

## Metapragmatic analysis of marking-up in discourse: case of president George Weah's speeches in Liberia

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### RÉSUMÉ :

Baliser une idée est essentiel car il permet aux protagonistes d'éviter des quiproquos. Il laisse la latitude à l'énonciateur de développer son idée et d'attirer l'attention de l'auditoire sur les personnes ou points saillants. Il y a plusieurs possibilités pour y parvenir. Dans le discours d'acceptation du président George Manneh Weah, l'on remarque l'usage de l'adverbe de manière 'spécialement'. Pour atteindre le même objectif, il emploie cette fois le complément de nom 'fer' pour se référer à la présidente Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

Dans le discours inaugural, il emploie le nom 'Libériens'. De plus, président George Weah fait usage du verbe à la forme impersonnelle. Au-delà de ces explications et différents balisages dans le discours, il y a de nombreuses idées omises que seule l'analyse métalinguistique permet de déceler. Cet article est donc une exhortation à nous approprier cette tactique discursive de désambiguïsation.

***MOTS-CLÉS :*** *baliser – désambiguïsation – discours – métalinguistique - tactique*

### ABSTRACT:

Particularizing an idea is central in communication. It prevents participants from misunderstanding. Moreover, it helps the speaker praise his view and draw attentions on focal participants. It can be conducted in various ways. In president George Manneh Weah's Acceptance Speech, one can notice the use of the adverb 'especially'. Similarly, to reach the same goal, he uses the noun complement 'iron' to refer to president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

In the Inaugural Speech, he uses the noun 'Liberians'. For the same purpose, president Weah uses the impersonal verb form. Beyond these explications and different ways of marking-up one's discourse, there are many unstated ideas that the metapragmatic analysis can reveal. Thus, resorting to Sympathy Maxim, the paper aims at exhorting people to welcome with open arms these disambiguation techniques.

***KEY WORDS:*** *marking-up – disambiguation – discourse – metalinguistics - tactics*

## INTRODUCTION

The risk of missing the point in a verbal interaction leads good speakers to take measures among which one can have marking-up. It consists in a particularisation, that is, in an additional basis for classification. It is important in the sense that it gives the opportunity to the locutor to clear the bush around his idea so as to disambiguate it and make it transparent. The application of this discourse technique is even obeying discourse principle like quantity maxim which requires to be precised enough in one's discourse.

Afterall, if the message is not caught, it means that it has failed to meet that requirement. In other words, marking-up is any device used to lay emphasis on someone or something one is referring to. It can be realized through discourse resources like impersonalisation, adjectives, adverbs, over-lexicalisation. They are present in George Manneh Weah's speech too. Thus, the following questions: What are the traces of marking-up in George Weah's speeches? What make it relevant to tact maxim? What are metapragmatic indicators of marking-up?

In a three-part analysis, marking-up in discourse in the pragmlinguistic theory is investigated in George Weah's speeches. The first part deals with Allusion in discourse. The second part corelates explicatures and sympathy maxim. The last part is devoted to personalisation and lack of agency.

### 1. ALLUSION IN DISCOURSE

Pragma-linguistics from which metalinguistics derives from is "the general conditions of language use" according to J. Angermuller and al. (2014 p. 259). It does cover allusion as a marking-up technique which R. W. Langacker (2008, p.267) refers to as 'instantiation'. In fact, allusion strategy in discourse is a "purposive ambiguity", according to D. Sperber and D. Wilson (1995, p. 39), which means that if further information is not brought, allusion remains something vague and is poorly informative. Allusion is subjective in nature and this is why P. Lennon (2004, p. 67) concedes that "what is allusive for one reader may be merely a commonplace metaphorical idiom for another". It complies with verbal process, which means that marking-up can start with allusion as a preliminary stage.

#### 1.1 Verbal Processes in "Discourse Marking-Up"

Verbal processes are in M. A. K. Halliday's words (2004: 252) "Clauses of saying". To put it differently, these clauses "contribute to the creation of narrative by making it possible to set up dialogic passages" (M. A. K. Halliday, idem: 252).

In utterance (1) below, the mission is marked-up by the adjective 'singular'. With it, one can learn that if there were to be other missions, they would be fake ones. There is but one mission: transforming. It is announced by the process verb declare. It is important because it has a solemn dimension.

- (1) I **declare** publicly today that transforming the lives of all Liberians is a **singular** mission and focus of my presidency.

Marking-up is also present via the noun object 'development' in example (2).

- (2) To our **development** partners we **say** a big thank you for the support you have provided over the **last 12 years**.

The idea conveyed is that there are many partners, but the ones at stake are those who foster development. It informs that the noun 'partners' is a multidimensional unit. From the point of view of the duration, only the 12 last years are marked-up. The process verb specifies that only those pictured as development partners are thanked.

In example (3), it works differently as if investors were not development agents. The gist is that the focus has shifted. It goes from development partners to investors.

- (3) To **investors** we **say** Liberia is open and ready for business.

One can see that the key strategy alludes to a congregation. The congregation of investors are particularised simply because they are from far different from development partners. The process verb 'say' has brought a change in the orientation. Rightly, H. Mills' warning is to be taken seriously, H. Mills (2000: 109) observes that "words are rarely neutral".

In example (4), the process verb has also changed orientation and consequently, the focus too.

- (4) I solemnly **pledge** today, with the help of all of you, my fellow citizens, to build a Liberia of equality, freedom, dignity and respect for one another.

The marking-up is made by the constellation of virtues and qualities. The targeted Liberia is the one pathed with equality, freedom, dignity and respect. For D. Machin and A. Mayr (2012: 109) "verbal processes are expressed through the verb 'to say' and its many synonyms. A verbal process typically involves three components: sayer, receiver and verbiage." This is obvious in example (5), whereby; the verb 'to admonish' is somehow a synonym of 'to say'. The sayer is President George Weah and the verbiage is preceded by that relative pronoun 'that'.

- (5) And so, my fellow Citizens, I want to **admonish** you, that the foundation of the New Liberia must be reinforced by the steel of integrity.

Allusion is also present in otherness. In the way they are referred to.

## 1.2 Excluding Others

Exclusion in discourse, according to D. Machin and A. Mayr (2012: 102), is understood as "ways of (not) representing others". This discourse strategy is not done openly but, rather with much subtlety. Very often, it goes unnoticed by non-specialists. It does comply with the semantic features of metalinguistic verbs. In the words of D. Machin and A. Mayr (2012: 60),

these "Metalinguistic verbs are where the kind of language used by a speaker is specified". Specificity can be observed in the following utterances:

(6) We **need** men and women, boys and girls, **whose integrity** provides the foundation of the trust that is required...

(7) without the support of the youth of this country, the women of this country, **especially those who** make their living by selling in the markets.

(8) We **truly** thank all Liberians **especially** the women of Liberia

(9) They are the **true** heroes and heroine of this victory.

(10) **Especially** in the last 13 years of political struggle.

In example (6), the metalinguistic verb 'need' is specified by the 'whose integrity'. It means that any person is not welcome but specifically persons known for their integrity. This phrase individualised these men and women, boys and girls. As R. W. Langacker (2008: 267) rightly put it "instantiation consists of imposing a profile on a type specification, which lacks it". By instantiating them, they all formed a homogeneous group, those who have in common 'integrity'.

In utterance (7) marking-up is borne by the adverb phrase 'especially those who'. The idea is that only women selling in the market are concerned with the matter. In example (8), the adverb 'especially' specified the type of women. Similarly, the adverb 'truly' modifies the metalinguistic verb 'thank'. In example (9), the marking-up is assured by the adjective 'true'. It helps distinguish exclude fake heroes. Thus, by specifying this group of true heroes, fake ones are by the same token excluded<sup>28</sup>. In example (10), specificity is conveyed by the adverb 'especially'. It is backed up by the time indicator 'last 13 years'. The span of time is well circumscribed. That is, the preceding years are excluded. These excluded years are not the 'landmark' in R. W. Langacker's (2008: 113) terminology. The adverb and the span of time are marking-up clues.

These clues are sometimes reinforced from the point of view of the vocabulary in the description, they can be a kind of over-lexicalisation in the referencing process. There is over-lexicalisation in allusion strategy when the thing or person we refer to is described with over-wording. It is the creation and the use of many words or lexical items for a single entity or concept.

For P. Teo (2000: 20) over-lexicalisation "results when a surfeit of repetitions, quasi-synonymous terms is woven in to the fabric of news discourse, giving rise to a sense of overcompleteness". In other words, overlexicalisation gives a sense of over-persuasion and is

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<sup>28</sup> As a Gouro proverb goes: we learn how to run when learning how to walk. (There is no room for learning first how to walk and thereafter how to run.)

normal evidence that something is problematic or ideological contention. So, there is over-lexicalisation where there is an abundance of particular words and their synonyms.

This too-many wordings is due to the strong desire to say everything, to empty the message and is prompted by a feeling of sympathy.

## 2. EXPLICATURES AND SYMPATHY MAXIM

As A. Cruse (2011: 435) indicates, "Normal language is full of potential ambiguities". The antidote of this potential ambiguity is therefore explicature which A. Cruse defines as follows:

the explicature of an utterance corresponds in many ways to the notion of 'what is said' that was presented earlier. It consists of all the propositions that are explicitly communicated by the speaker through that utterance. The explicature of an utterance is closely tied to what is explicitly encoded in the linguistic form uttered, but is not identical to it. An explicature must be logically complete. (A. Cruse, 2011 : 435)

One uses explicatures as a way of being accurate in conveying messages. It becomes easier to understand chiefly when connected, fuelled by the sympathy Maxim. In other words, relying on the Sympathy Maxim, helps guess the orientation one imposes on a discourse, at least. As theory does, the Sympathy Maxim can help weighing the words used in the description. In the words of M. Middeke and al. (2012: 371)

Just as the theory of gravitation allows us to predict that objects which are dropped will fall to the ground rather than begin to float, a good theory of the English language will allow us to predict which sentences and words speakers are likely to produce and understand and which they will not. This means that theories do not merely have enormous explanatory potential, but also massive practical implications.

Hence sympathy maxim reveals explanation for explicature.

For A. Cruse (2011: 430), the sympathy maxim requires:

- (i) Maximize sympathy (expression of positive feelings) towards the hearer
- (ii) Minimize antipathy (expression of negative feelings) towards the hearer.

It goes without saying that emotional intensity triggers such a verbal attitude.

### 2.1 Explicature in Emotional Intensity

Emotional intensity is present in example (11) that read like:

(11) I **cannot summon the words** to thank the people.

There is indeed an emotional involvement in his incapacity to find the appropriate word. This reality is not strange because the etymology<sup>29</sup> of 'emotion' according to J. Ayto (2005: 202) informs that the prefix 'e' means, to remove, to take away. Thus, emotion has taken away the President's ability to find the word that can faithfully represent the feeling of gratitude which he is experiencing. As J. Ayto (2005) indicates, emotion when applied to physical movement, metaphorically gives way to strong feelings.

One can also notice an aspect of Sapir-Whorf's linguistic determinism which considers that "different languages will shape the world differently. This way, the words different language speakers inhabit are not simply ones with different labels but are therefore distinct worlds" (E. Sapir, 1958: 69)

Emotional intensity is also manifest in utterance (12):

(12) What the people of Liberia have delivered for the country **cannot** even be **described with words**.

The items in bold type witness the awareness of using inappropriate words. The greatness of the joy has become undescrivable. This extralinguistic world is revealed in language and O. Argaman (2009: 90) expresses it as: "Language is a convenient way to measure these changes, since using language — including all lexical modalities— is also behavior."

Example (13) clearly depicts a superlative paraphrase.

(13) But today is a feeling like **no other**.

It means that the feeling attached to this ceremony is beyond all the others. Reasonably, one praised the newness in any speech act. It means that any speech act is never deprived of a sort of surprise.

trying to learn to use words, and every attempt is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure because one has only learnt to get the better of words for the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which one is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate.

(W. Hirtle, 2007: 53)

to put it differently, to usage language is also a venture in the unknown world of words, where everything is possible ranging from the audible to inaudible one and it can be seen that all these ways add credits to marking-up. They specify that day and also the discourse circumstances. In utterance (14), the specification lies in the use of

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<sup>29</sup> "A (social) moving, stirring, agitation" from Middle French *émotion*, from Old French *emouvoir* "stir up", from Latin *emovere* "move out, remove, agitate", from assimilated form of *ex* "out" to push away. Sense of "strong feeling" is first recorded in 1650s.

the negator 'never'. In (15), it is conveyed through the adjective 'overwhelmed'. It contains an idea of something extraordinary.

(14) They will **never** be forgotten

(15) I am **overwhelmed** with the crowd and the energy here **today**,

Deservedly, one can agree with P. Charaudeau when he writes:

the communicative situation is where constraints originate. These constraints determine what is at stake in the exchange. They come, as we have seen, both from the identity of the participants and from the place they occupy in the exchange, from the viewpoint of their aim, their content and the material circumstances in which the discourse is performed. (P. Charaudeau, 2014: 287)

This linguistic constraint proves as if need be that "all persuasive language is conative by definition, since it is oriented to the audience" according to R. Cockcroft and *al.*, (2014: 94). In that audience, some people are marked-up by presenting them deeper or with more clarity. In the words of R. Cockcroft and *al.*, (2014: 94), "Persuasion involves sender/persuader as well as the receiver/persuadee, so the emotive function (oriented initially towards the persuader) is vital; and because persuasion must have a topic and an issue, the referential function is equally important." This is made possible by resorting to the specifications and attributes of those people.

## 2.2 Sympathy Conveyance in Specification and Attributes

Specification conveys anything that can individualise a person or a situation. It overlaps with that person's attributes. In the following examples, one can observe:

(16) My darling wife, **Clar Weah**.

(17) **My wife and children** have remained my pillar of strength.

(18) with **special** thanks and appreciation going to the Honourable Senator of Nimba Country, **Prince Yormie Johnson**

(19) Then, in our **darkest days**, the UN stood by us

(20) Europe will always have a **special** place in my heart

By revealing his wife's name, in example (16), he made her particular. She is individualised and cannot therefore be assimilated to the uniformed Liberian audience. As for example (17), if he were given the opportunity, D. Machin (2012: 81) would have analysed it by saying that

the wife and the children are "functionalised by being depicted in terms of what they do". The use of the singular for pillar shows the centrality of their role for the President.

In utterance (18), the adjective 'special' pairs with the proper name of the Prince and thus reach the specification goal. It plausibly isolates the prince Yormie Johnson. This fact reveals that specification and qualification can also be reached with proper names and not always with adjectives like in example (19) where the use of the superlative 'darkest' helps discriminate days. With that superlative, one learns about what to do with language. For J. Wilson (1990: 14) "What this indicates is that language mediates our view of the world underlying reality which we transform to suit our needs; it is rather there are competing realities which become reflected in the various structures which we employ to talk about the world".

In example (20), particularisation is expressed with the time adverb 'always' pairs with the adjective 'special'. Europe is particularised typically in terms of belonging, dearness and even accessibility which means that this continent, to quote the words by J. Wilson (1990: 82) "is now more easily accessible". Moreover, the origin of that frequency adverb 'always' is telling. J. Ayto (2005: 20) observes that "Always" originates from *alne weg* means 'all the way'. It seems likely that this was used originally in the physical sense of 'covering the complete distance. It means perpetually". This forgetfulness of Europe is what makes it particular. In other words, Europe is always in present Weah's short term memory because of the closeness that links them.

### 3. PERSONALISATION AND LACK OF AGENCY

#### 3.1 Personalisation as a Marking-up technique

In the referentiation process in the speech, President George Weah resorts to the personalisation as a discourse tactics, that is, referring to a particular person. As R. W. Langacker (2008: 267) reveals "an instance (as opposed to a type) is thought of as having a particular location in the domain of instantiation, which serves to distinguish it from other instances. Starting from a type conception, instantiation is just a matter of conceiving the profiled entity as occupying such a location". It is opposed to impersonalisation where "it is not just a particular but a whole institution that requires something" (D. Machin and A. Mayr, 2012: 80)

In the following cases, personalisation is present:

(21) As we open our doors to all foreign direct investments, we will not permit **Liberian**-owned businesses to be marginalized.

(22) I received a concession call from **His Excellency Vice President Joseph Nyumah Boakai**.

- (23) And of **course**, to our own, Congress for Democratic Change, **we** say a resounding thank you.

In example (21), Liberians are personalized by being made particular via the verb 'to own'. It means that, not all the Liberians are concerned with that decision but, particularly the Liberians who own businesses. In example (22), personalisation is attained through the functional Honorifics 'His Excellency Vice President'. As a matter of focus, there is no two persons occupying this function.

In example (23), with the use of the personal pronouns, 'we' in utterance (23), there is a lack of clarity. In the terms of N. Fairclough (2000: 152), "'we' is slippery". In other words, the linguistic unit "we" is misleading. It is difficult to identify accurately who it refers to, President Weah alone as well as to a togetherness of voices. In the viewpoint of J. Wilson (1990: 80) constraining 'WE' and 'I.' "I" indicates a greater existential involvement than WE (Inclusive), which in turn indicates a greater existential involvement than WE (Exclusive)".

In the argumentation process, the argument can be directed at a person. This discourse device is sometimes termed "argumentation ad hominem" by R. Cockcroft and *al.* (2014: 172). The technique proves efficiency generally when it relies on good qualities and merits of the persons being talked about. It is obvious that the arguments put forward by President George Weah will reach the point because the persons evoked have great merits as he displays some of these merits.

### 3.2 Lack of Agency

The lack of agency complies with impersonalisation and is used to give extra weight to a particular statement. But the agent can be easily identified through the presupposition embedded in a given utterance. Presupposition is called the 'pre-constructed elements' by Fairclough (1995a: 107). For, D. Machin (2012: 137) "Presupposition is one skilful way by which authors are able to imply meanings without overtly stating them, or present things as taken for granted and stable when in fact they may be contestable and ideological". The correlation is in the fact that the lack of agent compulsorily complies with the existence of presupposition.

In the examples that follow, the agent is missing.

(24) but that vision of freedom, equality, and democracy has not yet been fully **realized**.

(25) I was chosen to be the 24th President of the Republic of Liberia.

(26) **Many of those who** founded this country left.

It is easy to observe with N. Fairclough (2003: 136) that "we can look at what elements of events are included in a text and what elements are excluded". The excluded elements can be guessed taking account indices like attributes. That is to say, in the quest for the agent, we can be helped with the ideas and values communicated by objects or any other comment. The gist is to see the way they are encapsulated and at a macroscopic level what they convey.

In example (24), President Weah denounces a common failure in Liberia. That is introduced by the conjunction 'but' which plays a functional cohesive role. It contrasts with the optimism of the President. But the pessimism is not absolute, because of the mitigator 'fully'. This adverb 'fully' conveys that much has been done and even that only less needs to be done.

The lack of agency permits to avoid specification. No name is given as responsible for that mismatch. Interestingly, it serves to conveniently summon arguments that are then easy to dismiss. It goes alike for example (25) where the agent is missing. Who has chosen him? Anyway, it is not the totality of Liberian taken individually. Marking-up resides in the focus of his fans, those who have elected him. There is a kind of synecdoche in this where he takes the part for the whole and the part is the admirers of the President. He has extended them to the whole country. By omitting the agent, he engages the whole country rendering it thus more powerful in terms of the size and giving it the national dimension.

With the use of the quantifier 'many of (those who)', there is a matter of anonymisation. But it comes clearly in the mind of knowers, the knower of the history of Liberia. The heroes who have influenced Liberia's life. Thus, even though indirectly mentioned, marking-up is always present and it relies on an indicator, which can be historical, contextual or political. Using that anonymisation in the process of thanking Liberians for the success is a way of remaining apparently vague and thus to address the mind of those who have a great mastery of the history of the country.

## CONCLUSION

Marking-up in discourse is reached through many linguistic resources or enunciation devices. Such discourse tactics are not neutral at all. Their use is strongly motivated in that the locutor is fully aware of resorting in a subtle way to exclude others. It can be fulfilled by resorting to allusion in discourse. By alluding to a person or an object, we create more focus on that object or thing. That person or that thing typically functions as the arguments of a given verb, that is, the person or thing has played a social role that have marked President Weah. Marking-up in discourse can also be reached with explicatures where things are mentioned plainly. Nonetheless, presuppositions are triggered by explicatures. In such a case, adverbs like 'normally', 'generally', 'particularly', are made use of. Another way of marking-up is in the use of personalisation and impersonalisation. In the particular case under study, President Weah has sometimes named doers as subjects or as direct complements. Drawing

attention on these strategies by which linguistic particularisation is applied has connection with pragmatics, known as invisible meaning. Moreover, it is metapragmatic as a focalisation technique of an intrinsic relationship between the two entities, which are, the language use and the extra-linguistic world requires going beyond the immediate context. It helps distinguish different stages in the referentiation process. That way, it has a disambiguation function in discourse.

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