, softening and correcting, gaining time, showing one's attitude to what one is saying, persuading, referring to the other person's expectation, and summing up.

Procedures for Collecting Quantitative and Qualitative Data:

1. Transcribe four speeches from videos of pre-election campaign and write in Thai language, then translate the speeches from Thai to English.

2. Classified the speeches by twenty-one DMs lists of Swan (2005).

3. Count and record the number of occurrences of each DMs.

4. Write the meaning of each DM used in the statement based on functions of DMs classified by Swan (2005).

5. Interpret the grammatical meaning or meaning based on functions of DMs by Swan (2005) and write an interpretation.

6. Interpret the intended meaning in DMs used by Pita Limcharoenrat and write the interpretation, then report the finding in a summary form.

Results of Research

Research Question 1: What types of discourse markers (DMs) are utilized in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections?

This table delineates the various categories and specific types of DMs that Pita Limcharoenrat employed in his speeches, offering a structured overview that aids in understanding his rhetorical choices.

Table 1 Results of types and frequencies of Pita's speeches at four election campaigns

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	S1	S2	S3	S4	Frequency
1	Focusing and linking	because, regarding, that's, as far as	-	3	-	1	4
2	Balancing a contrasting point	but, whereas, while	-	1	-	2	3
3	Emphasizing a contrast	Still however, nevertheless	2	1	5	3	11
4	Similarity		-	-	-	-	0
5	Concession and Counter Argument	It's, certainly, so, of course, however, but, nevertheless	-	3	1	15	19
6	Contradicting		-	-	-	-	0
7	Dismissal or previous discourse	at least	-	-	1	-	1
8	Change of subject	now, all right, ok	1	1	2	1	5
9	Return to the previous subject		-	-	-	-	0
10	Structuring	first, firstly, second, third, finally	2	3	2	2	9
11	Adding	also, moreover, as well as, besides, another, furthermore	-	3	7	6	16
12	Generalizing	in general	-	-	-	-	0
13	Giving examples	for instance	-	1	-	-	1
14	Logical consequence	therefore, because, so, consequently	-	5	2	7	14
15	Making things clear or giving detail	that's, I mean, actually, that is to say	-	1	1	1	3
16	Softening and correcting	I think, I feel, well, really, I suppose	-	2	1	-	3
17	Gaining time	well, I mean, let me see	-	1	1	-	2
18	Showing one's attitude to what one is saying	now	-	-	-	-	0
19	Persuading		-	-	-	-	0
20	Referring to the other person's expectation		-	-	-	-	0
21	Summing up	therefore, in conclusion	-	1	1	-	2

According to the table 1, Pita Limcharoenrat's use of discourse markers (DMs) in his pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections is both varied and strategic. The data highlights the selective employment of specific types of DMs across the four speeches. For instance, the most frequently used type of DMs is those for "Concession and Counter Argument," which appear 19 times across the speeches. Another notable category is "Logical Consequence," with a total frequency of 14. The DMs that emphasize a contrast, categorized as "Emphasizing a contrast," are also not negligible, appearing 11 times across all four speeches.

Overall, Pita Limcharoenrat's use of DMs suggests a well-thought-out strategy to guide the audience through complex arguments, particularly in the longer speeches where the diversity and frequency of DMs are more pronounced.

Research Question 2: How frequently do these discourse markers (DMs) appear in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections?

The frequency of discourse markers (DMs) in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections is influenced by the length and complexity of each speech. Across all four speeches, 91 instances of DMs were identified, distributed unevenly among various categories. The category "Concession and Counter Argument" had the highest frequency, appearing 19 times. It was followed by "Logical Consequence" and "Adding," which were noted 14 and 16 times, respectively. "Emphasizing a Contrast" was another significant category with 11 instances. Interestingly, these categories primarily feature in the longer speeches, Speeches 3 and 4, indicating a greater need for nuanced argumentation and logical flow in these presentations.

Research Question 3: What intended meanings can be discerned in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections through the functions of these discourse markers (DMs)?

The third research question explores the intended meanings conveyed through DMs in Pita Limcharoenrat's pre-election speeches for the 2023 Thai elections. This inquiry focuses on understanding these linguistic elements' strategic and ideological implications within the broader context of political rhetoric. Some founded results are illustrated in the tables.

Table 2 Result: Some samples of intended meaning of Speech 1

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	Statement in Speech	Intended Meaning
3	Emphasizing a contrast:	still	"Who **still** remembers the first button? Transform from intruders to pioneers, change the land law amnesty, and create special cultural zones for our ethnic brothers and sisters."	Reminds of initial transformative efforts; outlines policy goals on land and culture.
8	Change of subject	now	"I'm **now** at Sam Kasat in Chiang Mai. What party are you affiliated with?"	Location provides context; question aims to understand political alignment of the audience.
10	Structuring	Firstly Finally	"**Firstly**, I want to thank the people of Chiang Mai for giving us, the Future Forward Party, more than 250,000 votes."	Acknowledgment of support; aims to strengthen rapport with constituents from Chiang Mai.

Table 3 Result: Some samples of intended meaning of Speech 2

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	Statement in Speech	Intended Meaning
1	Focusing and linking	because regarding that's	"**Because** Move Forward Party believes that embracing diversity can become a strength, not a weakness."	Clarifies the party's stance on diversity; presents it as a source of strength.

Table 3 Result: Some samples of intended meaning of Speech 2 *(Continue)*

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	Statement in Speech	Intended Meaning
2	Balancing a contrasting point	but	"If you say you want creativity but enforce only one way of thinking,"	Criticizes the contradiction in promoting creativity while imposing a singular viewpoint.
3	Emphasizing a contrast	however	Regarding conflicts, Move Forward Party also has; **however**, it's about how an organization or society handles them. Is there enough maturity? Is there a safe space for expression?"	Acknowledges the existence of internal conflicts within the Move Forward Party, while emphasizing the importance of mature handling and open dialogue.
5	Concession and Counter-argument	certainly however but	"**Certainly**, there will be conflicts at every level—society, company, family."	Recognizes that conflicts are an inevitable part of any collective, whether it's in society, a company, or a family.
10	Structuring	first second third	"The **first** level is societal, the **second** is within the workplace, and the **third** is personal."	Outlines a framework for discussing an issue, categorizing it into three distinct levels: societal, workplace, and personal, possibly to address the complexity and multiple dimensions of the issue.
14	Logical consequence	therefore because	"**Therefore**, a society that doesn't discriminate and manages conflicts maturely is the way forward for Thailand, which is what Move Forward Party is striving for."	Advocacy for a non-discriminatory and mature society.

Table 3 Result: Some samples of intended meaning of Speech 2 *(Continue)*

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	Statement in Speech	Intended Meaning
15	Making things clear or giving detail	that is	"**That's** what they are trying to ask, so I will answer this question on three levels."	Intent to provide a comprehensive answer by discussing multiple aspects or layers of the issue.
16	Softening and correcting	I think	"At the company level, **I think**, well, currently, the sentiment of the times has changed…"	Suggesting that current attitudes or perspectives within the corporate environment have evolved.
17	Gaining time	well	"At the company level, I think, **well**, currently, the sentiment of the times has changed…"	Expressing the view that current attitudes or conditions within the corporate environment have evolved.
21	Summing up	therefore	"**Therefore**, a society that doesn't discriminate and manages conflicts maturely is the way forward for Thailand, which is what Move Forward Party is striving for."	Arguing that the ideal future for Thailand is one where there is no discrimination and conflicts are handled maturely; this is the goal of the Move Forward Party.

Table 4 Result: Some samples of intended meaning of Speech 3

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	Statement in Speech	Intended Meaning
3	Emphasizing a contrast	still	"I'm lucky to have eaten more than one boiled egg, so I **still** remember what was said."	Suggests that the speaker is grateful for their experiences, which help them remember important past conversations.
5	Concession and counter-argument	so	"Good thing I ate three boiled eggs, **so** I can remember where I was in my speech. Are you kidding me?"	Uses humor to cover a momentary lapse in memory, suggesting that eating boiled eggs helps with recollection.

Table 4 Result: Some samples of intended meaning of Speech 3 *(Continue)*

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	Statement in Speech	Intended Meaning
8	Change of subject	alright	"**Alright, alright**, excuse me Pi Pod. I'll take a moment to receive a garland."	Acknowledges someone (Pi Pod) while indicating they'll briefly pause to participate in a ceremonial act.
10	Structuring	first	"I'm Pita, **first** on the party list."	Clarifies the speaker's position within a political party, emphasizing their prominence.
15	Making things clear or giving detail	that is	"They say they guarantee everything will be good; everything is expensive and wages are low. Everything is just going down, down, down, except one thing is rising, and **that is** drug abuse, folks."	Criticizes the failure of current or previous administrations to improve the quality of life, pointing out increasing drug abuse as an exception.
16	Softening and correcting	really	"Do any of you remember that over the past eight years, someone made a promise in Hat Yai, saying to choose something peaceful. So, is it **really** peaceful or is it dead silent?"	Questions the effectiveness of past promises made about peace in Hat Yai, suggesting that the situation may be stagnant rather than peaceful.
17	Gaining time	let's see	"Wow! So many people came. **Let's see** if Songkhla can take it."	Expresses excitement about the turnout and playfully challenges the capacity of Songkhla to handle the crowd.
21	Structuring	in conclusion	"**In conclusion**, let's do it like the Prime Minister's advisors, no more speeches, let's just sing."	Suggests ending the event in a light-hearted manner, poking fun at the more traditional approaches of political advisors.

Table 5 Result: Some samples of intended meaning of Speech 4

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	Statement in Speech	Intended Meaning
1	Focusing and linking	regard	"What we want **regarding** water is not to have droughts, carry water to people, and during the rainy season, help people escape floods."	Outlines a vision for water management, including prevention of droughts and floods.
2	Balancing a contrasting point	while	"**While** we are discussing this, there is Khun Yok, who is only 15 years old, currently detained under Article 112."	Draws attention to the specific case of a young person detained under a controversial law, linking it to larger discussions.
3	Emphasizing a contrast	still yet	"At the same time, when I was in the area, kids ran up to me saying they **still** have dreams of living in this country, don't want to move abroad, can we abolish conscription for them?"	Shares an anecdote to advocate for the abolition of conscription, based on the aspirations of the younger generation to remain in their country.
5	Concession and counter-argument	if still	"**If** you are from Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai, our dream is simply to have clean air to breathe." numbers, and they will destroy the palace." system can actually solve the country's problems."	Targets specific geographical areas, stating that their basic aspiration is clean air, thus shedding light on environmental issues
8	Change of subject	now	"You don't have to worry, the torch is **now** in my hands, it will never be extinguished."	Promises to carry on the mission or ideals steadfastly; suggests that under his leadership, the values he stands for will not fade away.
9	Structuring	first	"To pull Thailand out of political turmoil, I see two moves in my vision. The **first** is to put an end to the cycle of coups d'état."	Outlines a plan to stabilize Thailand by ending the repetitive cycle of military coups.

Table 5 Result: Some samples of intended meaning of Speech 4 *(Continue)*

No.	Types of DMs	DMs	Statement in Speech	Intended Meaning
11	Adding	also	"Dad (Pita) **also** loves Som (fan club),"	Affirms love and appreciation for a specific fan club, likely to build rapport and emotional connection.
14	Logical sequences	therefore so	"**Therefore**, the next leader of Thailand must be someone with initiative to develop the country further."	Emphasizes the need for a proactive leader focused on national development.
15	Making things clear or giving detail	actually	"I understand, there are still many people who once agreed with the coups. You don't trust politicians who come from elections, and you also don't believe that the parliamentary system can **actually** solve the country's problems."	The speaker acknowledges that some people have lost faith in democratic processes and elected politicians, perhaps favoring military intervention as a form of governance.

In comparing the use of discourse markers (DMs) in shorter speeches, Speeches 1 and 2, with the longer ones, Speeches 3 and 4, it is apparent that the speaker, Pita, employs DMs more strategically and diversely in the longer discourses. In speeches that span less than 10 minutes, DMs tend to be more straightforward and concentrated, often serving as simple transitional elements or basic connectors between ideas. However, in the longer speeches that exceed 10 minutes, Pita demonstrates a nuanced use of DMs to weave a complex narrative across various socio-political issues. Here, DMs are not just connectors but also tools for emphasis, contrast, concession, and even for changing the subject. Overall, the longer the speech, the more sophisticated the deployment of DMs, allowing for a more layered and structured presentation of ideas.

Conclusion and Discussion

The data shows a diverse range of DMs serving different rhetorical functions in response to the first research question regarding the types of DMs utilized. Categories such as "Concession and Counter Argument was particularly prominent, especially in the longer speeches. The length of the speeches also influences the frequency of DMs. This information is consistent with the findings of Ni'ma RASHID (2020), who observed that the frequency of DMs tends to increase in longer, more complex speeches. However, some categories of DMs, such as "Similarity," "Contradicting," and "Persuading," were absent from the speeches. This result could indicate a strategic choice, aligning with Jirušková's (2012) study, which posits that the absence of certain DMs can be as telling as their presence. It suggests that these markers may not have been deemed necessary for the specific rhetorical goals of these speeches, or they might not align with the cultural or linguistic norms of Thai political discourse.

For the second research question, the data reveals 91 instances of DMs across the four speeches, with a notable increase in frequency in the longer speeches (Speeches 3 and 4). This pattern aligns with the findings of Ni'ma RASHID (2020), who observed that the frequency of DMs tends to rise in longer speeches. Moreover, the category "Concession and Counter Argument" had the highest frequency, appearing 19 times. This result is particularly interesting when compared to the study by Amir Zand-Moghadam and Bikineh (2015), which highlighted the frequency use of DMs in political interviews to signal opposition or endorsement.

For the final question, indicating the intended meaning of the speaker to the audiences. The analysis of these DMs reveals a complex interplay of political, social, and cultural nuances, which can be compared to existing theories and studies on discourse analysis and political communication. Firstly, he use of structuring DMs like "first," "second," and "finally" is also noteworthy. These markers help organize the speech's

content, making it easier for the audience to follow the argument. According to the literature, structuring DMs is essential in persuasive speeches as they guide the audience through the logical flow of the argument (Redeker, 1991). Pita Limcharoenrat uses these DMs effectively to outline his plans and visions, thereby adding a layer of credibility and thoughtfulness to his speeches. Secondly, The DMs used for emphasizing contrast, such as "still" and "yet," Limcharoenrat employs these markers to highlight the unchanging conditions or the persistence of certain issues. This result is in line with the theories that suggest that contrastive DMs are often used to set up opposition or to prepare the audience for a counter-argument (Schiffrin, 1987). In Limcharoenrat's speeches, these DMs question the status quo and emphasize the need for change, aligning with the political agenda of challenging existing power structures. Finally, concession and counter-argument DMs such as "if," "but," and "however" are used prolifically. These DMs only acknowledge opposing views or potential criticisms to counter them with the speaker's arguments. This information is consistent with studies that highlight the role of concessive DMs in building ethos and pathos by showing the speaker as reasonable and passionate (Hyland, 1990). For instance, when Limcharoenrat acknowledges that conflicts are inevitable in any organisation but emphasises the importance of mature handling, he is essentially building his ethos as a realistic yet optimistic leader.

New Body of knowledge

Strategic Emphasis and Relatability: The research highlights how DMs like "still" and "now" are adeptly used to balance political ambition with relatability and to navigate topic transitions while gauging audience alignment. This strategic emphasis underscores a paradigm where DMs bridge the speaker's intent with audience perception, fostering a more engaged and responsive listener base.

Complex Narrative Weaving: In longer speeches, the study unveils a paradigm shift from using DMs for simple transitions to employing them as tools for weaving complex narratives. This includes using DMs to structure arguments, emphasize contrasts, integrate humor and personal anecdotes, enrich the discourse, and enhance listener engagement and comprehension.

Enhanced Communication Effectiveness: The analysis demonstrates that DMs are pivotal in enhancing communication effectiveness, particularly in political discourse. By structuring speeches, clarifying positions, and advocating for societal ideals, DMs help politicians articulate their messages more clearly and persuasively, influencing public opinion and political alignment.
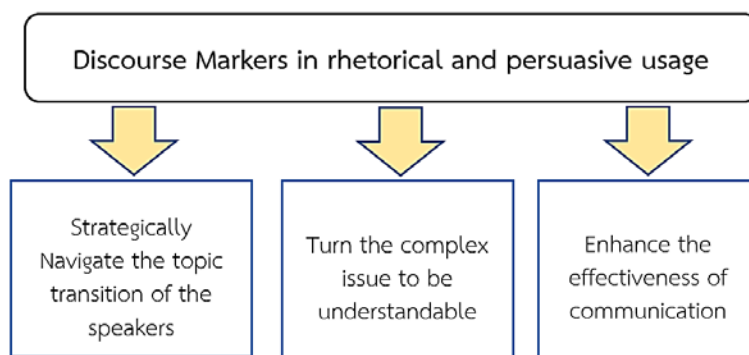
Picture 1 New Body of knowledge

Suggestions of Research

1. Suggestions from the study

Future research could expand the scope to include a wider range of political figures and contexts, both within Thailand and internationally. It would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strategic use of discourse markers in different political landscapes. Moreover, social media posts or video speeches could be a fruitful avenue for research

2. Suggestion for applying study results

The findings offer valuable insights for politicians, speechwriters, and communication strategists. Understanding the types and frequencies of

discourse markers most effective in longer speeches can guide crafting more persuasive and coherent political messages. Moreover, the educators and trainers in the field of communications can illustrate the importance of linguistic choices in public speaking. It could be incorporated into training modules that aim to improve public speaking and persuasive skills.

3. Suggestions for policy implication

Policymakers could use the insights gained to craft more effective public speeches, particularly when discussing complex or divisive issues, ensuring clearer communication and greater public engagement.

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