

High-focus and time-immediate indexicals: A study of Sinhala discourse markers me: 'this' and dæn 'now'

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Abstract

This article is an investigation of Sinhala demonstrative me:2 and temporal adverb dæn, in their functions as discourse markers. We analyze a corpus of approximately 400 min of naturally occurring, entirely unscripted spoken discourse. The data for this study are taken from televised interviews and political debates, involving a total of 16 speakers (11 male and 5 female). The data were transcribed and Romanized (adapted from Gair, 1998a) to facilitate morpho-syntactic-pragmatic analysis, and allowing for both interlineal glossing and the marking of relevant prosodic features. We identified all instances of the target forms me: and dæn and coded them for their functions as demonstrative/temporal reference markers in addition to their functions as discourse markers. We illustrate the functions of me: 'this' as a filler and as a clarification marker, and the functions of dæn 'now' as a contrastive marker, a discursive strategy building marker, and a marker of defensiveness to deflect designedly direct face threatening accusations. Our findings indicate that me: 'this' and dæn 'now' function as discourse management markers, exhibiting remarkable patterns of online interactional and cognitive processes of focus, repair, hesitation, and contrast across the majority of speakers and across all interactional settings in our database. © 2015 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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