# ‘Now’: A Marker to Illocutionary Force in Political Discourse

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# Abstract

The English pragmatic marker *Now* is dynamic. *Now* as a pragmatic marker has much to contribute to the function and meaning of discourse. Interpreting the function of *Now* should consider the speaker’s intention, the discourse illocutionary force and goals. The main claim in this study is that the illocutionary force of an utterance could be triggered through the marker *Now* as set to relate the parts of a discourse. To understand this function, the study draws on speech acts theory (Austin, 1962, Searle 1969, 1979, Searle and Vanderveken, 1985). The study concludes that *Now* introduces the intentional and attentional phases of discourse. As such, it informs the addressee of the utterance illocutionary force, and therefore directs his attention to what the utterance is meant to communicate in the first place. Now relates two utterances comparable in terms of illocutionary force. It also points to where directives are more predictable in discourse through what I call a point of culmination.

# Keywords

**Now, Illocutionary force, Proximization, Discourse, Coherence.**

# Introduction

Contribution of research to pragmatic markers is considerably significant. We may need double the volume of this research to include all studies on pragmatic markers. The studies on pragmatic markers were different in terms of methodology and findings. They have been considered for different functions in different studies. Halliday and Hasan (1976), for example, considered discourse markers along their analysis of cohesion, or what devices make the best difference between scattered disjointed sentences and well-formed paragraphs. One of the discourse makers that has received much attention recently is *Now*. The discourse marker *Now*, according to Schiffrin (1987), is an adverbial of present time; it contrasts with other adverbials with different reference to time, such as ‘then’**.** *Now* has other discourse functions. It signals a series of subordinate units, draws the hearer’s attention to an upcoming idea or orientation to discourse (Schiffrin, 1987). Schiffrin (1987) also contended that *Now* serves as a marker to compare disputed opinions and transfer within discourse to new stands on an issue. Another account by Aijmer (2002) similarly distinguished between *Now* as an adverbial and a discourse marker. The discussion is based on a number of criteria, such as tone of voice and lexical collocation. *Now* is a discourse marker when it has a separate tone or collocates with other markers like ‘well’. As such, it marks the speaker’s shift to a more elaborated form of a stated proposition. *Now* also delimits the boundary between two discourses given its features as short and separable from the content of the discourse. Another study by Aijmer (1980) reported one basic function, that is**,** to keep a sense of coherence in a communicative setting where a speaker is trying to communicate his intention. *Now* this way facilitates the comprehension and interpretation of the text on the basis of shared knowledge or general background information. *Now* also collocates with other particles like *well* to draw the hearer's attention to what is new and develop a sense of urgency. The third account by Schourup (2008) employed Relevance Theory to explore *Now* as a marker of text coherence. Schourup (2008) assumed that text coherence is achieved through the satisfaction of optimal relevance. *Now* was found to contribute to the formulation of explicature and place constraints on context selection. The study concluded that the discourse marker *Now* contributes to text coherence by guiding the hearer’s linkage between an utterance and context of discourse.

The first two accounts by Schiffrin (1987) and Aijmer (2002, 1980) are more representational; the third by Schourup (2008) is cognitive and more procedural. This study does not try to eliminate any of the accounts mentioned above. The coherence account is as important as the cognitive one. This study postulates however that the marker *Now* is also dynamic; that is**,** it is constructed in the process of discourse formulation to communicate certain functions. *Now* performs a number of functions following the discourse goals, speaker’s intended meaning and the force of the message. The basic claim in this article is that the pragmatic marker *Now* contributes to the illocutionary force of the utterance as established in discourse. Before I explain these functions, I should explain the methodology of this research in the following section.

1. **Methodology**

The researcher selected a number of political speeches as delivered at the United Nations. The speeches have global themes, such as terrorism, Iran’s nuclear program, peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis, and the last Israeli wars on Gaza. Table 1 below lists some instances of the marker *Now* along with the necessary contextual information to explain its functions. The analysis includes a description of the utterances where *Now* occurs in the discourses. This is necessary to trigger how the marker was conceptualized and explain its functions in the discourses. The analysis in this research will draw on speech act theory (Austin,1962 ; Searle 1969, 1979; Searle and Venderveken, 1985). Here, I shall be interested in speech acts theory as a theory of illocutionary force. The illocutionary force is basically hearer-oriented; that is iy indicates “what he is meant to do with a particular proposition that is expressed” (Levinson, 1983, p.246). For example, by an assertion, an addressee is mean to believe it as true or false; by an order, he is meant to act thereupon; by a complaint, he is meant to apologize or show regret etc. The speech acts under discussion are assertives, expressives and directives. In assertives, according to Burkhardt (1990: 139), 'the word must match the world, as it were, and is accordingly true or false'. The degree of certainty in assertives can vary from 'extremely high to extremely low' (Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1984: 107). A good paraphrase of an attitude given through assertives might be indicated according to van Eemeren and Grootendorst, (ibid: 114) as follows:

**My point of view in respect of O is that O is/is not the case.**

The illocutionary point of expressives, according to Searle (1969) is to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content with a presupposed true proposition and no direction of fit between the world and word. Expressive speech acts “are tied very closely to our existence as social and psychological beings, to the fact that we live as individuals in groups” (Burkhardt, 1990, p.162). Expressives could be, but not limited to, apologies, congratulations and greetings.

Directives, according to Levinson (1983, p. 240), are “attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something”. Directives’ illocutionary includes acts of ordering, commanding, requesting, pleading, begging, praying, entreating, instructing and forbidding (Searle, 1969). Directives imply creating “cognitive attitudes, namely expectations that the speaker will behave according to the content of his utterance” (Burkhardt, 1990: 144).

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| N | Title of Speech | Information |
| 2 | Obama’s speech at the UN, 2011 | 1. Now we have learned that no matter how much we love peace and hate war, we cannot avoid having war brought upon us if there are convulsions in other parts of the world." 2. Now, all of us have a responsibility to support the new Libyan government as they confront the challenge of turning this moment of promise into a just and lasting peace for all Libyans. |
|  | Contextual information | Obama gives an example about a new direction to peace since he took office. America's military action in Iraq will be over. In Afghanistan, the government is taking responsibility and America is seeking a partnership with the Afghani people. The United States and other nations should move in the direction of peace, and this is through the United Nations**,** which has a responsibility to maintain world peace and security. Obama is giving examples about the role of the United Nations in Sudan, Côte D’Ivoire, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. The united nations**,** however**,** has a role to play in the conflict in Syria, that is to stand by the Syrian people against oppression. Obama then moved to talk about the Palestinians’ right to a state of their own. He discussed the obstacles to peace in the Middle East. He calls for the United nations to play a role to achieve peace and put an end to suffering. Then he moved to talk about a world without Nuclear weapons. Iran’s nuclear program is one basic issue. Iran must give up its nuclear program; otherwise it should face more pressure and sanctions. He also discussed other issues such as the global crisis, poverty and WHO attempts to stop some worldly diseases. |
| 3 | Netanyahu’s speech at UN, 2011 | 1. Ladies and gentlemen, in Israel our hope for peace never wanes. Our scientists, doctors, innovators, apply their genius to improve the world of tomorrow. Our artists, our writers, enrich the heritage of humanity. Now, I know that this is not exactly the image of Israel that is often portrayed. After all, it was here in 1975 that the age-old yearning of my people to restore our national life in our ancient biblical homeland. |
|  | Netanyahu’s speech at UN, 2013 | 1. Now, the Jewish people’s odyssey through time has taught us two things: Never give up hope, always remain vigilant. Hope charts the future. Vigilance protects it. Today our hope for the future is challenged by a nuclear-armed Iran that seeks our destruction. |
|  | Netanyahu’s speech at UN, 2014 | 1. Listen to ISIS’s self-declared caliph, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. This is what he said two months ago: A day will soon come when the Muslim will walk everywhere as a master… The Muslims will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism… and destroy the idol of democracy. Now listen to Khaled Meshaal, the leader of Hamas. He proclaims a similar vision of the future: We say this to the West… By Allah you will be defeated. Tomorrow our nation will sit on the throne of the world. |
|  | Contextual information  (Netanyahu , 2011, 2013, 2014) | Though the speeches are given in different years, they all share basic themes, such as peace between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, Hamas, Iran nuclear program and the call to impose more sanction**s** and put more pressure to force the country to stop its nuclear program. |

**Table 1: some instances of the marker *Now* in the speeches by Obama and Netanyahu.**

1. **Analysis**

# The marker *Now* contributes to the illocutionary force of the utterances in Table 1 above. More specifically, *Now* marks the speaker’s intention through guiding the utterance to what it is meant to achieve in the communicative setting. The discussion below will try to understand how the marker *Now* achieves these functions. Before I do that, I should point out that *Now* delimits the intentional and attentional phases of discourse. The intentional phase is the place where the speech starts to reflect the speaker’s communicative intention. The attentional phase, however, is the place where the addressee starts to conceptualize the speaker’s intentions as set to achieve the discourse goal. According to Kecskes (2014) intention and attention are the main organizing forces in the communicative process. One basic function by the marker now is the ability to function discursively to communicate different stands on an issue. As such it helps communicate the desired impact of the utterance. The desired impact or what the utterance is meant to achieve on the addressees is what I shall refer to as the illocutionary force.

# The marker *Now* in most of the instances mentioned in Table 1 above initiates the attentional phase of discourse where the addressee is more involved as a recipient of the message. Now marks the attentional phase where the hearer needs to start conceptualizing the message following the speaker’s intention. As such it guides the hearer’s conceptualization of the message to the speaker’s intention. In example (1) below, the utterances before and after the marker *Now* are assertives; an assertive speech act is institutionalized as a marker of the social or psychological identity of the speaker. It presents what he believes as true. An assertion is mean to make the audience believe a proposition and act thereupon. This assertion has the desired impact on the hearer once it is brought to their attention that is part of the discourse they encounter, and therefore worth of their attention. Netanyahu in example (1) believes in the Jewish Odyssey and the need to remain vigilant and hopeful. He also believes that Iran is a threat. However, the communicative function of the message is not achieved by what Netanyahu believes. That is, the assertive function of the utterances is not the only communicative end of the utterances. The function becomes more apparent by considering both utterances through the marker *Now*. The illocutionary force of the utterance is meant to communicate a warning and trigger a change of policy following that. How could the two assertives before and after the marker *Now* communicate this goal. In the example, being vigilant and hopeful is made as a necessary turn to warn against Iran and stop any prospective agreements with the Iranian government. *Now* shifts the addresses’ attention to the Jewish people odyssey and their experience to remain vigilant, still hopeful. This shift of attention to the first utterance communicates the next utterance’s illocutionary force of warning against Iran on the ground of being vigilant. I should claim at this point that the marker now has no semantic representation and does not form any part of the content of the utterance; however it marks an implied connection between utterances that is necessary to reach the speaker’s intention. Initiating a perspective of being vigilant and hopeful prior to the performance of the act of warning shall maximize the desired effect of the utterance. The speaker’s goal to warn the addressees of this potential danger is therefore achieved with highest degree.

(1)

Now, the Jewish people’s odyssey through time has taught us two things: Never give up hope, always remain vigilant. Hope charts the future. Vigilance protects it. Today our hope for the future is challenged by a nuclear-armed Iran that seeks our destruction.

(Netanyahu, 2013)

In example (2), Obama is asserting that war is necessary when there is convulsion in some parts of the world. Again I should claim here that though the marker *Now* is not part of the utterance performing the speech act of assertion, it triggers the audience’s attention to it. one possible illocutionary for for the utterance is that Obama is justifying the need to go to war in some parts of the world or troops on the ground in others. *Now* in this example informs the audience of the speaker’s intention to make an assertion or provide justification? Without the marker Now, the audience may not notice that the speaker is performing the act in the first place and therefore it passes their attention unchecked.

(2)

**Now** we have learned that no matter how much we love peace and hate war, we cannot avoid having war brought upon us if there are convulsions in other parts of the world.

(Obama, 2011)

Example (3) has an expressive speech act. Through communicating disappointment and displeasure, Netanyahu was trying to arouse feelings of regret by the International Community for what he believes a deliberate act to damage to the image of Israel. The marker *Now* in the example connects two utterances. Before now, Netanyahu was asserting that Israel hope for peace never wanes. This assertion was made to make people believe what thinks is true. This assertion was validated through reference to what he considers the bright side of Israel. After the marker *Now*, an expressive speech act is performed with an illocutionary force to arouse feelings of regret by the International Community for damaging the image of Israel. The two speech acts, though with different forces can help trigger what I believe different goals from what Netanyahu was stating in his speech. He was trying to solicit approval by the United Nations to support Israel in the war on Gaza. The marker *Now* in the utterance secured a smooth shift between the two speech acts. This transition per se could increase the illocutionary force of both speech acts before and after the marker *Now*.

(3)

Ladies and gentlemen, in Israel our hope for peace never wanes. Our scientists, doctors, innovators, apply their genius to improve the world of tomorrow. Our artists, our writers, enrich the heritage of humanity. **Now**, I know that this is not exactly the image of Israel that is often portrayed. After all, it was here in 1975 that the age-old yearning of my people to restore our national life in our ancient biblical homeland.

(Netanyahu, 2011)

In example (4), Netanyahu is performing the speech act of directing through the impetrative form ‘listen’. A directive speech act is meant to trigger the audience to act in a certain way or change their stand on an issue. The utterances linked by the marker *Now* have directive speech acts. The two speech acts apparently have the same illocutionary force; that is alarming the International Community of the threat by ISIS and Hamas. The threat by ISIS could be more direct, and the International community could be more certain of it as dangerous to world peace. However, I can claim that Netanyahu was certain that not all the International Community share the same stand from Hamas. Drawing a similarity between ISIS and Hamas was meant to produce the same illocutionary force and therefore to act against both of ISIS and Hamas accordingly. The shift between the two stances, and therefore, the endeavor to secure a similar illocutionary force was not possible without the marker *Now*.

(4)

Listen to ISIS’s self-declared caliph, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. This is what he said two months ago: A day will soon come when the Muslim will walk everywhere as a master… The Muslims will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism… and destroy the idol of democracy. **Now** listen to Khaled Meshaal, the leader of Hamas. He proclaims a similar vision of the future: We say this to the West… By Allah you will be defeated. Tomorrow our nation will sit on the throne of the world.

(Netanyahu, 2014)

In example (5), the utterance after the marker *Now* communicates a similar expressive function. The utterance functions as a denial of a faulty belief. What comes next is predictable; evidence of concessions Israel made before, like withdrawal from Lebanon and leaving Gaza to counteract this faulty belief. Expectations of what comes next as relevance to what is mentioned before are strengthened through the discourse marker *Now*. *Now* in certain contexts like this one could share with the connective but the function of expectation contravention. The audience are supposed to agree with Netanyahu’s argument that Israel has made what is necessary to establish peace in the Middle East, thus act by forcing the other side, in this case the Palestinian Authority, to give further concessions. The marker *Now* therefore and through its function as a marker of expectation contravention could help achieve the illocutionary force of the utterance; that is to deny an argument and prove as faulty, and change stands to force another party to act in a way desirable to the first party.

(5)

**Now**, some argue that the spread of militant Islam, especially in these turbulent times -- if you want to slow it down, they argue, Israel must hurry to make concessions, to make territorial compromises. And this theory sounds simple. Basically it goes like this: Leave the territory, and peace will be advanced. The moderates will be strengthened; the radicals will be kept at bay. And don't worry about the pesky details of how Israel will actually defend itself; international troops will do the job.

(Netanyahu, 2011)

*Now* helps the discourse speaker issue directives. It represents the point of culmination where the discourse speaker has given all s/he thinks is necessary to change the hearer’s stand on an issue. It is also the point where the likelihood by the hearer to comply with the issued directives is optimal. In Example 6, Obama has to go over a long list of what he did before he can use his next *Now*. The text is geared to this point where *Now* initiates a directive. *Now*, in this example, constructs the discourse to a point where issuing a directive is very predictable. It also implies expectations by the speaker of compliance by the hearer to the issued directives. In Example 6, Obama attributed to himself a number of achievements as a President to the United States. He dismantled al Qaeda, ended the war in Iraq, sought a world without nuclear weapons, appointed a special envoy for the Middle East to end the conflict, etc. In the utterances that follow the marker *Now*, the hearer expects a different agent pronoun, from *I to you*, from what *I should do* to what *you should do*. In Example 7, Obama also shows a similar instance of the marker *Now* to an issue directive. Before the marker *Now* the speaker discusses Gaddafi, the Libyan people quest fro freedom and democracy. After the marker *Now*, an utterance with a directive speech act becomes evident; according to Obama, the world therefore must support the new government.

(6)

**Now**, if we are honest with ourselves, we need to admit that we are not living up to that responsibility.

(Obama, 2009)

(7)

**Now**, all of us have a responsibility to support the new Libyan government as they confront the challenge of turning this moment of promise into a just and lasting peace for all Libyans.

(Obama, 201

1. **Conclusion**

The marker *Now* performs an array of functions discourse. Given that discourse is a continuous flow of propositions, the goals of a discourse and intention of a speaker are important to understand the function and meaning of *Now* as a pragmatic marker. To understand such functions, this research selected a number of political speeches at the United Nations to address topics like terrorism, Iran’s Nuclear program, peace talks in the Middle East and last wars on Gaza. Speech act theory was used to explain how the marker *Now* organizes the production of discourse to communicate speaker’s intention and communicate the utterance illocutionary force. *Now* helps communicate the utterance illocutionary force in different ways. Now attracts the hearer’s attention to the speech act being performed before the interpretation of the utterance illocutionary force. As such the discourse marker marks the intentional and attentional phases of discourse; the first underlies the speaker’s communicative intention, and the second marks the place where hearers start to conceptualize the speaker’s intentions as they are designed to achieve the discourse goals. *Now* It also holds two propositions similar and comparable; this should generalize an illocutionary of one utterance to another. *Now* also signals the point of culmination in the discourse where the issuance of directives is more likely by the discourse speaker to change the audience’s stand on an issue.

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