

THE DISCOURSE MARKER *ZNAČI* IN SERBIAN: AN ANALYSIS OF SEMI-FORMAL ACADEMIC DISCOURSE¹

Sabina Halupka-Rešetar and Biljana Radić-Bojanić

Abstract

Among the rare treatments of discourse markers in South Slavic languages (Mišković 2001, 2003; Fielder 2008; Dedaić and Mišković-Luković 2010; Premilovac 2010; Mišković-Luković and Dedaić 2012), the Serbian discourse marker *znači*, evolved from the lexical verb *značiti* ('to mean'), has so far gone unnoticed. Based on a corpus of approximately 6.5 hours of recorded semi-formal student-teacher conversations, the paper analyzes the pragmatic aspects of the discourse marker *znači*. The key questions that are addressed are: (a) what discursive environments *znači* occurs in; and more importantly, (b) what pragmatic effects the speakers intend to achieve by using this discourse marker. The pragmatics of *znači* is explored in order to establish whether in each individual case it is used (a) as a marker of various types of reformulation, such as expansion or compression, (b) as a means of concluding, or (c) whether it serves an interactional function.

Keywords: *Znači*; Discourse marker; Serbian; Reformulational; Concluding; Interactional.

1. Introduction

Discourse markers represent a morphologically and syntactically diverse class of elements, which is indisputably one of the reasons they have been elusive to a consensus definition in the literature. Schiffrin (1987: 31) operationally defines markers as sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk. For Fraser (1996: 169) "a discourse marker signals the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse". One of the most comprehensive and yet sufficiently loose definitions of this class of elements is the one given by Schourup (1999: 234), who states that a discourse marker is "a syntactically optional expression that does not affect the truth-conditions associated with an utterance it introduces and is used to relate this utterance to the immediately preceding utterance". The same author lists the characteristics on which nearly all variant uses of the term discourse marker draw selectively and with varying emphasis: (a) connectivity, (b) optionality, (c) non-truth-conditionality, as well as (d)

¹ Research on the paper was funded by project of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Serbia nr. 178002 *Languages and Cultures in Time and Space*. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 12th Conference of the International Pragmatics Association in Manchester, July 3-8, 2011. The authors wish to thank the panel organizers and the audience for useful comments, as well as the two anonymous reviewers whose comments have greatly improved this manuscript.

weak clause association, (e) initiality, (f) orality and (g) multi-categoriality (although the latter four are not consistently regarded to be criterial for the discourse marker status).

The aim of the paper is to check by which of the above features *znači* can be qualified as a discourse marker, as well as to try and establish the discourse functions of the particle *znači* in Serbian in one register. The analysis is based on a corpus of approximately 6.5 hours of recorded semi-formal conversations between nine university students majoring in English at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia and their language instructor. Each conversation lasts approximately 43.3 minutes and has 161 conversational turns on average. This paper presents only the initial results of a larger study of discourse markers in Serbian, which will be based on a more extensive corpus of spoken language, currently unavailable for the Serbian language. Due to the limited nature of the corpus, no quantitative analysis will be presented here, since the paper does not aim to account for all the possible functions of *znači*. Nevertheless, we are aware that focusing only on a limited type of data creates the potential risk of mistakenly equating the general function of a discourse marker with its particular use within a specific discourse type (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 70).

The paper is organized as follows: First, we discuss the characteristics of *znači*, which qualify it as a discourse marker; then we establish its three basic functions: (a) reformulational (further subclassified into expansion and compression), (b) concluding, and (c) interactional, offering ample exemplification for each function.²

2. Characteristics of the discourse marker *znači* in Serbian

The treatment of discourse markers in Serbo-Croatian received some attention in Silić (1984), and Velčić (1987). Silić claims that explicative (lexical) connectors, like *to jest* ('that is'), *drugim riječima* ('in other words'), and *(to) znači* ('that means'), are mostly sentence-initial and are used to explain, generalize, sometimes to specify the content of the previous sentence/text (1984: 109-122). Velčić (1987) also recognizes explicatives as connectors *par excellence* due to the fact that they can explain, clarify, specify the previous utterance, make it more concrete or point to it. However, the more recent (prescriptively oriented) grammars of Serbian (e.g. Piper and Klajn 2013) pay very little attention to discourse markers, calling items like *kao* ('like'), *znači* ('consequently', 'thus', 'in other words', 'that is', 'really', 'I mean', etc., depending on the context), *ono* ('like'), *mislim* ('I mean') and the like fillers,³ used exclusively or primarily to fill long pauses in speech and taking them to be signals of uneducated language (Piper and Klajn 2013: 216).

In the past decade, analyses of several discourse particles in the South Slavic languages have been put forward, including *baš* ('truly', 'just') and *kao* ('like') in Serbian (Mišković 2001, 2003; Mišković-Luković 2010), *tobože* ('pretendedly', 'allegedly', 'supposedly') and *dakle* ('consequently', 'then', 'therefore', 'so') in

² The examples in the paper are coded as follows: Examples taken from the Dictionary of the Serbian Language published by Matica srpska will be coded as RMS, examples provided by the authors as AUT, examples from Del Saz Rubio and Fraser (2003) as DSRF, and examples from the corpus are coded by speaker and by conversational turn number (e.g. S3-T17) and transcribed following DuBois (2006).

³ Translation of the term 'poštalice' after Kovač and Horga (2010).

Croatian (Dedaić 2005, 2010) and *ono* (loosely, ‘like’) in Bosnian (Premilovac 2010), and most recently, *odnosno* (‘that is’, ‘in other words’) in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (Mišković-Luković and Dedaić 2012). All of these works are largely synchronic and descriptive and aim at exploring the meanings and uses of specific discourse markers in these languages. The results of the said analyses in one language are to an extent applicable to corresponding discourse markers in other South Slavic languages (especially so in the case of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) and reveal some of their meanings and contexts of usage.

Znači as a discourse marker evolved from the lexical verb *značiti* (‘mean’). In *Rečnik srpskoga jezika* (A Dictionary of the Serbian Language, Nikolić (ed.) 2007) it is listed under the entry for the verb *značiti* as its third meaning, restricted to usage in 3p.sg, meaning *consequently, thus* and exemplified by (1):

- (1) *Znači, ženiš se!* [RMS]
 ‘So, you’re getting married!’

Although *znači* as a discourse marker was initially typically used in informal discourse, its use as a discourse marker has become so widespread that it can nowadays be heard in all kinds of spoken discourse, including public speech (on TV), in the speech of young people (Piper and Klajn 2013: 216) and also in university-level exchanges between instructors and students, as will become evident in what follows.

Znači relates utterances to other discourse-internal as well as -external units (when the discourse marker is used discourse-initially, in a non-linguistically expressed context), as illustrated by (2) and (3), respectively:

- (2) *Knjigu će mi doneti Petar. Znači, ne moraš dolaziti u grad.* [AUT]
 ‘Peter will bring me the book. *Znači*, you don’t need to come to town.’

- (3) (There is a hailstorm outside.)
Znači, ništa od utakmice... [AUT, after Dedaić 2010]
 ‘*Znači* (So) the match is off.’

While in example (2) *znači* relates the second discourse segment to the first one in that it presents a logical conclusion or consequence of the first event (it can be paraphrased as *Since/ As Peter will bring me the book, you don’t need to come to town*), in example (3) the event to which *znači* relates remains implicit, i.e. it is not realized linguistically but rather consists in the here and now of the discourse context (the weather conditions outside).

Although typically it is the first utterance/event that is implicit, in some cases the second utterance, rather than the first one may remain implicit, as in the following example:

- (4) (Students looking at exam results on the department notice board.)
Nema te na spisku...značiii... [AUT]
 ‘You are not on the list... *znači* (‘so’)...’

A special intonation contour associated with examples like (4) compensates for the lack of the second discourse segment and suggests that the addressee probably failed the test.

The explicative *znači* is phonologically independent, hence separated from the rest of the utterance by pauses, which is usually signalled by commas in writing. It may occur either medially (5) or initially (6) within a discourse segment.

- (5) *To nam je, znači, novi direktor.* [AUT]
 ‘That’s, *znači*, our new principal.’ (‘So, that’s our new principal.’)
- (6) *Znači, to nam je novi direktor.* [AUT]
 ‘*Znači* (so), that’s our new principal.’

Znači is a procedural and non-truth-conditional linguistic device, i.e. it contributes nothing to the truth conditions of the proposition expressed by the utterance (Schourup 1999). Compare example (7), in which *znači* is a lexical verb, with (8), where it is a discourse marker, and leaving it out will not affect the truth value of the proposition:

- (7) *A šta znači kad ti neko pošalje SMS u ponoć?* [AUT]
 ‘And what does it mean when someone sends you a text message at midnight?’
- (8) *On se, znači, sprema za školu.* [AUT]
 ‘He is, *znači*, getting ready for school.’ (‘So, he is getting ready for school.’)

As a discourse marker, *znači* guides the hearer towards the intended contextual effect (contextual implications, strengthening or contradiction of an existing assumption; Bezuidenhout 2004: 103), reducing at the same time the effort required to process the utterance. Largely due to its non-truth-conditional nature, the use of the discourse marker is optional, both syntactically and semantically.⁴ Thus, removing *znači* from sentence (8) does not alter its grammaticality, as can be seen in example (9):

- (9) *On se sprema za školu.* [AUT]
 ‘He is getting ready for school.’

Also, as discourse markers typically do not create propositional relations but only display/reflect existing ones (Schourup 1999),⁵ omitting *znači* does not affect the semantics of the utterance either. This, of course, should not be taken to imply that

⁴ Note however that, although function words in general have procedural meaning, they are frequently required by the grammar.

⁵ A reviewer notes that Schourup’s (1999) claim is controversial since discourse markers can sometimes mark a relation that would not obviously exist without the presence of the marker, and cites “I think, therefore I am” as an example of this: The discourse marker *therefore* serves precisely to *posit* a philosophical relation, which is in principle open to debate, between cognition and being. At a more mundane level, in the dialogue below, the discourse marker *but* serves to posit an adversative relation between not having a dog and desirability as a partner, which may well never have occurred to speaker A. Nonetheless, A will be easily able to work out B’s meaning simply by virtue of the presence of the marker:

A: *Do you think you and Jack could be a couple?*

B: *Well, he’s nice, but he doesn’t have a dog.*

While we agree with this comment, we find that this propositional relation marking role of discourse markers is exceptional and agree with Schourup that generally, discourse markers tend to reflect existing propositional relations rather than create new ones.

discourse markers are useless or redundant, as they guide the hearer toward a particular interpretation and simultaneously rule out unintended interpretations (Brown and Yule 1983: 106; Brinton 1996: 34).

Znači also displays weak clause association, as evidenced by examples (1-3, 5-6, 8). It is “either outside the syntactic structure or loosely attached to it” (Brinton 1996: 34). In other words, *znači* being agrammatical (in that it has no grammatical function, cf. Goldberg 1980: 7), it occurs at sentence boundary (initially or finally) or sentence-medially, always both phonologically and syntactically independent. The above examples confirm that the discourse marker *znači* conforms to the criterion of initiality. As expected (Mosegaard Hansen 1997; Blakemore 1987), it prototypically introduces the discourse segment it marks (see example 2), though it may be discourse-segment initial, when S1 is implicit (see example 3), as well as discourse-segment final, when S2 is implicit (see example 4). In addition, it primarily occurs in speech (cf. Piper and Klajn 2013).

Having accounted for the characteristics of the discourse marker *znači*, we now turn to its functions.

3. The functions of *znači*

As pointed out in Section 2, although *znači* has traditionally been treated as a concluding (Silić 1984) or explicative connector (Velčić 1987), the analysis of the present corpus provides evidence for establishing three basic functions of the discourse marker *znači*: Reformulational, concluding and interactional, which we further explore in the following sections.

A note is in order here: Dedaić’s (2010) account of the discourse marker *dakle* suggests that *dakle* and *znači* are in most cases interchangeable. This should come as no surprise, given that both discourse markers are primarily reformulators (in the sense of Del Saz Rubio and Fraser 2003) or concluding devices. This paper, however, will not offer a comparative analysis of these two items (but see Section 4 below).

3.1. Reformulation

Del Saz Rubio and Pennock-Speck (2005: 89) claim that discourse markers of reformulation specify the type of relationship created between (a constituent of) a source discourse segment (S1) and a reformulated segment (S2). Thus, S2 is a reinterpretation of S1 in terms of what was said, meant or implied (cf. Del Saz Rubio and Fraser 2003). Del Saz Rubio and Fraser (2003) propose four types of reformulation: Expansion, compression, modification and reassessment, with a number of subtypes in each group. Expansion provides a fuller, usually more detailed explanation of what was said or meant by the speaker of the source segment, or an alternative version of it. It includes elaboration (e.g. *We have AC in the U.S. That is, we have alternating current. I don’t mean air conditioning*), definition (e.g. *We saw an amoeba – that is, a single-celled animal – in the microscope*), identification (e.g. *My best friend, namely Sam, is coming tonight*) and illustration (e.g. *There are three ways to spill ink. One way, for*

example, is to spill it deliberately).⁶ Compression is the opposite of expansion: It summarizes a series of items in a single expression (e.g. *Harry wandered through the streets, turning this way and that, often going down a street he had been on no more than 10 minutes before. Simply stated, he was lost*). For Del Saz Rubio and Fraser (2003: 9), modification “changes the value of a prior segment to conform more with what the speaker understands to be the facts or with his/her own perception of the situation”. This can be achieved by narrowing down what was said, e.g. *The porch was 40 feet long. More precisely, it was 39.5 feet long*, or by correcting it, e.g. *I like her. Or rather/On second thought, I would say I hate her, really*. Finally, reassessment revises the speaker’s opinion of an implication contained in a prior segment, which describes a good or bad scenario. The reassessment conveys the speaker’s view to be even worse or better, depending on the situation (e.g. *He brought alcohol to the party. Still worse, he gave it to minors*).

Since reformulation does not always rely on the use of discourse markers, the functions of the discourse marker *znači* established here only map onto some of the types of reformulation Del Saz Rubio and Fraser (2003) elaborate in their paper. The corpus contains examples of two subtypes of reformulation, expansion and compression, where the former type of reformulation can be further subdivided into elaboration and illustration. It is worth noting that other explicative discourse markers (connectors, cf. Silić 1984; Velčić 1987) may replace *znači* when used as a reformulator, and so may *dakle* (cf. Dedaić 2010; for more details see the end of Section 3).

3.1.1. Expansion

Given the type and scope of the corpus, of the four types of reformulation proposed by Del Saz Rubio and Fraser (2003) we present only examples of elaboration and illustration in this section. What these two have in common is that S2 reformulates the message in S1 to make it more accessible to the hearer. Although Dedaić (2010: 121) notes that in many examples elaboration and illustration cannot be distinguished, in the present paper examples in which S1 is only reworded in S2 are classified as elaboration (Section 3.1.1.1), whereas examples in which S1 is expanded by providing examples in S2 fall into the category of illustration (Section 3.1.1.2).

3.1.1.1. Elaboration

This type of reformulation occurs when the speaker feels that the message in S1 is not clear enough or when the inferences might be ambiguous (Dedaić 2010: 123). In the following examples, S2 restates the message in S1 using different lexical items. This is meant to make the message in S1 more easily understandable for the hearers:

- (10) *Jako ružne:.. Jako vulgarne:.. I obično .. ne preza da kaže bilo šta ... Znači, šta god da mu padne na pamet kaže odmah.* [S3-T206]

⁶ All the examples in this section are taken from Del Saz Rubio and Fraser (2003).

‘Very ugly. Very vulgar. And usually (he) doesn’t shy away from saying anything. *Znači*, he immediately says whatever comes to his mind.’

- (11) *Jer u principu bi trebalo .. bar u teoriji, da sve stvari sva osećanja stanja koja spadaju pod jednu boju da imaju neki zajednički imenitelj. Znači nešto što ih povezuje.* [S6-T229]
 ‘Because in principle they should, at least in theory, all things, all emotions, states that belong to one colour should have a common denominator. *Znači*, something that connects them.’

In both of these examples the speakers use expressions that are less frequent in Serbian (*ne prezati* ‘not shy away from’, belonging to a more formal register, and *zajednički imenitelj* ‘common denominator’, from the register of mathematics) and, aware of the fact that their interlocutors may not be familiar with these expressions, they offer a paraphrase in S2 which is introduced by the discourse marker *znači*.

The analysis of the corpus also suggests that elaboration frequently occurs when there is a metaphor in S1 that the speaker estimates to be in need of clarification, as can be seen in (12-13):

- (12) *Taj predstavnik verovatno tih studenata ili ko već bio .. ne mogu da svare tu činjenicu znači ne mogu da se izbore sa tom činjenicom.* [S8-T112]
 ‘That representative, probably of those students or whoever he is, they could not stomach the fact, *znači*, they could not deal with (fight) that fact.’
- (13) *Pa neka srž problema ... koren znači od čega je taj problem potekao.* [S3-T36]
 ‘Well, some kind of a core of the problem, its root, *znači*, what the problem stems from.’

The metaphorical expression ‘to stomach a fact’ in example (12) is judged by the speaker to be potentially unclear to the hearer and is therefore paraphrased more simply (although its paraphrase is also a metaphor, PROBLEMS ARE ENEMIES, cf. Charteris-Black 2011). In a similar vein, in (13) the ‘core of the problem’, ‘its root’, is explained as being the thing that ‘the problem stems from’, whereby the speaker uses a more conventional metaphor in place of a less conventional one.

That this function of *znači* is found in the analyzed corpus is expected: As it consists of a set of student-instructor conversations, speakers often talk about what certain (metaphorical) words or expressions mean. In this sense, the discourse marker *znači* comes very close to the lexical verb *značiti* ‘to mean’, because it only rewords the contents of S1 in S2.

3.1.1.2. Illustration

One of the sub-types of expansion that Del Saz Rubio and Fraser (2003) propose is illustration, as exemplified by their (14):

- (14) *There are three ways to spill ink. In other words/That is to say/I mean, you can do it deliberately, intentionally, and on purpose.* [DSRF]

Similarly to (14) where S2 reformulates, expands and provides an illustration of the message in S1, the analysis of the corpus also indicates that the speaker may reformulate S1 by providing examples for elements of the original message:

- (15) *Zato što zapravo ... posle toga dobijemo .. kompletnu biljku. Dobijemo nešto što je .. kompletno .. znači razvilo se i .. cvetalo. [S3-T58]*
 ‘Because, actually, after that we get a complete plant. We get something that’s complete, *znači*, it has developed and blossomed.’
- (16) *I onda da kažeš šta .. je svaka od njih za tebe značila u tom kontekstu znači u toj rečenici. [S7-T7]*
 ‘And then you say what each of them meant for you in that context, *znači* in that sentence.’
- (17) (*Interviewer: Sad na koji način bi ti povukla paralelu .. čovekovog života .. i rasta biljke*)
 ‘Now, in what way would you draw a parallel between a person’s life and the growth of a plant?’
Interviewee: Pa isto je kao i sa .. biljkom. Znači, kreće se od nekih korena pa onda se razvija, pa .. i: sam čovek stvara svoje potomstvo dostiže neki vrhunac sa godinama i posle toga isto kao cvet .. o:vaj suši se i umire. Tako da verovatno da ... ima iste stadijume. [S3-T71-72]
 ‘Well, it’s the same as with a plant. *Znači*, you start with some roots, and then it develops, and even man himself produces offspring, reaches a peak with time and after that, just like a flower, *ovaj*,⁷ withers and dies. So, probably, yes, it has the same stages.’

Whereas in (15) the speaker clarifies what is meant by a ‘complete plant’, probably because that may not be clear enough from the expression itself, in (16) the speaker narrows down the reference of ‘the context’, specifying it as a ‘sentence’ in order to make the instructions more precise. In (17) the speaker draws a parallel between a person’s life and the growth of a plant, which requires a detailed explanation introduced by the discourse marker *znači*.

3.1.2. Compression

In this usage, S2 is more general than S1. This occurs when the message in S1 is judged by the speaker to be too dense and so it needs to be reformulated in more general terms in order to make it more accessible to the hearer. Therefore, compression is understood here as the extension of a concept in S1 to a broader concept in S2, so that every instance of the concept in S2 is also an instance of the concept in S1 and there are instances of S2 which are not instances of S1. The following examples illustrate this:

⁷ *Ovaj* is also a discourse marker which marks hesitation, roughly corresponding to *erm* in English.

- (18) *Nešto što nam je tek ... što smo tek razvili u glavi i što sad hoćemo da nastavimo da razvijamo znači dobili smo neku ideju o tome.* [S1-T48]
 ‘Something that is just, that we have just developed in our head and that we now want to continue developing, *znači* we got an idea about that.’
- (19) *Pa ... pitanja koja se tiču prirode .. znači i okruženja.* [S4-T172]
 ‘Well, the issues that concern nature, *znači* the environment, too.’
- (20) *Besan, ljubomoran ... znači opet sva .. vrlo .. intenzivna osećanja.* [S9-T74]
 ‘Angry, jealous. *Znači*, again all very intensive feelings.’

The discourse marker *znači* in (18) serves a summative function because it succinctly expresses the content of S1, while in (19) S2 broadens the scope of S1 (the surroundings include nature as well as other things), which is also implied in the use of the conjunction *i* ‘and’ (in that anything that pertains to nature also pertains to the environment). Finally, the S2 in (20) does not just generalize the content of S1, but also links it to the previous discourse, where other intensive feelings were also mentioned (as suggested by the use of the adverb *opet* ‘again’).

3.2. Concluding

Dedaić (2010: 120) points out that reformulations frequently include the notion of ‘conclusivity’, which is “manifest in either the logical or contextual implications of S1, or in a reinterpretation of the previous utterance, which is not just said ‘in other words’, but in stronger, more concise, pointed, or specific words”. However, reformulation and concluding seem to be two distinct (if not always clearly delimitable) notions. Thus, whereas in the examples in Section 3.1 *znači* is best replaced by other reformulation markers (explicative connectors), such as *to jest, odnosno, drugim rečima* (‘that is’, ‘in other words’), the same discourse marker in the examples in this section can be replaced by other concluding discourse markers, such as *dakle, stoga, zato, prema tome* (‘thus’, ‘hence’, ‘accordingly’). The notion of concluding implies that S2 presents a logical conclusion following from the message in S1, which is different from reformulation insofar as the second message is not a mere restatement of the first one, but rather S1 and S2 are in a causative-resultative relationship, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (21) *Oduvek ju je zanimalo zelenilo ... Pa: zato što znači .. kao što smo rekli znači .. zelenilo: znači životnu sredinu, znači ona očigledno vodi računa o tome.* [S2-T104]
 ‘She’s always been interested in greenery. Well, because (*znači*), like we said, (*znači*), greenery means the environment, *znači* she obviously takes care of it.’
- (22) *Pa kada posadimo iz toga će da izraste nešto novo .. znači .. nešto smo uradili sa tim.* [S1-T50]
 ‘Well, when we plant something, something new will grow out of it. *Znači*, we did something with it.’

By uttering the clause introduced by *znači* in example (21), the speaker draws a conclusion which stems from the previous utterance and also summarizes what the described person's interest in greenery implies; similarly, in (22), the speaker draws a conclusion which he believes follows from S1. In both cases, the discourse marker *znači* can be replaced by other concluding discourse markers without any change in the relationship between S1 and S2, as in (23):

- (23) *Pa kada posadimo iz toga će da izraste nešto novo. Dakle/prema tome, nešto smo uradili sa tim.* [AUT]
 'Well, when we plant something, something new will grow out of it. Thus/hence/therefore, we did something with it.'

3.3. Interaction

In addition to its reformulational and concluding functions, the discourse marker *znači* appears to have an interactional function as well. Our corpus has shown that *znači* may be used as a strategy of self-repair, i.e. "to locate and replace a prior information unit" (Schiffrin 1987: 74), where information unit is understood in the Hallidayan sense, in the unmarked case corresponding to a clause (Halliday 1967: 200-201). Self-repair, as defined by Schiffrin (1987) and as used in this paper, differs from reformulation in that, while in the latter one and the same concept is expressed in a different way (using different wording), in self-repair the speaker corrects (part of) his/her previous utterance and thereby changes its content. Strategies of self-repair "show speakers' sensitivity to their own production of discourse: By locating and replacing an item from an outgoing utterance, speakers display their productive efforts" (Schiffrin 1987: 78), which can be seen in the following examples from the present corpus:

- (24) *Tu je sada ona .. oformila valjda sebi neki nov život i nešto i onda se znači sada je ta Engleska mesto gde ona živi i sada je to u stvari (H) gde ona želi da ostane i vidi svoj život.* [S8-T14]
 'Here she now formed, I guess, a new life for herself, or something and then she, *znači*, now this England is the place where she lives, now that is in fact where she wants to stay and imagines her life there.'
- (25) *Mozak je zadužen za ... znač- znači bukvalno upravlja svim organima.* [S1-T138]
 'The brain is in charge of, *znači*, literally controls all of the organs.'

In both (24) and (25), the speakers change their minds regarding the form of the utterance and use *znači* to signal a restating of their ideas.

In addition, *znači* may serve as a confirmation of the speaker's word choice after an instance of hesitation, as in (26). The speaker here is unsure of her initial choice of the word, which leads her to hesitate in preparation of a self-repair, which ultimately does not happen and the word choice is reinforced by the use of *znači*:

- (26) *Pa isto zato što pod- o: podržava .. znači podržava naša .. leđa.* [S3-T222]

‘Well, also because it su-, erm, supports, *znači* supports our back.’

Besides the function of self-repair, *znači* very frequently occurs as a signal of hesitation, when the speaker needs more time to think and plan the upcoming utterance, but does not want to lose his/her conversational turn (27-28):

(27) *Pa: zato što znači .. kao što smo rekli znači .. zelenilo: znači životnu sredinu, znači ona očigledno vodi računa o tome. [S2-T104]*
 ‘Well, because, *znači*, like we said, *znači*, greenery means the environment, (*znači*) she obviously takes care of it.’

(28) *Iz tog semena će se izroditi biljka plod znači ponovo seme znači onda će ponovo doći dete. [S5-T20]*
 ‘From that seed a plant will grow, a fruit, (*znači*) seed again, *znači*, then the child will come again.’

4. Closing remarks

This paper represents the first attempt at giving an account of the discourse marker *znači* based on a corpus of academic interviews in contemporary Serbian. The analysis singled out three types of discourse functions of *znači*: Reformulation, concluding and interactional. Reformulation is the most elaborate function of the three. It is characterized by representing the original message (from S1) in S2 in a way that is more accessible to the hearer and it includes the subtypes expansion and compression, with the former further classified into elaboration and illustration. As expected, the function of the discourse marker is highly context-dependent: It is the relations between the host utterances that determine which use will be selected in a particular case. The discourse marker itself has no conceptual meaning, but it serves the purpose of making the relation between the utterances explicit, i.e. it conveys instructions on how to interpret the host utterances. This is at the heart of its procedural meaning.

The corpus examples of the discourse marker *znači* presented in the paper raise two important issues for which we try to provide explanations. Firstly, the discourse markers *dakle* and *znači*, though in most cases interchangeable, were studied in two related but different languages (Croatian, cf. Dedaić 2010, and Serbian, respectively) and on the basis of quite different corpora. In order to arrive at valid conclusions regarding the degree of similarity between these two items, one would have to control for these variables and first analyse data pertaining to one language only and a wide variety of data sources (various registers, speakers of different ages, spoken vs. written language, etc.). Only then could valid conclusions be reached regarding the full discursive ranges of these two markers.

Secondly, as also noted in Section 2, the discourse marker *znači* evolved from the lexical verb *značiti* (‘to mean’). However, in light of the findings presented in this paper, it seems reasonable to propose that the discourse marker *znači* be entered in dictionaries of Serbian as a separate entry, reflecting its lack of lexical meaning and significant pragmatic role. Such is the case with e.g. the English discourse marker *like*, which has earned a separate entry in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* and the *Macmillan English Dictionary*.

While the preliminary account of *znači* arrived at in this paper offers an outline of the possible functions of this discourse marker in Serbian, a comprehensive analysis of *znači* requires taking into account a larger corpus of various types of spoken language. A related line of future research is the comparison of the discourse markers *znači* and *dakle* (as well as other related items in South Slavic languages), which could provide a fruitful source of knowledge.

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