



Navigating Challenge and Commitment: A Domain-Functional Analysis of Discourse Markers in Zohran Mamdani's Al Jazeera Interview

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Abstract

In unscripted talk, speakers constantly signal how each utterance connects to earlier talk and how the listener should receive it. Small expressions known as discourse markers (DMs), carry much of this work. This study investigates the DMs produced by the interviewer and by New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani in an Al Jazeera English interview broadcast to mark his first 100 days in office. The data consist of a 4,109-word transcript prepared from the YouTube recording. The analysis applies Crible's two-dimensional domain-function model, which places each DM in one of four domains (ideational, rhetorical, sequential, and interpersonal) and assigns it a specific function, while also paying attention to the disfluencies, such as repetitions, that accompany DMs in spontaneous speech. A total of 200 DM tokens were identified: 60 from the interviewer and 140 from the mayor. For both speakers the sequential domain was the largest, followed by the rhetorical, ideational, and interpersonal domains. The interviewer's DMs leaned toward the rhetorical domain, largely through *I mean* when framing critical questions, whereas the mayor's DMs leaned toward the ideational and interpersonal domains for supplying reasons, softening answers that departed from the question, and opening personal stories. The forms *but*, *so*, and *well* moved across domains within the same interview. The findings show that a two-dimensional model reveals interactional detail in political interview talk that single-level DM classifications tend to overlook.

Keywords: discourse markers; domain-function model; disfluency; political interview; Zohran Mamdani

Abstrak

Dalam percakapan spontan, penutur umumnya memberi penanda hubungan antara ujaran yang disampaikan dengan ujaran sebelumnya serta bagaimana ujaran tersebut perlu dipahami oleh lawan bicara. Penanda wacana (*discourse markers*/DM) berperan penting dalam proses ini. Penelitian ini mengkaji DM yang digunakan oleh pewawancara dan Wali Kota New York Zohran Mamdani dalam wawancara Al Jazeera English mengenai 100 hari pertamanya menjabat. Data berupa transkrip 4.109 kata yang disusun dari video pada situs YouTube. Analisis menggunakan model dua dimensi domain dan fungsi Crible, yang mengklasifikasikan DM ke dalam empat domain, yaitu ideasional, retorik, sekuensial, dan interpersonal, serta mengidentifikasi fungsi spesifiknya. Sebanyak 200 token DM ditemukan, terdiri atas 60 dari pewawancara dan 140 dari Mamdani. Pada kedua penutur, domain sekuensial paling dominan, diikuti domain retorik, ideasional, dan interpersonal. DM pewawancara lebih banyak berfungsi secara retorik, terutama melalui *I mean* dalam merumuskan

pertanyaan kritis, sedangkan DM Mamdani lebih banyak berfungsi secara ideasional dan interpersonal untuk memberikan alasan, memperhalus respons, dan membuka narasi personal. Bentuk *but*, *so*, dan *well* menunjukkan fungsi yang berbeda bergantung pada konteks. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa model dua dimensi dapat mengungkap fungsi interaksional DM dalam wawancara politik yang mungkin tidak terlihat dalam klasifikasi satu dimensi.

Kata kunci: penanda wacana; model domain-fungsi; disfluensi; wawancara politik; Zohran Mamdani

Introduction

Spoken language is produced in real time, requiring speakers to plan, formulate, and deliver messages while responding to their interlocutors. This makes spoken interaction dependent on small linguistic signals that help speakers organize ideas, indicate relationships between utterances, manage transitions, and monitor interaction. Although often unnoticed, these signals contribute to the coherence and flow of conversation (Heine et al., 2021). Expressions that perform such organizing and interactional functions are commonly referred to as discourse markers (DMs). DMs contribute less to the propositional content of an utterance than to how it is connected to surrounding discourse and interpreted by the hearer (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999). They provide insight into how speakers organize information, express stance, and manage interaction (Crible, 2018).

Research over the past four decades has shown that DMs operate across several dimensions of discourse. Schiffrin (1987), for example, related DMs to the organization of ideas, sequences of actions, and speaker participation, while Fraser (1999) classified them according to the discourse relations they signal. More recent studies, however, emphasize that DMs are highly multifunctional, the same form may perform different functions depending on its position and context (Crible, 2018; Farahani & Ghane, 2022). Their use may also vary according to the communicative setting and task (Guydish et al., 2024). These findings suggest that assigning each marker to a single fixed category may not fully capture its use in natural speech.

To address this issue, Crible (2018) and Crible and Degand (2019a) proposed a two-dimensional model that separates the domain in which a DM operates from its specific discourse function. The model identifies four domains: ideational, rhetorical, sequential, and interpersonal, and allows a marker to be interpreted according to the particular function it performs in context. This approach has demonstrated strong annotation reliability and has been applied to spoken corpora in English and French (Crible, 2017, 2018; Crible & Degand, 2019b). It also draws attention to the relationship between DMs and disfluency. Studies have shown that markers may occur with pauses, repetitions, and self-repairs, functioning either as resources for organizing speech or as part of the speaker's ongoing planning process (Crible et al., 2017; Crible & Pascual, 2020; Kosmala & Crible, 2022).

Political interviews provide a particularly useful context for examining this flexibility. They combine relatively spontaneous speech with clear differences in communicative roles. Interviewers typically ask questions that seek information, clarification, or accountability, while politicians must construct responses that address

the question, present their position, and manage their relationship with the audience. DMs can therefore help both participants frame questions, connect arguments, qualify claims, shift topics, and manage interpersonal relations (Fu et al., 2024). The time pressure of such interactions may also produce repetitions and self-repairs, making political interviews especially suitable for examining DMs together with features of spontaneous speech.

The present study focuses on an Al Jazeera English interview with New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani marking his first 100 days in office. Broadcast on 9 April 2026, the interview covers childcare, housing costs, taxation, relations with political leaders, the war in Iran, and anti-Muslim bigotry. The interview provides a useful setting for examining how DMs operate across two different interactional roles: the interviewer, who formulates questions and challenges, and the mayor, who responds with explanations, personal narratives, and political positions. This interaction also provides opportunities to observe how DMs work alongside repetitions and self-repairs in spontaneous political talk.



Figure 1: Mayor Zohran Mamdani on *Talk to Al Jazeera* (2026).

Previous research has examined DMs in interviews, talk shows, and political communication using different analytical frameworks. Nur et al. (2023) identified elaborative and spoken markers as prominent in a YouTube celebrity interview. Fu and Ho (2022) compared *so*, *and*, and *but* in Chinese, American, and British television interviews, finding both common patterns and differences across media contexts. Fu (2024) and Fu (2026) further demonstrated that *but* can perform different functions across political interviews and discourse domains. Fu et al. (2024) found that *you know* and *I mean* may serve hedging, monitoring, and reformulating functions across interpersonal, sequential, and rhetorical domains. Studies of *well* similarly show its role in opening, closing, shifting topics, and managing answers (Faisal, 2023; Xhaferri et al., 2024). Fuller (2003) also demonstrated that speakers' interactional roles influence their choice of DMs.

Research by Indonesian scholars has likewise shown how the small linguistic choices contribute to the organization and interpretation of spoken and political discourse. Dewi and Ayomi (2024) found that *okay* and *so* functioned mainly as structural markers in a bilingual classroom, while Putri and Ayomi (2025) showed the prominence of *so* in causal relations in online English news. In broadcast interaction, Ratnadi et al. (2022) demonstrated how hosts manage turn distribution through verbal and non-verbal resources. In political communication, Wibhisana et al. (2023) showed how linguistic choices construct ideology and group membership, while Ayomi et al. (2025) found that declarative clauses, rhetorical questions, and strong modality contribute to the presentation of political claims as facts. Together, these studies indicate that linguistic choices in mediated interaction are closely related to speaker roles, power, and persuasive purposes.

Despite this growing body of research, most studies of DMs in interviews continue to rely on single-level classifications or focus on particular markers. Studies applying Crible's model have often examined selected markers across larger corpora rather than the complete set of DMs used by both participants within a single interaction. Consequently, less is known about how the full range of DMs differs between interviewer and interviewee in a contemporary political interview, particularly when domain, function, and disfluency are considered together.

This study addresses this gap by identifying and comparing the DMs used by the interviewer and Mayor Mamdani in the Al Jazeera English interview through Crible's two-dimensional model (Crible, 2018; Crible & Degand, 2019a). It has two objectives: (1) to identify the domains and functions of DMs used by each speaker, and (2) to examine cases in which the same DM performs different functions across contexts, including its co-occurrence with disfluency. By applying the model to both sides of a single political interaction, the study contributes to a more contextualized understanding of how DMs organize discourse and manage interaction in political interviews.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design supported by frequency counts to examine DM use in a naturally occurring political interview (Sugiyono, 2017). The data consisted of a video recorded interview between an Al Jazeera English correspondent and New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, published on the Al Jazeera English YouTube channel to mark his first 100 days in office (Al Jazeera English, 2026). The interview was selected because it provides spontaneous interaction between two distinct roles, a journalist asking questions and a politician responding, and addresses politically sensitive topics that require careful management of stance and interpersonal relations.

The automatically generated YouTube transcript was checked against the recording and corrected for captioning errors. It was then divided into conversational turns and labelled as interviewer (I) or mayor (M), resulting in 55 turns and 4,109 words: 1,035 words from the interviewer and 3,074 from Mamdani. Candidate DMs were identified through systematic searches and examined in their sentence and turn level contexts. A form was coded as a DM when it could be removed without changing

the truth conditional content of the clause and when it connected the utterance to the surrounding discourse rather than simply linking elements within a clause (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999; Crible, 2017). Therefore, *and* linking two nouns was excluded, whereas *and* introducing a new point or turn was included.

Each DM token was analyzed using Crible's two-dimensional domain function model (Crible, 2018; Crible & Degand, 2019a). Tokens were assigned to one of four domains, ideational, rhetorical, sequential, or interpersonal, and to a specific discourse function, such as addition, cause, contrast, reformulation, topic shift, monitoring, or face management. For quantitative analysis, each token received one predominant domain and function. Cases showing clear multifunctionality or co occurrence with disfluencies, such as repetitions or false starts, were examined qualitatively in their local context, following Crible's (2018) approach to multifunctionality. Because the two speakers produced different amounts of talk, DM frequencies were normalized per 1,000 words to facilitate comparison.

Result and Discussion

The analysis identified 200 DM tokens in the interview. The interviewer produced 60 tokens, equivalent to 57.97 DMs per 1,000 words, while Mayor Mamdani produced 140 tokens, equivalent to 45.54 per 1,000 words. Although the mayor produced more than twice as many tokens, the normalised rates show that the interviewer used DMs more densely. This suggests that the interviewer's short turns were packed with markers that framed and directed the questions, whereas the mayor's longer turns contained more stretches of continuous content between markers. Table 1 presents the distribution of these tokens across Crible's four domains.

Table 1. Distribution of DMs by Domain and Speaker
(predominant domain per form)

Domain	Example forms	Interviewer (f)	per 1,000 w	Mamdani (f)	per 1,000 w	Total (f)	%
Sequential	<i>and, so, now</i>	29	28.02	70	22.77	99	49.5
Rhetorical	<i>but, however, instead, I mean, well, actually</i>	20	19.32	32	10.41	52	26.0
Ideational	<i>because, also, since</i>	8	7.73	28	9.11	36	18.0
Interpersonal	<i>you know</i>	3	2.90	10	3.25	13	6.5
Total		60	57.97	140	45.54	200	100

The sequential domain, which includes turn-initial *and*, resumptive *so*, and topic-shifting *now*, was the largest domain for both speakers. It accounted for 48.3% of the interviewer's tokens and 50.0% of the mayor's. This shared pattern reflects the basic nature of interview talk. Both participants constantly had to link turns, add points, and move between topics. The finding is in line with Fu and Ho (2022), who found

and and *so* to be prominent markers in television interviews, and with Dewi and Ayomi (2024), who observed that structural markers dominate classroom talk, another setting in which one participant guides the direction of the interaction.

Beyond this shared profile, the two speakers showed different tendencies. The interviewer's DMs were proportionally more rhetorical (33.3% compared with 22.9% for the mayor). This difference was driven mainly by *I mean*, which accounted for 9 of the interviewer's 20 rhetorical tokens. The mayor's DMs, on the other hand, were proportionally more ideational (20.0% compared with 13.3%) and more interpersonal (7.1% compared with 5.0%). These differences were driven mainly by *because* and *you know* respectively. Table 2 lists every DM form found in the data together with its assigned function and predominant domain.

Table 2. DM Forms with Assigned Function and Predominant Domain

Marker	Interviewer	Mamdani	Function	Domain	Total (f)
<i>and</i>	20	61	addition / continuation	sequential	81
<i>also</i>	1	12	addition	ideational	13
<i>but</i>	9	19	contrast	rhetorical	28
<i>however</i>	0	1	contrast	rhetorical	1
<i>instead</i>	0	2	contrast (replacement)	rhetorical	2
<i>so</i>	8	6	consequence / resumption	sequential	14
<i>because</i>	6	16	cause	ideational	22
<i>since</i>	1	0	cause	ideational	1
<i>well</i>	1	7	face-management	rhetorical / interpersonal	8
<i>you know</i>	3	10	monitoring	interpersonal	13
<i>I mean</i>	9	1	reformulation	rhetorical	10
<i>now</i>	1	3	topic shift	sequential	4
<i>actually</i>	1	2	contrast (counter- expectation)	rhetorical	3
Total	60	140			200

Table 2 shows that the DM inventory in this interview was relatively small but heavily used. Only 13 different forms were found, and just three of them, *and*, *but*, and *because*, accounted for 131 of the 200 tokens (65.5%). This concentration on a few high-frequency forms is in line with Crible's (2018) observation that the most frequent DMs are also those that carry the widest range of functions, and it echoes Putri and Ayomi's (2025) finding that a single connector can carry a disproportionate share of causal meaning in media texts. The table also shows clear role-based preferences. *Also* (12 of 13 tokens) and *because* (16 of 22 tokens) were used mostly by the mayor, while *I mean* (9 of 10 tokens) was used almost exclusively by the interviewer. The following sections examine these patterns in more detail through selected excerpts.

Multifunctionality: One Form, Several Domain

One of the main predictions of Crible's (2018) model is that a DM form is not tied to a single domain. The marker *so*, for example, appears in the ideational, sequential, and interpersonal domains. In its ideational use, *so* marks a real-world result that follows from a previous state of affairs. When the mayor explained the impact of his child care policy, he said: "...and *so* when you make that free, you transform what's possible in the city" (0:54, Mamdani). Here *so* links a policy action, making child care free, to its consequence for the city. The link is presented as objective rather than as personal opinion, so it is ideational.

In its sequential use, *so* signals a return to the main line of talk after a side comment or a digression. In one answer, after elaborating on several examples, the mayor said: "*So* for us, it really gets back to this tenet of what was initially called sewer socialism..." (4:26, Mamdani). In this case *so* does not introduce a consequence. Instead, it tells the listener that the speaker is picking up the central theme again. This resumptive use corresponds closely to Schiffrin's (1987) observation that *so* can mark the return to a suspended point, and it shows how the same form can organise talk rather than describe events.

In its interpersonal use, *so* allows a speaker to draw a conclusion about the other person and to push the conversation forward on that basis. After the mayor described his conversations with national leaders, the interviewer responded: "*So* you have clout with the president. He's listening to you.". Here *so* introduces the interviewer's interpretation of the mayor's position and invites him to confirm or reject it. The marker therefore operates on the relationship between the two speakers: it presents a conclusion about the addressee and puts him in a position where he must respond. This interpersonal use is typical of interviewers, who often summarise and reformulate the interviewee's words in order to steer the next turn (Ratnadi et al., 2022).

The contrastive marker *but* shows a similar range. In the sentence "She said, it's good, *but* it's not over yet" (7:49, Mamdani), the mayor was reporting the words of a nurse he had met on her commute. The *but* contrasts two states of affairs in the nurse's life, an improvement and a remaining difficulty, and is therefore ideational. By contrast, in the question "*But* I mean, is it easy on the campaign trail to promise, *but* the reality is that much harder to deliver?" (1:32, Interviewer), both instances of *but* serve the interviewer's own argument. The first opens a challenge to what the mayor has just said, and the second sets up the contrast between campaign promises and political reality that the question asks him to address. These are rhetorical uses because they express the speaker's stance and argumentative direction rather than an objective contrast between facts. This range mirrors Crible and Degand's (2019a) argument that a contrastive relation can be realised in any of the four domains, and it supports Fu's (2024, 2026) findings that *but* in political interviews performs many functions beyond basic contrast.

The interviewer's question at 1:32 is also interesting because it combines *but* with *I mean*. The cluster "*But I mean*" allows the interviewer to begin a challenge and immediately soften it by presenting the question as a clarification of her own thinking. Such clusters of DMs are common in spontaneous speech and often appear at points where the speaker is managing a delicate move (Crible et al., 2017). In a political

interview, the combination lets the interviewer remain critical while still sounding fair and reasonable.

“Well” as a Case of Simultaneous Functions

The marker *well* provides the clearest example of simultaneous, rather than simply alternating, multifunctionality in the data. The mayor began seven of his answers with *well*. In most of these cases, the answer that followed did not directly accept the terms of the question. Excerpt (1) illustrates this pattern.

- (1) I: “...How is it possible to do that?”
M: “*Well*, we have something a secret sauce here in New York City, which is our municipal workforce...”(3:40)

In Excerpt (1), the interviewer asks how the mayor can achieve his goals, implicitly questioning whether they are realistic. He instead reframes the issue by pointing to the city’s workforce as a hidden strength. The initial *well* does two things at once. On the rhetorical level, it signals that the answer will not follow the exact line of the question, preparing the listener for a shift in perspective. On the interpersonal level, it protects the mayor’s face by announcing this shift openly, so that the change of direction sounds like a thoughtful reframing rather than an evasion. Because the two functions cannot be separated here, *well* is rhetorical and interpersonal at once.

This dual interpretation is consistent with Crible’s (2018) description of *well* as one of the markers that most strongly resists being placed in a single domain. It also agrees with studies of media talk showing that *well* commonly prepares the ground for dispreferred or non-straightforward responses (Faisal, 2023; Xhaferri et al., 2024). A single-level classification such as Fraser’s (1999), which is designed around the relation between two propositions, has no obvious category for this kind of work. In such frameworks, *well* is often placed in a residual or “other” category, which means that its most important interactional contribution is left undescribed. The two-dimensional model, by contrast, makes this contribution visible.

Two of the mayor’s seven *well*-initial answers also contained an immediate word repetition, as shown in Excerpts (2) and (3).

- (2) M: “*Well*, I would say that this is also what it means to provide world-class services...”(6:00)
(3). M: “*Well*, I..I think at at the core of it, you have to make the focus of your work...” (8:43)

In both excerpts, *well* is followed by a repeated word (*I..I*, *at.. at*). These repetitions suggest that the mayor was planning his answer while already speaking. The *well* gives him a moment to begin the turn, and the repetition extends that moment while he formulates the key idea. This pattern supports Crible’s (2018) and Crible and Pascual’s (2020) finding that DMs and disfluencies tend to cluster in spontaneous speech, particularly at the beginning of complex or sensitive answers. It also illustrates the point made by Kosmala and Crible (2022) that such features are not simply errors: they help the speaker hold the floor and signal to the listener that a considered answer is on its way.

Interpersonal and Ideational Markers: “You Know” and “Because”

The marker *you know* was used ten times by the mayor and three times by the interviewer. In all cases it was interpersonal, performing what Crible and Degand (2019a) call a monitoring function, that is, checking or inviting the hearer's shared attention and understanding. The mayor used *you know* almost exclusively when introducing personal stories. In his account of a conversation with a nurse, for example, he said: "...and I asked her, *you know*, how's your day?" (7:49). In his account of an attack on a young Muslim woman, he began: "*You know*, I can just tell you that my heart broke..." (15:44).

In both cases *you know* draws the listener into the story and invites them to share the speaker's perspective. By opening with *you know*, the mayor signals that he is moving from policy talk to personal experience and asks the audience to respond with empathy. This use agrees with Fu et al. (2024), who found that *you know* in political interviews is closely associated with monitoring and with building shared ground, and it parallels Arianto and Ayomi's (2023) observation that interviewees who narrate personal experience draw heavily on forms that connect *I* and *you*.

The marker *because*, by contrast, was almost entirely ideational in the data. It supplied an objective reason for a preceding claim rather than expressing the speaker's attitude toward it. For example, when discussing the city's finances, the mayor justified his approach by noting that "...this is the largest fiscal deficit that our city has seen since the great recession..." (5:20), presenting the size of the deficit as the factual cause behind his decisions. The interviewer also used *because* in an ideational way, but much less often (6 tokens against the mayor's 16). This difference reflects the division of labour in the interview. The interviewer's role was to raise challenges and ask for explanations, whereas the mayor's role was to justify his policies and decisions, which naturally required more causal reasoning. The strong presence of *because* and *also* in the mayor's speech shows how a politician builds an image of competence by linking policies to reasons and by adding supporting points one after another, a strategy comparable to the use of declarative, fact-like statements in political communication described by Ayomi et al. (2025).

Role-Based Differences: "I Mean" and the Formulation of Challenges

The most striking difference between the two speakers concerned *I mean*. The interviewer used it nine times, while the mayor used it only once. In Crible's model, *I mean* is typically a rhetorical marker of reformulation: the speaker uses it to rephrase, clarify, or sharpen what they have just said. In this interview, the interviewer used *I mean* mainly at moments when she was formulating a critical or face-threatening question, as in the example at 1:32 discussed above.

This pattern can be explained by the interviewer's role. Political interviewers must challenge politicians while remaining polite and neutral. *I mean* helps the interviewer meet both expectations. It allows her to restate a question in a sharper form while presenting the restatement as a clarification rather than an attack. The finding agrees with Fu et al. (2024), who noted that *I mean* often appears at the beginning of interviewers' turns to reframe statements, and it extends Fuller's (2003) finding that speaker role shapes DM use. Specifically, the present data suggest that it is not only the general role of interviewer but the local task of formulating a challenge that encourages this particular marker. The finding is also comparable to Ratnadi et al.'s

(2022) observation that hosts in broadcast conversation use specific linguistic techniques to control the direction of talk, reflecting their institutional power over the exchange.

The mayor, in contrast, rarely needed to reformulate his own statements in this way. His answers were long and developed step by step, and he relied more on *and*, *also*, and *because* to build his arguments. When he needed to depart from a question, he preferred *well* rather than *I mean*. The interviewer reformulated in order to challenge, while the mayor reframed in order to respond on his own terms.

Comparison with Previous Research

The overall dominance of the sequential domain, which accounted for roughly half of all tokens for both speakers, is broadly consistent with Crible’s (2017, 2018) corpus findings that structuring functions are among the most frequent across spoken registers, including interviews. Crible (2018) also showed that the balance between domains shifts from one register to another, depending on how much speakers need to argue, explain, or interact. The present data reflect this sensitivity to communicative purpose: the mayor, who was presenting and defending his political record, showed a higher ideational share (20.0%) than the interviewer (13.3%). This suggests that the need to justify policy decisions in public pushes politicians toward DMs that express causal and additive relations between facts.

The findings also refine previous observations about the position of DMs. Fu and Ho (2022) found that *so*, *and*, and *but* in television interviews tend to occur at the beginning of utterances. The present study confirms that many of these markers were turn-initial or clause-initial, but it also shows that the same initial position was compatible with different domains. An initial *so* could introduce a consequence, a return to the main topic, or a conclusion about the addressee. An initial *but* could introduce a factual contrast or an argumentative challenge. Position alone, therefore, does not determine what a DM is doing. A two-dimensional analysis is needed to distinguish these uses.

Compared with single-level studies of interviews, such as Nur et al. (2023), the present analysis offers a different kind of insight. Single-level studies show which relation types are most frequent; the domain-function approach adds where in the interaction these relations operate. For instance, the high number of contrastive markers in this interview could be reported simply as “frequent contrast”. The two-dimensional model shows that some of these contrasts concern facts, some concern the interviewer’s argumentative stance, and some are tied to face-management. This additional layer is especially valuable in political interviews, where the difference between reporting a contrast and using contrast to challenge someone is central to how the interaction unfolds.

Finally, the results contribute to the broader discussion on DMs and fluency. Crible et al. (2017) and Crible and Pascual (2020) argued that DMs and disfluencies form recurrent clusters that can signal either smooth planning or temporary difficulty. The co-occurrence of *well* with word repetition in the mayor’s answers shows that such clusters also appear in high-stakes public talk, precisely at moments when the speaker must deliver a complex or sensitive response. This interpretation supports the view

that DMs should be understood as strategic resources for speaking in real time rather than as unnecessary fillers (Crible, 2018; Heine et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Overall, this study shows that discourse markers play an important role in shaping interaction in political interviews. While both speakers relied heavily on sequential markers to organize the flow of talk, their broader DM use reflected their different interactional roles: the interviewer used more rhetorical resources to formulate critical questions, whereas Mamdani relied more on ideational and interpersonal markers to develop explanations, manage responses, and introduce personal narratives. The multifunctional use of *so*, *but*, and particularly *well* further demonstrates that DM functions are highly dependent on context and may involve stance, discourse organization, and face management at the same time. These findings support the value of Crible's two-dimensional model for capturing aspects of political interview discourse that single-level classifications may overlook. As the study is based on one interview and single-analyst coding without precise timing or prosodic analysis, the findings are best understood as a detailed case study. Future research using larger, time-aligned corpora and multiple annotators could examine whether these patterns extend across political interviews, speakers, and cultural contexts.

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