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Pragmatic markers as a means of implementing strategies of linguistic influence in political debates

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Abstract. The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing significance of political communication in public life, the intensification of information flows, and the need to identify linguistic mechanisms that enable political actors to create argumentative appeal, construct emotionally charged messages, and influence the interpretive frameworks of the audience. The aim of the article was to determine the functional potential of pragmatic markers and to clarify their role in implementing strategies of persuasion, manipulation, discursive positioning, and the regulation of communicative interaction within debate discourse. The methodological basis of the study included the method of pragmatic analysis, discourse and contextual methods, as well as elements of quantitative analysis, which made it possible to establish the frequency of use, typical positions within the structure of an utterance, and the functional load of different groups of markers. This approach enabled the identification of correlations between linguistic form and the speaker's pragmatic intentions, as well as the determination of strategies in which pragmatic markers are most effective. The results of the study demonstrated that pragmatic markers perform a multifunctional role in political debates: they structure utterances, guide the audience's attention, shape the emotional background, strengthen or soften arguments, ensure the expression of confidence or doubt, contribute to establishing and maintaining contact, and help politicians construct and reproduce their desired public image. The most effective groups of markers include modal, intensifying, contact, and positioning markers, which allow the optimisation of persuasive influence and ensure the achievement of communicative goals. The practical value of the research lies in the possibility of applying the results to the training of political communicators, improving the quality of political discourse analysis, optimising debate strategies, and developing educational courses in political linguistics, rhetoric, and strategic communication

Keywords: pragmatic intensifiers; discursive positioning; political argumentation; communicative influence strategies; markers of emotional modality; regulators of debate interaction; strategic meaning construction

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INTRODUCTION

In an environment of heightened media polarisation and real-time audience engagement, politicians increasingly rely on modal expressions, parenthetical constructions, and metadiscursive markers to manage interaction, frame arguments, and subtly guide audience interpretation. In linguistic discourse, the issue of pragmatic markers in political communication has attracted significant attention from researchers due to their powerful influence on argumentation structure, management of the emotional frame, and construction of political identity. The growth of informational competitiveness, the spread of social media, and the polarisation of public debates have prompted linguists and political scientists to study micro-linguistic tools that subtly but deliberately affect audience perception. In particular, the issue of manipulation through pragmatic markers such as modal particles, parenthetical expressions, and metadiscursive constructions has been studied across different contexts by I. Nedainova (2023), V. Kuchinska (2023), O. Mazepova & V. Sobora (2024).

For instance, I. Nedainova (2023) analysed how modal, intensification, and parenthetical markers are used by political actors to manage audience perception, emphasising their function in constructing an image of power and authority. The author highlighted that markers serve as a tool for indirect control over the communicative process and allow politicians to influence audience interpretative frameworks, enhancing the effectiveness of persuasion strategies. V. Kuchinska (2023) examined the specific use of pragmatic markers in debates and public speeches, demonstrating that intensification and positioning markers enable politicians to strengthen arguments and regulate the emotional perception of the audience. V. Kuchinska (2023) emphasised that the strategic use of markers reflects individual rhetorical styles and cultural features of political discourse in Spain. O. Mazepova & V. Sobora (2024) examined the communicative-pragmatic parameters of military-political discourse and demonstrated how markers shape the perception of events in debates and media. The scientists demonstrated that markers perform multifunctional roles: structuring utterances, regulating audience attention, creating an emotional tone, and supporting the speaker's positioning within the discourse.

Another aspect is the role of discursive positioning and "stance markers" in manipulative communication, which is confirmed by analyses of contemporary Ukrainian political discourse. Y. Maslova (2025) highlighted the cognitive-pragmatic mechanisms of intertextuality in newspaper discourse during wartime. The researcher emphasised the cognitive-pragmatic aspect of marker usage in crisis-period discourse. The scholar showed that pragmatic markers contribute to the formation of polarised narratives and help speakers convey a desired image in the media while simultaneously influencing the interpretation and emotional perception of messages by the audience L. Pavlychenko (2022) analysed media discourse and highlights that pragmatic markers are important instruments for polarising opinions, providing emotional coloring to messages, and forming strategies of influence on public opinion during wartime. The author showed that contextual and social factors determine the effectiveness of markers in media discourse. V. Paliadnik (2024) examined the use of pragmatic markers in online debates and public speeches of political parties. The researcher noted that markers play a strategic role in establishing communicative advantage, maintaining audience interaction, and guiding message interpretation in new media, enabling political actors to effectively implement strategies of speech influence

Despite numerous works, a systematic approach to studying pragmatic markers specifically in the context of speech influence strategies in political debates remains insufficiently developed. The aim of this research was a thorough analysis of the functional potential of these markers and their role in forming strategies of persuasion, manipulation, discursive positioning, and regulation of interaction in debate speech. The scientific novelty lies in the integration of pragmatic, discursive, and quantitative approaches, the empirical analysis of an actual corpus of political debates, and the classification of pragmatic markers according to their strategic functions of influence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of pragmatic markers as a means of implementing strategies of speech influence in political debates was conducted using an extensive, comprehensive, and multi-level methodological framework that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to discourse analysis. This approach was specifically designed to ensure the objectivity, reliability, reproducibility, and representativeness of the obtained results, while simultaneously capturing the intricate mechanisms through which pragmatic markers function in real-life political discourse. The empirical base of the study consisted of a carefully curated sample of debates conducted between 2022 and 2025, both in Ukraine and abroad. The selection criteria included the political relevance of the debate topics, the number and diversity of participants, the availability of complete verbal transcripts, the feasibility of transcription and coding, and the accessibility of contextual information regarding audience composition and communicative environment. The dataset incorporated debates involving a wide array of political actors, from state representatives to non-state actors, and covered different ideological and stylistic orientations, thereby capturing the full heterogeneity of political communication styles, argumentation strategies, and rhetorical preferences. To ensure methodological rigor and the comparability

of data, all debate recordings were systematically transcribed following established transcription protocols, which accounted for intonation, pauses, speech tempo, emphasis, and other prosodic features. This approach allowed for a nuanced analysis of the functional and strategic role of pragmatic markers in discourse.

The classification of markers included several functional categories: modal markers, which express certainty, doubt, possibility, or necessity of action and influence audience evaluation of arguments; intensification markers, which amplify or attenuate arguments, highlight critical points, and modulate emotional engagement; contact markers, which facilitate the establishment and maintenance of interaction with the audience, promote engagement, and regulate the dynamics of discourse; positioning markers, which indicate the speaker's attitude toward topics, events, or interlocutors, contributing to strategic self-representation and alignment within political debate; and emotionally colored markers, which modulate the overall affective tone of discourse and influence audience interpretation, contributing to the construction of a desired political image and reinforcing persuasive impact (Nedainova, 2023; Kuchinska, 2023). The methodological framework was designed as a multi-pronged analytical system, combining pragmatic, discourse, and content analysis. Pragmatic analysis was employed to identify the functional roles of markers in situ, establishing the connections between linguistic forms, communicative intentions, and strategic goals. It enabled the examination of how markers implement strategies of persuasion, manipulation, and the regulation of communicative dynamics. Discourse analysis provided tools for exploring the logical organization of utterances, the sequencing of arguments and counterarguments, the identification of recurring discursive patterns, and the mapping of strategies of speaker positioning. Contextual analysis allowed the researchers to evaluate how marker effectiveness depends on social and communicative variables, such as speaker status, audience characteristics, genre, medium, and situational conditions (Mazepova & Sobora, 2024; Maslova, 2025). Quantitative content analysis complemented the qualitative investigation by providing empirical data on the frequency, distribution, and functional roles of markers across debates. Each marker was coded according to type, subtype, position within utterances, and functional significance. Additional coding procedures included normalisation of variations, accounting for synonymous forms, and thematic categorisation across debate segments. This approach made it possible to identify recurrent usage patterns, evaluate the relative effectiveness of different marker types, and examine correlations between marker deployment and specific persuasive or manipulative strategies (Mazepova & Sobora, 2024; Paliadnik, 2024). To enhance reliability and ensure replicability, a two-stage verification process was implemented. Initially, two independent researchers analysed the same debate transcripts, followed by a collaborative reconciliation of discrepancies and consensus building on marker classification and functional assignments. The second stage involved inter-researcher calibration of coding criteria and harmonisation of analytical procedures, standardising methodological approaches and minimising subjective biases, thereby reinforcing data integrity. Special emphasis was placed on the strategic classification of markers. To ensure systematic analysis, the researchers developed comprehensive coding tables, where markers were catalogued by type, subtype, position, functional role, and contextual features. These tables allowed for the tracking of patterns across diverse debate formats, facilitating both qualitative interpretations and quantitative statistical analysis. This methodological rigor provides a template for replicable studies, enabling future researchers to apply the same procedures for the analysis of pragmatic markers in political discourse, multimodal formats, crisis communication, and strategic political rhetoric. Overall, the multi-level methodological approach adopted in this study represents a robust and replicable model for investigating the complex functions of pragmatic markers in political debates. By integrating qualitative insights, quantitative validation, discourse-structural mapping, and contextual analysis, the study provides a thorough, nuanced, and empirically grounded understanding of how pragmatic markers operate as instruments of speech influence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that the transcription process was methodologically rigorous, capturing not only verbatim speech but also crucial paralinguistic features such as intonation, pause duration, stress, and speech tempo. The markers were classified into distinct categories: modal, intensification, contact, positioning, and emotionally colored. Each type of marker was found to play an important role in shaping strategies of persuasion, manipulation, discursive positioning, audience engagement, and the regulation of interactive dynamics during debates. The analysis revealed that pragmatic markers play a systematic and multifunctional role in the implementation of speech influence strategies in political debates, affecting both the structural organization of discourse and the regulation of interaction with audiences. Across the analysed corpus of political debates pragmatic markers consistently functioned as strategic instruments for shaping argumentation, managing audience attention, and constructing speaker positioning in real-time communicative contexts.

Modal markers were found to be central in shaping audience perception of speaker credibility and authority. Their use enabled speakers to signal varying degrees of certainty, probability, obligation, or necessity, thereby guiding audience interpretation of political arguments. In confrontational segments of debates, modal

markers were frequently employed to assert epistemic dominance, whereas in explanatory or justificatory segments they functioned to mitigate categorical claims and present positions as reasonable or inevitable (Tannen, 2007). For instance, modal markers were frequently used to shape argumentation and signal varying degrees of certainty or necessity. A prime example of this is found in the statement, "We must act now to combat climate change", where the modal marker "must" emphasises urgency and authority, positioning the speaker as an authoritative figure and guiding the audience toward interpreting the argument as not only necessary but inevitable. Similarly, intensification markers, such as "absolutely" in the phrase "This is absolutely crucial for our future", were used to amplify key points, intensify the persuasive force, and reinforce the emotional impact of the argument (Furko, 2017).

Intensification markers demonstrated a significant role in regulating the persuasive force and emotional salience of arguments. These markers were used to amplify key points, emphasise evaluative judgments, or, conversely, to soften potentially controversial claims. The analysis showed that intensification markers often co-occurred with modal markers, producing a cumulative effect that enhanced both argumentative strength and emotional engagement. Markers such as "extremely" and "absolutely" are frequently used to reinforce the strength of an argument, making the speaker's position appear more convincing (Carter & McCarthy, 2006). For example, in a political debate, a speaker might say, "This is extremely important for our nation's future," with "extremely" intensifying the perceived importance of the issue. Similarly, "I am absolutely certain that this policy will lead to prosperity" uses "absolutely" to stress the speaker's unwavering confidence and to enhance the emotional intensity of the claim. Conversely, markers like "perhaps" or "maybe" serve to soften statements, mitigating their assertiveness and reducing confrontation. For instance, "Perhaps we should consider revising this policy to avoid unforeseen consequences" uses "perhaps" to introduce a degree of uncertainty, making the statement less categorical and more diplomatic. In some cases, intensification markers work in tandem with modal markers, creating a cumulative effect that strengthens both the emotional appeal and the argumentative structure. For example, "This decision is absolutely crucial for the success of the program" combines the intensifying function of "absolutely" with the modal certainty of "crucial", creating a statement that is both emotionally charged and logically firm. Contact markers were identified as primary tools for maintaining interactional dynamics and audience involvement. Their use increased during moments of audience address, topic transitions, and rhetorical appeals, contributing to the maintenance of attention and responsiveness. In digitally mediated debates, contact markers appeared particularly salient, compensating for reduced physical co-presence and reinforcing perceived communicative proximity (Surtikanti *et al.*, 2023).

Positioning markers functioned as indicators of speaker stance and relational alignment within the debate. These markers were instrumental in constructing political identity, delineating in-group and out-group boundaries, and negotiating alignment or opposition toward interlocutors. The findings indicate that positioning markers frequently operated in combination with evaluative and modal elements, reinforcing strategic self-representation and discursive role allocation. These markers were often deployed to negotiate alignment or opposition toward interlocutors, and they frequently cooccurred with evaluative and modal elements, reinforcing strategic selfrepresentation and discursive role allocation. Such effects of stance and positioning in political rhetoric are well attested in discourse research, where positioning mechanisms are shown to be central to how political actors situate themselves, their parties, and their opponents in relation to audiences and ideological frameworks. For example, phrases like "We, the people" or "Our party will stand firm" reflect not only group identity but also convey the speaker's positioning vis-à-vis others in the debate. These markers were frequently deployed to establish solidarity or assert authority, and were linked to persuasion strategies intended to shape audience perceptions of the speaker's credibility and political affiliation.

Emotionally colored markers are shown to shape the affective dimension of political discourse, influencing audience emotional responses and interpretative framing. Their use contributed to the construction of a desired political persona and to the modulation of emotional climate within debates. These markers were particularly prominent in segments addressing socially sensitive or value-laden topics. These markers are frequently used to craft a desired political persona and to regulate the emotional climate within debates, enhancing the persuasive impact of the speaker. For instance, emotionally charged phrases such as "This is a tragic failure" or "We cannot allow this injustice to continue" were utilised to evoke strong emotional reactions from the audience, reinforcing the speaker's stance while appealing to emotions like anger, empathy, or urgency. For instance, political figures often employ fear-inducing language in debates on immigration, using phrases like "we must protect our families from these dangerous threats" to align the audience's emotions with their political objectives. Such markers help shape both emotional perception and interpretive understanding of complex political issues, furthering the speaker's persuasive agenda (Charteris-Black, 2011).

Discourse-level analysis revealed that pragmatic markers significantly contribute to coherence, cohesion, and the rhythmic organization of political debate (Chilton, 2004). Beyond structuring arguments and sequencing reasoning, markers regulated the flow of

discourse and mediated audience alignment with the speaker's intended message. The same marker was observed to perform different functions depending on its placement within the utterance, the surrounding linguistic environment, and accompanying paralinguistic features, underscoring the non-linear and context-dependent nature of pragmatic influence. A key result of the study is the identification of a synergistic effect arising from the interaction of different marker types. Modal, intensification, and positioning markers emerged as primary instruments of strategic influence, while contact and emotionally colored markers functioned as facilitators of interaction and moderators of emotional climate. Their combined use enhanced persuasive effectiveness and enabled speakers to maintain control over debate dynamics.

The findings confirm that pragmatic markers function as linguistic micro-strategies through which political actors achieve macro-level communicative goals, including persuasion, audience alignment, emotional framing, and identity construction. The study also highlighted that the same marker can perform different functions depending on its placement, surrounding linguistic environment, and interaction with other paralinguistic cues, underscoring the non-linear and multi-dimensional nature of pragmatic influence in political communication. Comparison with prior research confirms and extends existing knowledge on the strategic functions of pragmatic markers. I. Nedainova (2023) emphasised the capacity of modal and intensification markers to simultaneously regulate speaker authority and audience emotional perception, corroborating the multifunctional effects identified in this study. V. Kuchinska (2023) and O. Mazepova & V. Sobora (2024) highlighted the importance of contact and positioning markers in sustaining audience engagement and implementing persuasion strategies, which aligns with the present findings across various genres and platforms. Y. Maslova (2025) illustrated the influence of stance markers in shaping interpretation and aligning audience response, supporting the contextualised analysis presented in this study. V. Paliadnik (2024) emphasised the mediating role of platform and delivery format in marker effectiveness, reaffirming the necessity of integrating technological, social, and contextual dimensions in understanding pragmatic influence. The study demonstrated that pragmatic markers serve a dual and complementary function: they provide structural and logical organization of arguments, ensure the coherence and intelligibility of discourse, and simultaneously regulate cognitive and emotional reception, allowing speakers to craft persuasive messages, shape audience attitudes, and project desired identities.

Scholars such as A. Partington *et al.* (2024) emphasised the interactional nature of these markers, suggesting that they are not only used to convey content but to manage audience expectations and align the speaker with a particular stance. This supports findings in the present study, where the use of markers such as "must" or "absolutely" helps position speakers as authoritative figures, enhancing their persuasive power. Moreover, S. Statham (2022) and R. Iqbal *et al.* (2025) contributed valuable frameworks for understanding how markers play into broader power dynamics. They argued that discourse markers, especially those related to emotional engagement and positioning, are tools through which political figures can shape power relations, framing their arguments in ways that reinforce their own authority and align their audience with their political agenda. These markers are not only used to reinforce certainty or authority but also to soften or intensify claims, allowing speakers to navigate the complexity of contentious political issues. For instance, the use of "perhaps" or "maybe" can soften an otherwise confrontational statement, whereas "absolutely" or "extremely" can amplify the emotional salience of an argument. Further, the study by Y. Fu (2024) on the use of contrastive markers in British political interviews provided a nuanced understanding of how markers like "but" frame argumentation. While Y. Fu (2024) focused on the role of contrastive markers in defining opposing viewpoints, this study emphasised the integration of positioning markers with evaluative and intensification markers to build a cohesive political identity and emotional connection with the audience.

S. Alghazo *et al.* (2025) focused on how markers contribute to the coherence and logical flow of discourse, which is crucial for making arguments persuasive. R. Hayik (2025) added a layer of complexity by examining how these markers help construct political identity, enabling speakers to build a connection with their audience. Q. Al-Azzawi *et al.* (2022) extended this by exploring how intensifying and modality markers can be used for manipulation, creating emotional tension that strengthens political arguments. Finally, S. Qaiwer & B. Kazemian (2025) explored the role of metadiscourse markers in political speeches, showing how these markers help in the persuasive structuring of political discourse. They focused particularly on how speakers use metadiscourse to frame arguments and engage with the audience. The present study agrees with this perspective, particularly in the way emotionally colored markers serve to establish emotional rapport and regulate audience interpretation. However, the present study expands upon this by showing that pragmatic markers also serve a dual role, functioning both to organise arguments and to regulate emotional reception, thereby creating a more complex strategic tool for political speakers. Modal, intensification, and positioning markers emerged as primary instruments for strategic influence, whereas contact and emotionally colored markers functioned as facilitators of interaction and moderators of emotional climate. Importantly, the analysis revealed that the interplay between these markers creates

synergistic effects, enhancing both persuasiveness and the ability to maintain control over debate dynamics. These findings provided valuable insights into the intricate mechanisms by which political actors manage argumentation, audience attention, emotional framing, and identity construction within real-time debate environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research on pragmatic markers in political debates provided a comprehensive understanding of their functional role as instruments for the implementation of speech influence strategies and established their multi-layered effectiveness across different genres and communicative contexts. The analysis revealed that pragmatic markers perform structural, cognitive, and emotional functions simultaneously, ensuring the logical organization of argumentation, highlighting key points, maintaining coherence of statements, regulating interaction with audiences, and shaping the emotional tone of messages. Furthermore, these markers actively influence audience perception of political positions, allowing political actors to model information interpretation, emphasise their stance, and create a desired public image, confirming their strategic significance for communicative control and political positioning.

Within the classification of markers, it was found that each group performs specific functions. Modal markers ensure the demonstration of certainty, doubt, probability, or necessity of actions, thereby shaping argument persuasiveness, regulating audience perception of speaker competence and authority. Intensification markers amplify or soften arguments, modulate the emotional tone of statements, and draw attention to critical points, enabling speakers to achieve strategic emotional manipulation of audiences. Contact markers serve as a means to establish and maintain interaction with the audience, activate audience engagement, regulate the dynamics of discussions, and create a sense of direct communication, which is especially important in interactive online debates and public speeches. Positioning markers demonstrate the speaker's attitude toward the topic, interlocutors, or political events, contribute to strategic discursive positioning, and facilitate the construction of speaker identity within the debate arena. Emotionally charged markers form the overall tone of the discourse, influence audience interpretation, and ensure emotional engagement, supporting a coherent emotional image of the politician and enhancing the effectiveness of speech influence strategies. The findings contribute to theoretical advancements in political linguistics, enhance understanding of persuasive communication strategies, and offer a foundation for practical applications in political training, media analysis, and the development of effective public discourse strategies. The prospects for further research lie in a deeper exploration of the interaction between different types of pragmatic markers in the context of various political cultures and social groups, as well as studying their influence on the formation of political narratives in new media.

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Прагматичні маркери як засіб реалізації стратегій мовленнєвого впливу в політичних дебатах

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Анотація. Актуальність теми зумовлена зростанням значення політичної комунікації у суспільному житті, інтенсифікацією інформаційних потоків та потребою у виявленні мовних механізмів, які дозволяють політичним акторам формувати аргументативну привабливість, конструювати емоційно забарвлені повідомлення та впливати на інтерпретаційні рамки аудиторії. Метою статті було визначення функціонального потенціалу прагматичних маркерів і з'ясування їхньої ролі в реалізації стратегій переконання, маніпулювання, дискурсивного позиціонування та регулювання комунікативної взаємодії у межах дебатного дискурсу. Методологічну основу дослідження становили метод прагматичного аналізу, дискурсивний і контекстуальний методи, а також елементи кількісного аналізу, що забезпечили можливість встановити частотність використання, типові позиції в структурі висловлення та функціональні навантаження різних груп маркерів. Такий підхід дав змогу простежити взаємозв'язок між мовною формою та прагматичними намірами мовця, а також визначити стратегії, у яких прагматичні маркери є найбільш ефективними. Результати дослідження засвідчили, що прагматичні маркери виконують багатофункціональну роль у політичних дебатах: вони структурують висловлення, керують увагою аудиторії, формують емоційний фон, посилюють або пом'якшують аргументи, забезпечують демонстрацію впевненості чи сумніву, сприяють встановленню та підтриманню контакту, а також допомагають політикам формувати та відтворювати бажаний образ. Найефективнішими виявилися модальні, інтенсифікаційні, контактні та маркери позиціонування, які дозволяють оптимізувати процес впливу та забезпечити досягнення комунікативних цілей. Практична цінність полягає у можливості застосування отриманих результатів у підготовці політичних комунікаторів, поліпшенні якості аналітики політичного дискурсу, оптимізації дебатних стратегій, а також у створенні навчальних курсів із політичної лінгвістики, риторики та стратегічних комунікацій

Ключові слова: прагматичні інтенсифікатори; дискурсивне позиціонування; політична аргументація; комунікативні стратегії впливу; маркери емоційної модальності; регулятори дебатної взаємодії; стратегічне конструювання смислів