Stance-Taking in Sinhala Discourse

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Stance – or stance-taking - is a robust area of study in discourse that has been little applied in Sinhala. Stance is the study of linguistic resources used to express the speaker's emotions, attitudes, evaluation of and commitment to propositional content (Biber 2006; Schiffrin 1988; Zubair n.d.). Adverbials, verbs and adjectives marking affect and evidentiality, modals and emphatics have been identified as features showing stance in English (Biber 2006). Given the paucity of work on stance in Sinhala (Zubair n.d.), the main aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the linguistic resources used for stance in Sinhala. Additionally, the paper will also describe selected features of Sinhala that are productively used for stance-marking. Assuming that political discourse is a space for exaggerated instances of stance-taking, televised political debates in Sri Lankan media are used for investigation. Approximately six hours of televised spoken data are transcribed and coded for features that show stance-taking. This study shows that Sinhala uses many of the same features that other languages, including English, use for stance-taking, such as adverbials, affect-laden parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives), and discourse markers. Other than such typical features, Sinhala also uses the focused (or cleft) sentences (*eya giye: gedara*) productively for stance-taking. Since there are few pragmatic studies of focused sentences in Sinhala (Gair and Paolillo, 1997), this study will describe such uses in political rhetoric. In addition, Sinhala also uses quasi-verbs (*puluwan*), postpositions (*id̃əla*), clitics (*nisa:m̰ə*, *gijat̰*) and conjunctive participles (*wardənəyə wela*) for stance-taking.

Key words: Discourse, Sinhala, Stance, Stance Taking, Sinhala Language