

**Inclusion, presupposition, and pragmatic markers:
functions of *guardare* ‘look’ and *vedere* ‘see’ in Italian parliamentary debates**

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Abstract

This paper investigates the use of pragmatic markers (PMs) derived from the Italian verbs of visual perception *guardare* ‘look’ and *vedere* ‘see’ in contemporary parliamentary debates. Drawing on data from the ParlaMint 2.1 corpus, it analyses PMs role in stance-taking, inclusive positioning, and persuasion. More specifically, it argues that these markers are best understood through the lens of pragmatic presupposition as they help manage felicity conditions and common ground by framing contents as shared, accessible, or readily accommodable. *Guardare* typically prompts active engagement and frames upcoming discourse as interactionally relevant. *Vedere*, by contrast, more often presents ideologically loaded content as self-evident, thereby softening potentially risky moves such as attacks or self-praise. These differences reflect the lexical semantics and actional profiles of the two verbs, and show how perception-based PMs can be strategically exploited for rhetorical purposes in institutional discourse.

Keywords: look and see as pragmatic markers; pragmatic presupposition; inclusion; Italian parliamentary debates

1. Introduction¹

This paper examines the use as pragmatic markers (PMs) of the Italian verbs of visual perception *guardare* ‘look’ and *vedere* ‘see’ in parliamentary debates, focusing on their role in managing pragmatic presupposition and constructing inclusion in interaction.

Language in parliamentary discourse is often highly strategic, as it influences decisions, projects legitimacy, and maintains political face (Ilie 2006). Two frequently employed, yet distinct, tools are inclusion strategies and presuppositions (De Fina 1995; Lombardi Vallauri 2019). Inclusion strategies, such as the inclusive plural or appeals to national interest, operate at the interpersonal level, aiming to construct a sense of unity and collective identity among

¹ This paper is the result of shared discussions and conceptual work. Chiara Ghezzi is responsible for §§1, 3, and 5.1; Tanja Trebucchi for §§2, 4, 5 and 5.3. §6 was jointly written.

participants (Trebucchi 2025: 39–42). Presupposition, by contrast, functions as a linguistic or pragmatic mechanism, as it allows speakers to present certain assumptions as already shared or taken for granted. If the first is encoded in the sentence (Wilson 1975), the second belongs to the conversational situation (Stalnaker 1974). Even though both types of presupposition can serve as a vehicle for inclusion, we focus here on pragmatic presupposition, which naturalises a ‘shared’ contextual perspective that the interlocutor is implicitly required to accept. In this process, visual perception verbs such as *look* and *see* play a subtle yet powerful rhetorical role. These verbs function beyond their literal meaning, contributing to inclusive language while often relying on presupposition to frame assumptions as already accessible and shared background in the conversation, as we will try to show. When speakers use such verbs as PMs, they do more than direct attention to some information relevant in discourse, they favour the creation of a presupposed shared contextual perspective and invite the audience into a common pragmatic space.

In *As you see, this measure is necessary*, the verb *see* triggers a pragmatic presupposition that the necessity of the measure is already evident and accessible to the audience. In pragmatic terms, an utterance *P* presupposes *Q* iff, whenever *P* is conversationally acceptable, the speaker assumes *Q* and believes the audience to assume *Q* as well (Schwarz 1977: 247; Stalnaker 1974). Here, the speaker assumes, and attributes to the audience, the recognition that the measure is necessary. Rather than arguing for the claim, the statement presents it as shared knowledge, aligning speaker and audience while simultaneously limiting the space for disagreement. This move fosters alignment and reinforces in-group solidarity, acting as a tool of persuasion.

Moving from these premises, this paper considers whether there are differences in the use of the PMs derived from *guardare* and *vedere* in triggering pragmatic presupposition in parliamentary debates. Specifically, it explores how these markers leverage pragmatic presupposition as a mechanism to facilitate inclusive language, highlighting how the inherent semantics of perception verbs can be strategically exploited to construct a shared, and thus unquestioned, political reality.

The paper is structured as follows: §2 discusses the features of parliamentary debates and the inclusive role of pragmatic presupposition; §3 examines the properties of the visual perception verbs *guardare* and *vedere* as PMs; §4 presents the corpus and the methodology; §5 discusses the data and §6 draws some conclusions.

2. The inclusive role of pragmatic presupposition in parliamentary debates

Political discourse is a distinctive form of communication that blends linguistic strategies with social and psychological mechanisms aimed at shaping public opinion. Parliamentary debate, in particular, is persuasive, but also deliberative, publicly justificatory, and accountability-oriented, since speakers are required to advance claims, defend positions, and negotiate politically consequential representations of events before multiple audiences (cf. among others Bayley 2004; Van Dijk 2004). As a regulated and adversarial genre, it brings together procedural constraints, strategic interaction, and rhetorical design, while simultaneously addressing fellow parliamentarians, the media, and the electorate (Bayley 2004). In Austinian terms (1962), parliamentary debate operates simultaneously at the locutionary level, by putting politically relevant content on record; at the illocutionary level, by performing acts such as accusing, justifying, blaming, or defending; and at the perlocutionary level, by seeking to shape interpretation, secure alignment, and influence subsequent attitudes or action. Its force lies in explicit argumentation and in the strategic management of what can be presented as already acceptable, accessible, or not in need of full negotiation.

The linguistic strategies that politicians employ to pursue such aims are various and may differ in their degree of implicitness (Lombardi Vallauri 2019). Their analysis sheds light on how political actors shape the audience's perceptions, beliefs, and responses while navigating the constraints of public opinion. Presupposition is one of the key mechanisms through which discourse can present information as backgrounded rather than newly asserted. In its more familiar formulation, it is often associated with lexical or constructional triggers that impose contextual requirements on utterance interpretation. In political discourse, however, presupposition is also relevant at a broader pragmatic level, insofar as speakers may frame the information as already shared and mutually accessible (Schwarz 1977; Stalnaker 1996).

In an utterance such as *As you see, colleagues, families are carrying the heaviest burden*, for instance, the parenthetical marker invites addressees to treat the proposition not as fully new information, but as evident and readily shareable. The content is thus presented as available for uptake as a shared premise.

Central to this process is the notion of *common ground*, understood as shared knowledge or beliefs and as the set of propositions or facts that participants treat as taken for granted for the purposes of the interaction (Stalnaker 1996: 281–283). In this sense, common ground consists in what is pragmatically presupposed as shared in the unfolding discourse. This makes it especially relevant to parliamentary debate, where speakers seek to construct alignment, collective identities, and a sense of inclusion by framing viewpoints as already mutually accessible or acceptable rather than fully open to negotiation (Van Dijk 2003). Its persuasive

force is twofold: it mitigates speaker responsibility for introducing potentially contestable content and reduces the audience's epistemic vigilance by encouraging that content to be treated as already shared (Masia 2020)². From this perspective, presupposition is tied to felicity conditions as an utterance is pragmatically appropriate only if the assumptions it relies on are already part of the common ground or can be accommodated; otherwise, different forms of infelicity may arise (Schwarz 1977; von Stechow 2008). The inclusive role of presupposition in parliamentary debate therefore extends beyond canonical lexical triggers and also involves pragmatic mechanisms through which speakers guide hearers toward accepting contents as shared or readily accommodable. This is particularly relevant for PMs, whose contribution is primarily functional rather than purely semantic. Perception-verb-based PMs typically direct the audience's attention to the relevance of a stretch of discourse and, in doing so, may encourage the treatment of the upcoming content as accessible or warranted to merit collective uptake. Against this background, these PMs can be examined as interactional resources that contribute precisely to common ground management by directing attention, fostering intersubjective alignment, and making some contents easier to treat as shared or readily accommodable in context.

3. Verbs of visual perception as PMs in political discourse

At the propositional level, Italian *guardare* 'look' and *vedere* 'see' frequently develop cognitive meanings: *to see through the eyes* > *to see through the mind* > *to understand* (Sweetser 1990). These developments are also commonly widespread typologically (Viberg 2008).

At speech acts level, however, both forms may also develop into PMs, which typically function as attention-getting devices (Fagard 2010; Ghezzi/Molinelli 2015; Van Olmen/Tantucci 2022). When used as PMs, they function extra-propositionally and procedurally, and they are often highly polyfunctional. In (1), for instance, *guardi* occurs in the left periphery of the speech act ('we take it upon ourselves'), can be omitted without affecting propositional content, and serves both to attract the addressee's attention and to frame the following statement as interactionally relevant.

² Presuppositions are known to have persuasive force (Ducrot 1972; Givón 1982; Sbisà 2007), which helps explain their frequent use in political speech. By backgrounding part of the message, they can conceal manipulative intent: as Reboul (2011: 10) observes, persuasion is less effective when such intent is made explicit. The less visible the speaker's influence, the more readily the content is accepted, also because hearers tend to trust their own cognitive processes without subjecting them to further scrutiny (Sperber et al. 1995: 90).

(1) **Guardi**, ce ne facciamo carico noi (ParlaMint 2.1, 1819).

‘**Look.IMP.3SG.POL**, we take it upon ourselves.’

The nature and functions of PMs, in general, have been widely discussed, especially with regard to the distinction between discourse markers and PMs as scholars do not often agree on labels more suitable to define these units (cf. Heine et al. 2021: 1–55; Fedriani/Molinelli 2024: 34–47 for a recent overview). In line with Fedriani/Molinelli (2024), we consider here discourse markers more directly involved in discourse organisation and PMs more typically connected with (inter)personal values and the speaker’s stance toward the addressee, the utterance, or the context of interaction. Thus, visual perception verbs are better treated here as PMs, since their contribution does not primarily lie in textual linkage, but in the management of the interpersonal and illocutionary dimensions of the exchange.

This is especially important when PMs are related to presupposition, but much less attention has been devoted to their role in this domain. Crucially, when used as PMs, *guardare* and *vedere* do not trigger linguistic presuppositions, i.e. about the propositional content itself, rather, they cue presuppositions about how the speech act should be interpreted in the context of interaction. So, they do not presuppose the truth of the proposition that follows, but they evoke assumptions about the communicative situation in which that proposition is being advanced. They operate not on truth-conditional content, but on the conditions under which the utterance is presented as relevant or worthy of attention. As Waltereit (2001) argues for modal-particle-like items, these elements are especially revealing in contexts where the preparatory conditions of the speech act are not fully given, that is, where the speaker needs to justify or smooth the performance of the act. In this sense, PMs establish a link between the speech act and the interlocutors’ expectations, as shaped by the previous discourse and/or the extralinguistic situation. This is precisely the level at which PMs interact with common ground management as they help accommodate the speech act to the context of interaction by triggering pragmatic presuppositions on assumptions about the speaker-hearer relation, the relevance of the next move, and the hearer’s expected uptake (Hansen 1998: 42).

This interpretation becomes useful in parliamentary discourse, where preparatory conditions are relevant because they “describe the way the speech act fits into the social relation of speaker and addressee, and they describe how their respective interests are concerned by the act” (Waltreit 2001: 1397). These PMs are therefore likely to occur when a speaker needs to secure, at the moment of the utterance, the addressee’s attention, justify the relevance of an

intervention, or foreground a standpoint that may be contested, delicate, or interactionally consequential.

In (2), for instance, the verb no longer contributes lexical meaning, rather, it operates at illocutionary level, by signalling that the upcoming utterance should be processed as relevant and that the speaker is explicitly managing the hearer's attention and alignment.

- (2) **Guardate**, cari colleghi: non risolvere il problema della discarica significa differire nel tempo il risanamento ambientale. (ParlaMint 2.1, 5629)

‘**Look.IND/IMP.2PL**, dear colleagues: not solving the landfill problem means deferring environmental remediation over time.’

Here, *guardate* works as an attention-getting device, but its function is also more specific as it instructs the addressees to treat the following proposition as a relevant point within the debate. The PM also helps establish a pragmatic presupposition: namely, that the speaker is entitled to redirect the audience's attention and that the issue just introduced deserves special consideration. It also frames the subsequent claim as not merely informative, but as a warranted intervention in the shared space of parliamentary deliberation. The PM contributes to common ground management by preparing the hearers to integrate the proposition into the debate as salient and urgent.

- (3) **Vede**, signor presidente, ritengo importante questo richiamo, che condivido totalmente. (ParlaMint 2.1, 3678)

‘**(You) see. 3SG.POL**, Mr. president, I consider this warning important and totally agree with it.’

Similarly, in (3), *vede* functions as a PM, which signals that what follows should be interpreted against a presupposed interactional background. The speaker presents his intervention as one that the addressee is expected to recognise as relevant or already accessible from the shared situation. In this sense, *vede* helps justify the act of taking the floor and expressing alignment. It marks the utterance as anchored in the speaker's perspective and projects it as one the addressee can/should accommodate. Its role is thus to orient the hearer toward a particular interpretation of the speech act and of its place in the common ground.

Overall, the PMs uses of *guardare* and *vedere* in parliamentary debates function prototypically as attention-getters, but also as markers that regulate the interpersonal and illocutionary framing of an utterance, through presupposition. Their relevance to presupposition lies in the

fact that, differently from linguistic presupposition which activates assumptions on what is said, they activate assumptions at the moment of the utterance about how what is said is to be taken in context: as relevant, justified, hearer-oriented, and interactionally licensed. As PMs, verbs of visual perception share some functional and formal properties:³ they are syntactically extra-propositional, have specific intonational contours, a variable position and scope, and are frequently in the periphery of an utterance, they do not admit complementation or negation, appear more frequently in the imperative, at the second-person singular (*guarda* ‘look.IMP.2SG’) > plural (*vedete* ‘see.IND/IMP.2PL’) > third singular (politeness form, *guardi* ‘look.IMP.3SG’) > first plural (*vediamo* ‘see.IMP.1PL’). Although Italian has a rich TAM morphology, some verb forms are ambiguous: second plural forms (*guardate*, *vedete*) can be imperative or indicative, while first plural forms (*guardiamo*, *vediamo*) may be indicative, imperative, or subjunctive. *Vedere* is especially interesting because the polite imperative is often expressed through the indicative *veda* rather than the standard *veda*. These forms can co-occur with vocatives (*guardi*, *Presidente* ‘look, president’) and intensity-modulating elements such as nouns or adverbs (*guarda un po’* lit. ‘look a bit’).

From a semantic point of view, perception verbs often form a double series, with agentive (*guardare*) and non-agentive (*vedere*) values. The first denotes an intentional perceptual activity, while the second denotes a non-agentive experience with an experiencer subject (Gisborne 2010: 4; Viberg 1983). This contrast also involves Aktionsart. *Guardare* represents an activity as it is dynamic, durative, atelic, and normally implies controlled attention. *Vedere*, instead, is closer to a state, since it describes a non-dynamic perceptual condition that holds as long as the visual stimulus is available (Vendler 1957: 143–147; Comrie 1976; Bertinetto 1986). These aspectual properties help explain their pragmatic behaviour: while *guardare* can direct or refocus actively attention toward a specific aspect, *vedere* tends to present perception as evidentially available rather than actively sought (Ilie 2010: 894–895).

- (4) **Guardi**, quanto al fatto che a me "non fregghi più niente", non le consento di dirlo.
(ParlaMint 2.1, 57645)

‘**Look.IMP.3SG.POL**, as for the claim that I ‘don’t care anymore’, I will not allow you to say that.’.

In (4) the speaker frames the claim ‘I will not allow you to say that’ by invoking the interlocutor’s prior statement (‘don’t care anymore’), and then marks the claim as relevant

³ For a detailed list of properties of verbs as PMs see Bazzanella (1995), Dostie (2004), Ghezzi/Molinelli (2014).

through the use of *guardi*. The PM directs attention to the speaker's viewpoint by foregrounding the speaker's stance and evaluative position, thereby guiding the audience's interpretation.

Differently, *vedere* hints at the 'experience' of the perception as its use is more about the passive reception of information rather than an active engagement (Cornillie 2009: 47–49).

- (5) **Vedete**, noi abbiamo disegnato un progetto di inclusione reale. (ParlaMint 2.1, 67803)
'(You) see.IND/IMP.2PL, we have designed a project for genuine inclusion'.

In (5) it is implicit that both the speaker and the audience have already observed the situation, and that observation is part of the speaker's argumentation.⁴ In other words, the speaker assumes the audience can recognise the project as an actual case of inclusion. Rather than introducing this as a new claim, *vedete* frames it as something as already evidentially accessible to the addressees.

Evidentiality and epistemicity play an important role in how these PMs function in relation to presupposition. Evidentiality refers to the way speakers encode the source of the information, i.e. how speakers indicate whether the information comes from direct/indirect evidence or hearsay (Aikhenvald 2004: 3–6; Chafe/Nichols 1986: 1–4). Epistemicity concerns the speakers' evaluation of the truth of the information, typically related to the degree of certainty they have about the claim they are making (Palmer 2001: 1–7; Cornillie 2009: 45–47).

As regards evidentiality, *vedere* is associated with direct evidence, as it presupposes firsthand knowledge, personal observation, or self-evidence, thereby reinforcing the claim's reliability (Cornillie 2009: 48–49). It, thus, operates as presupposition trigger at the utterance level, indexing that what is seen is contextually evident in discourse. This makes *vedere* a useful strategy for framing content as self-evident, whereas *guardare* mainly implies a more active effort toward something not yet fully perceived or understood.

Regarding epistemicity, the PM *vedere* typically signals a higher degree of epistemic certainty. Through its use the speaker relies on the pragmatic presupposition that the relevant situation is accessible as evident in the common ground. This helps in conveying confidence in the truth of the statement and in strengthening the epistemic force of the claim.

- (6) Ma, **vede**, non ho nemmeno bisogno, presidente Conte, di usare le mie parole per dimostrarlo. (ParlaMint 2.1, 72198)

⁴ There is no evidence from the transcription that the speaker is holding a real project in his hands; moreover the use of *disegnato* 'designed' is clearly metaphorical.

‘But, (you) **see.3SG.POL**, I don't even need, president Conte, to use my words to prove it’.

In (6), *vede* strengthens the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition by presenting it as grounded in evidence that is assumed to be accessible to the addressee. The utterance therefore conveys a high degree of epistemic certainty: the claim is framed as evident, rather than as a mere opinion or inference. By using the PM, the speaker implicitly treats perception or knowledge as shared and unquestionable, signalling confidence in the information's reliability.

Guardare is less directly linked to certainty, suggesting a lower degree of epistemic certainty by emphasising consideration over established knowledge (Ilie 2010: 895–896).

(7) **Guardate**: se vogliamo centrare gli obiettivi entro il 2030, occorre pedalare. (ParlaMint 2.1, 76333)

‘**Look.IND/IMP.2PL**: if we want to hit the targets by 2030, we need to get pedaling’.

In (7), *guardate*, by functioning as an attention-getting PM, prepares the addressees to accommodate the speaker’s next argumentative move. It signals, thus, that the upcoming point (‘hit the targets’) is worthy of attention. In this sense, *guardate* is associated with a form of epistemic openness: unlike *vedete*, which would more readily frame the content as already accessible from the shared situation, *guardate* invites to actively orient toward a perspective that still requires consideration.

4. Corpus and methodology

For this research, we relied on the *ParlaMint 2.1–IT* corpus (Erjavec et al. 2023), available on the *Sketch Engine* platform (Kilgariff et al. 2004), which gathers parliamentary debates held between 2015 and 2020 at the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic in Rome. The analysis of PMs is based on formal and functional criteria.

As for the first, from all occurrences of the verbs *guardare* and *vedere*, we selected only those used as PMs, i.e. verbs of visual perception that met two selection criteria: the syntactic independence of the structure containing the verb from the host clause, thus its eliminability from the clause itself without changing its propositional meaning; the consequent essentially procedural value of the form, which led the verb to acquire a pragmatic value at the expense of its semantic and literary meaning (Kaltenböck et al. 2011). Therefore, constructions such as

guarda che ‘look that’ or *vedi che* ‘see that’, which retain a strong syntactic link with the complement clause introduced by *che* ‘that’, were excluded from the list of PMs uses.

Regarding the notion of the *host clause*, we followed the discourse segmentation model outlined by Degand (2014). In this model, PMs are identified within a specific unit of analysis of speech, namely the utterance, defined as the dependency structure of the verb, which constitutes the core of the utterance itself.⁵ Thus, predication is understood as the combination of the verb, its arguments, and any adjuncts, both at the nuclear level and at the propositional level (cf. Lo Baido 2024 and Trebucchi 2025). Within this model, it is possible to identify different positions occupied by the PM: *left periphery* (LP), *right periphery* (RP), and *medial position* (MP), in relation to the verb’s dependency structure.⁶

As regards functional criteria, the primary focus of this study is on the macro-function of the utterance that hosts the PM in relation to the discourse enacted by the speakers. To identify the function of each clause, we considered its illocutionary value: specifically, we identified four typical scenarios within parliamentary debates, each corresponding to a different communicative function (CF) of the host clauses.⁷

The first CF includes cases in which the politician produces a self-praise (SP):

- (8) **Vede**, signor presidente, in questi mesi noi di SEL abbiamo provato a fare opposizione in modo serio e rigoroso. (ParlaMint 2.1, 14597)
‘(You) see.3SG.POL, Mr. president, during these months we in SEL have tried to make a serious and rigorous opposition’.

In (8), the speaker seeks to highlight personal political actions by inviting the president to *see*, or perceive, them. This underscores the seriousness and rigour of the opposition efforts ‘we in SEL’, presented in contrast to those of other parties.

The second CF identified in our corpus involves cases where the speaker directs an attack (AT) toward political opponents. Attack is intended here in the sense of Masia (2020) as a criticism of unfavorable characteristics or flaws of a political opponent or group (Lee/Xu 2017: 204).

- (9) **Vedete**, questo è un Governo che ha ottenuto la fiducia con dichiarazioni programmatiche che oggi vengono smentite. (ParlaMint 2.1, 59907)

⁵ As Degand (2014: 154) points out, the utterance is operationalised in clausal terms.

⁶ Since this study focuses on monological debates, we do not distinguish between *turn-initial* and *utterance-initial*, or *turn-final* and *utterance-final*. Therefore, elements before the verb, its arguments, and adjuncts are classified as LP; those following as RP.

⁷ For similar criteria, cf. Masia (2020) and Ferron/Gannuscio (2023).

‘(You) **see.IND/IMP.2PL**, this is a government that gained confidence with policy declarations that are being denied today’.

In (9), the politician draws attention to the inconsistency between the government’s past declarations and its current actions, suggesting that the policy promises made previously are now being contradicted. By framing the statement in this way, the speaker is challenging the integrity of the government, implicitly accusing it of dishonesty or failure to honour its commitments. This kind of statement attacks the political opponents by undermining their credibility; moreover, pointing out such contradictions can potentially damage the opponents’ reputation and authority.

The third CF covers instances of subjective opinion (SO):

(10) **Guardate**, io non trovo giusto che non si vada a votare. (ParlaMint 2.1, 26368)

‘**Look.IND/MP.2PL**, I don’t find it fair that we don’t go to elections’.

In (10), the speaker expresses a personal judgment about the situation, framing it as a matter of fairness. The subjective nature of the opinion is reinforced by the first-person formulation *io non trovo giusto* ‘I don’t find it fair’, emphasising that the statement is rooted in the speaker’s personal viewpoint rather than an objective fact.

The fourth CF we identified arises when the speaker introduces neutral information (NI):

(11) **Guardi**, c’è un processo verbale e un Resoconto stenografico che rendono conto di tutto quello che è successo. (ParlaMint 2.1, 76679)

‘**Look.IMP.3SG.POL**, there are a trial and a Stenographic Record that account for everything that happened’.

In (11), the politician introduces NI to shift focus from the prior context, using the trial and stenographic record as new information to clarify or support the argument. This strategic move redirects the discussion or adds essential context.

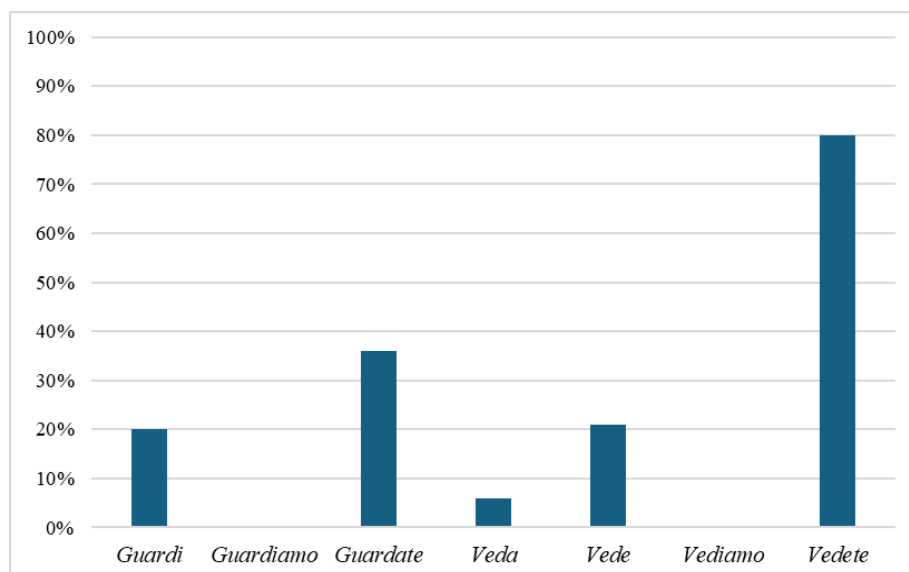
5. Data analysis

To carry out the quantitative analysis, we used the *shuffle* function in Sketch Engine to obtain a randomised sample of the first 100 occurrences of each verbal form under examination. We then manually assessed whether each instance functioned as a PM, thus determining the proportion of pragmatic uses for each form. The data on PMs uses (Figure 1) show that the first-person plural form did not appear in the data, while the second-person plural emerged as

the most productive in both verb groups, confirming its key role in establishing intersubjective alignment and directly addressing the collective audience in parliamentary discourse.

Moreover, it is possible to hypothesise some variation in the degree of pragmaticalisation between *guardare* and *vedere*. *Vedete* shows the highest degree of pragmatic specialisation in our corpus, as measured by the proportion of PM uses over its total occurrences: approximately 80% of its total occurrences in the corpus are as PMs. This suggests a strong functional shift of this form toward procedural use, where it serves less as a verb of visual perception and more as a PM. By contrast, forms such as *guardate* and *guardi* occur less frequently as PMs, pointing to a more balanced distribution between lexical visual-perception uses and pragmatic uses.

Figure 1 - Percentages of use as PMs of *guardare* and *vedere* in ParlaMint 2.1



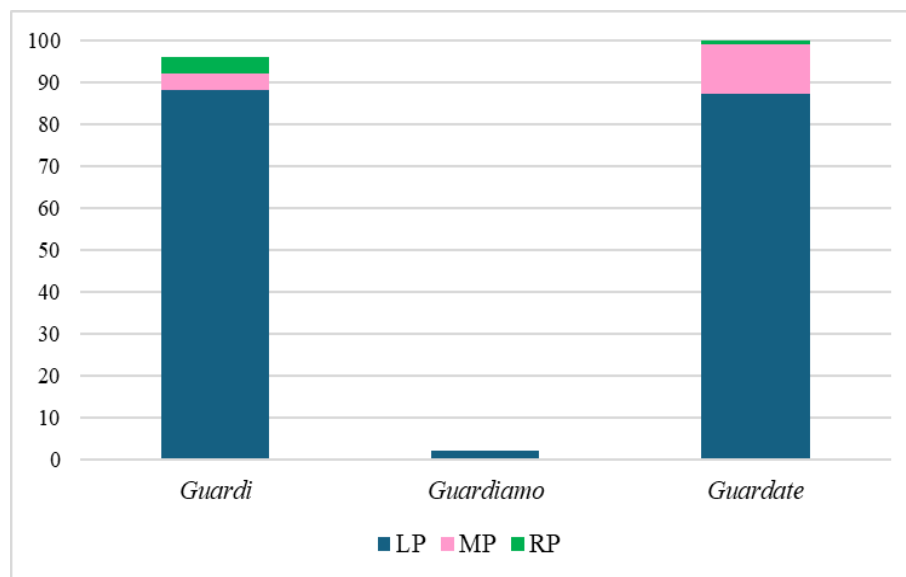
One last remark relates to the use as PMs of *vede* vs *veda*, the second singular polite form in the present indicative and imperative, respectively. As for *vede*, it stands out as one of the most used forms of *vedere* in parliamentary speech. Although morphologically an indicative form, it functions pragmatically as a polite imperative, especially in direct address to figures such as the president or other institutional interlocutors. This refunctionalisation underscores the pragmatic flexibility of *vede*, which allows it to perform evidential functions without the overt prescriptiveness of a canonical imperative. In its role of PM, *vede* is polyfunctional and serves to signal relevance, introduce presuppositions, or frame subjective assertions as self-evident observations. Its indicative morphology may also contribute to an epistemically confident tone, one that appears less confrontational yet equally assertive, making it particularly effective in the context of persuasive political argumentation. Although *veda* is the morphologically

canonical imperative form of *vedere* used for formal address, it appears to be marginally used as a PM in parliamentary debates. This low frequency suggests that *veda* carries a higher degree of formality that makes it less suitable for dynamic interactional moves. Its rare use may reflect the preference in parliamentary contexts for pragmatically more neutral or cognitively lighter forms, especially those suited to phatic and inclusive functions. The dispreference for *veda* supports the idea that PMs favour forms that are morphologically accessible (indicative *vede* vs subjunctive *veda*) and interactionally versatile as more common in a wider range of interactional domains, features more associated with *vede* (cf. §5.2).

5.1. *Guardare* in parliamentary debates

As regards the use of *guardare* as PM, it is possible to identify some peculiarities. Its most frequent position within the host clause is in the LP (Figure 2).

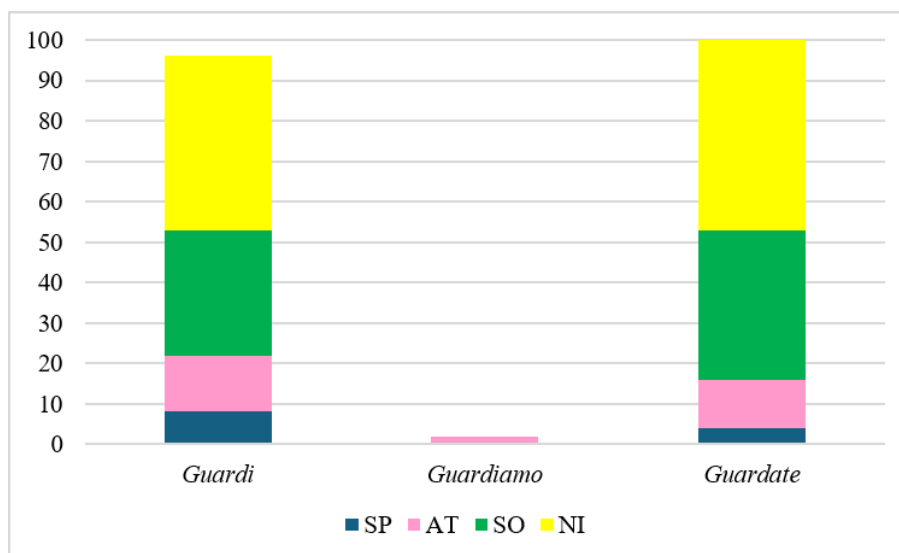
Figure 2 - Position of *guardare* as PM within the host clause



The LP is particularly relevant in parliamentary discourse, where the PM often signals a shift in topic or prefaces a new argumentative move, as in (12). The frequent placement in LP supports *guardare*'s role as a relevance-triggering device: it is employed to direct the interlocutor's attention to the upcoming content, foregrounding its salience and inviting active engagement. As will be shown in §5.2, the same function is also found with *vedere*-based PMs.

- (12) **Guardate:** bisogna stare attenti ai soldi ed all'origine dei soldi. (ParlaMint 2.1, 4194)
 'Look.IND/MP.2PL, one needs to be careful about money and where it comes from'.

Figure 3 - Functions of *guardare* within the host clause



The functional distribution of *guardare* reveals that the PM is most often used to introduce SO, as for *guardi* in (13), and to initiate NI, as for *guardate* in (14).

- (13) **Guardi**, l'Italicum non è una priorità, come lei sostiene; le priorità sono ben altre.
(ParlaMint 2.1, 14598)

‘**Look.IMP.3SG.POL**, the Italicum is not a priority, as you claim; priorities lie elsewhere’.

- (14) **Guardate**, il terremoto dell' Emilia ha avuto danni ingentissimi su un raggio vastissimo.
(ParlaMint 2.1, 25905)

‘**Look.IND/IMP.2PL**, the Emilia earthquake caused massive damage over a very wide area’.

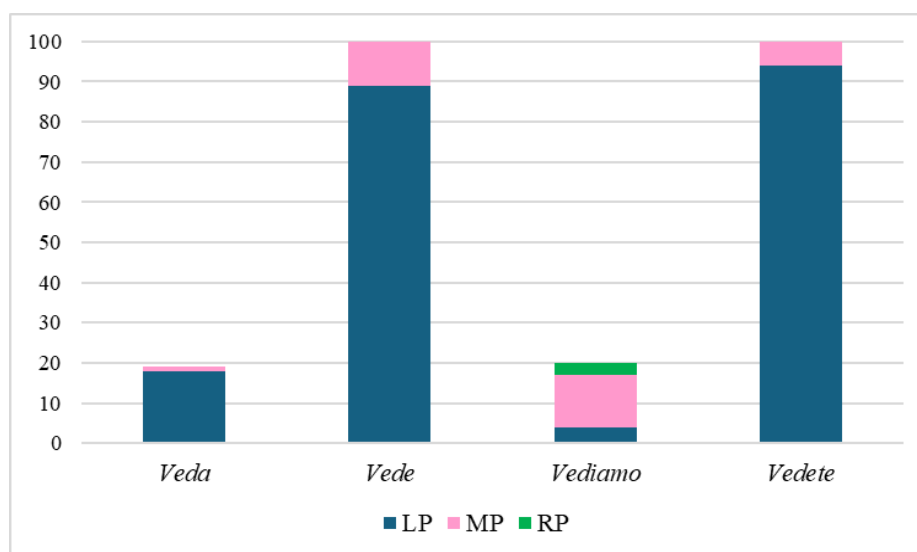
These functions are closely tied to the actional profile of the verb discussed in §3. *Guardare* invites the audience to adopt a particular perspective or consider an alternative framing. In terms of pragmatic presupposition, it signals that the upcoming move is relevant and requires the addressees’ active orientation. This aligns with the dynamic and agentive nature of the verb, since the ‘action’ required of the interlocutors is to redirect their focus and engage with the proposed standpoint. The relatively lower frequency of *guardare* in AT and SP confirms that it is not typically used to reinforce personal authority or directly challenge opponents, but to encourage cognitive inclusion, joint attention, and the accommodation of a new perspective. In summary, in parliamentary debates, PMs derived from *guardare* typically appear in the LP of the host clause. Functionally, *guardare* is most often used to introduce SOs and NI, reflecting its epistemically open nature. These forms pragmatically presuppose that the upcoming content

is relevant, and open to the addressees' active evaluation. In this sense, they prepare hearers to evaluate it as potentially salient within the common ground. Their main function is therefore inclusion-oriented: they draw the audience into the interpretive process and invite them to consider viewpoints that the speaker frames as requiring attention. Accordingly, *guardare* does not necessarily carry a direct evidential load; instead, it encourages active reflection and opens a space for the negotiation of new evidence.

5.2. *Vedere* in parliamentary debates

The use of *vedere* as a PM also displays some noteworthy peculiarities. Firstly, it occurs predominantly in the LP of the host clause, except for *vediamo*, which often appears in MP and occasionally in RP (Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Position of *vedere* as PM within the host clause



Like PMs derived from *guardare*, those derived from *vedere* often have the pragmatic function of steering the interlocutors' attention toward salient upcoming content, as in (15).

- (15) **Vedete**, noi siamo dell'avviso che le riforme siano imprescindibili. (ParlaMint 2.1, 3327)
 '(You) see. IND/IMP.2PL, we are of the opinion that reforms are indispensable'.

The PM *vediamo* seems to be the least syntactically fixed variant within the *vedere* paradigm. From a formal perspective, it displays a wide range of internal variants, *vediamo un po'* 'let's see a bit', *lo vediamo* '(we) see it', and *come vediamo* 'as (we) see', which suggests a certain degree of structural flexibility. Notably, the first-person plural form tends to occur more frequently in the MP rather than in LP or RP, indicating that speakers may employ *vediamo* as

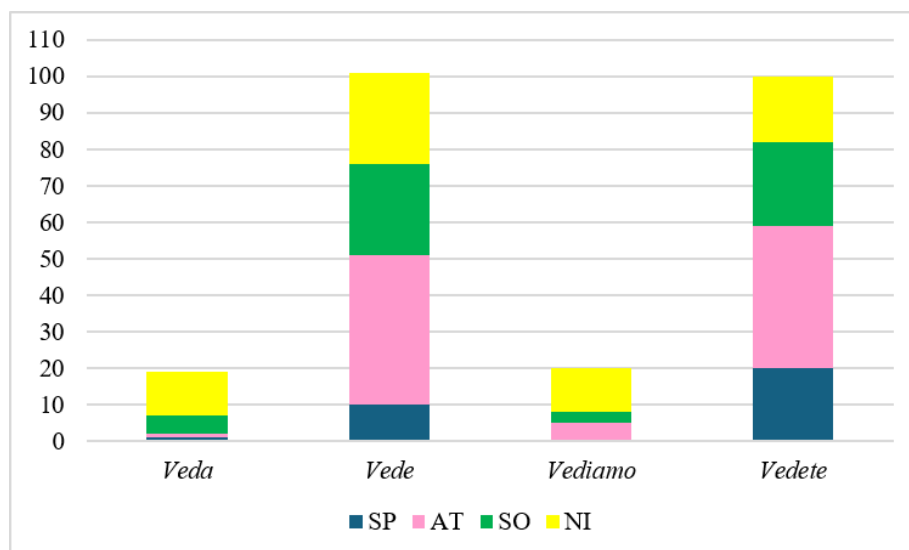
a resource for managing the interactional flow and sustaining engagement with the interlocutors. In this sense, the first-person plural form not only encodes intersubjectivity but also performs an inclusive function, aligning speaker and audience within a shared communicative frame. In addition, *vediamo* frequently fulfils a metacommunicative role, enabling speakers to comment on the discourse itself or to frame subsequent talk, facilitating the real-time negotiation and co-construction of meaning, as in (16).

(16) Il nostro, **come vediamo**, è il Paese con il sistema giudiziario di gran lunga più inefficiente tra i Paesi più avanzati. (ParlaMint 2.1, 11838)

‘Ours, **as we see**, is the country with by far the most inefficient judicial system among the most advanced countries’.

As for its functional distribution (Figure 5), *vedere* exhibits a heterogeneous pattern that shifts according to the specific form employed as PM.

Figure 5 - Functions of *vedere* within the host clause



The most frequent forms in our corpus, *vede* and *vedete*, are commonly used to introduce ATs (17) and SOs (18).

(17) **Vede**, signor Ministro, la storia, nemmeno troppo remota, non vi ha insegnato un tubo. (ParlaMint 2.1, 23546)

‘(You) see.3SG.POL, Mr. Minister, history, not even that far back, has taught you nothing’.

- (18) **Vedete**, noi siamo dell'avviso che le riforme siano imprescindibili. (ParlaMint 2.1, 3327)
'(You) see.IND/IMP.2PL, we are of the opinion that reforms are indispensable'.

In these examples, the host clauses convey sensitive content, expressing ideologically charged positions and, especially in (17), carrying strong attack implications. In this context, *vede(te)* helps frame the proposition as accessible and recognisable to the addressee, thus reducing the impression that the speaker is advancing a merely personal or overtly persuasive claim. This does not, however, remove the speaker's interactional responsibility for directing the audience's attention. Rather, PMs derived from *vedere* redistribute epistemic responsibility by presenting the propositional content as something the hearer can recognise, verify, or accept as already available in the common ground.

While SOs are also frequent with *vede(te)*, their distribution is similar to that found with *guardare*. More revealing is the role of *vedere* in self-praising contexts. Although SP is not especially frequent overall, it occurs with *vedere* more than twice as often as with *guardare*, which is unlikely to be accidental. As Lombardi Vallauri (2019: 252) notes, both self-praise and attacks on political opponents are risky, face-threatening moves. In these cases, *vedere* seems to help frame self-laudatory claims as epistemically grounded, intersubjectively accessible, or even self-evident, as in (19).

- (19) **Vedete**, colleghi, credo che la migliore testimonianza della verità di quanto dico sia nelle vostre stesse esperienze personali. (ParlaMint 2.1, 19433)
'(You) see.IND/IMP.2PL, colleagues, I believe the strongest evidence for the truth of what I'm saying lies in your own personal experiences'.

There are also cases in which SPs and ATs are combined within a single host clause.

- (20) **Come vedete**, a differenza dell'ex avvocato del popolo, noi la parola su questo la manteniamo. (ParlaMint 2.1, 73230)
'As you see.2PL, unlike the former "people's lawyer", we are keeping our word on this'.

In (20), the speaker's assertion of trustworthiness 'we are keeping our word on this' is combined with a contrast introduced by a 'unlike the former "people's lawyer"': this contrast conveys that the political opponent failed to keep his word. The utterance thus combines SP with AT. The PM *come vedete* supports this strategy not by creating the contrast itself, but by presenting the contrastive evaluation as accessible and grounded in shared evidence.

As for the less frequent forms—*veda* and *vediamo*—similar functional tendencies to those

observed for *guardare* emerge. As shown in Figure 5, these PMs primarily serve to introduce NI. Interestingly, although *veda* and *vediamo* are morphologically derived from the verb *vedere*, their use as PMs aligns more closely with the agentive verb *guardare*. This convergence derives from semantic and pragmatic factors. Differently from more frequent forms *vede* and *vedete*, which could be more integrated into the rhetorical organisation of political discourse and, thus, serve as weaker attention signals, *veda* and *vediamo* are less conventionalised and more marked. On a morphological level, *veda* is a subjunctive formal imperative whilst *vediamo* is an inclusive imperative; these properties enable them to express an exhortation or a strong invitation. As such, they retain a higher degree of illocutionary force and convey a stronger directive intent. These PMs function as attention-getters and topic shifters, actively guiding the interlocutors' focus—functions that are semantically congruent with the action-oriented, intentional and dynamic nature of *guardare*. In this sense, *veda* in (21) and *vediamo* in (22) simulate an intentional act of visual orientation, thereby acquiring a discourse role that transcends their original experience-based semantics. In this function, they operate as full-fledged attention-getters, guiding the discourse by marking a topic shift.

(21) **Veda**, signor presidente, la Costituzione prevede che ci sia possibilità di chiedere il voto segreto. (ParlaMint 2.1, 35926)

‘**See.IMP.3SG.POL**, Mr. president, the Constitution provides for the possibility of requesting a secret ballot’.

(22) **Come vediamo**, il più grande problema che affronta oggi la comunità internazionale è proprio il contrasto al terrorismo internazionale. (ParlaMint 2.1, 45436)

‘**As we see**, the biggest problem facing the international community today is precisely the fight against international terrorism’.

In summary, the PM *vedere* displays different functions. Forms such as *vede* and *vedete* frequently present the speaker's point of view as inferable or already grounded in the shared situation. They activate a presupposition that the upcoming content is evidentially accessible, thus facilitating its accommodation within the common ground. In this respect, *vede(te)* shows a particular functional specialization for AT and SP, two communicative moves that are much less characteristic of *guardare*: potentially contentious or self-laudatory claims are framed as evident rather than purely subjective. Its function is therefore inclusion-oriented, but in a different way from *guardare*: it includes the audience by treating them as able to recognise or

verify a claim. By contrast, *veda* and *vediamo* often serve as attention-getters, marking the introduction of NI and directing the interlocutors' focus, similarly to *guardare*.

6. Concluding remarks

This study has investigated the use of the Italian visual perception verbs *guardare* and *vedere* as PMs in political debates, focusing on their role in inclusion and presupposition strategies. Our corpus-based analysis of parliamentary debates reveals distinct pragmatic behaviours shaped by aspectual properties, epistemic stance, and evidential functions.

The key difference between the two verbs lies in their aspectual and actional nature. *Guardare*, being dynamic and agentive, reflects an active and goal-directed movement of attention. As a PM, it presupposes that the upcoming move is relevant, worthy of attention and open to the addressees' evaluation. Its use is tied to inclusion strategies: the speaker invites the audience to participate in a joint process of orientation or reassessment. This epistemic openness makes PMs derived from *guardare* effective tools for constructing argumentative relevance, since the truth or salience of the matter are framed as still requiring consideration. *Guardare* invites co-orientation, that is, an active reconfiguration of the audience's interpretative focus. By contrast, *vedere*, as an experience-based verb, encodes the 'experience' of perception. As a PM, it activates a presupposition concerning the accessibility of the speaker's claim: the proposition is framed as inferable, recognisable, or already grounded in the shared situation. This makes *vedere* particularly suited to potentially contentious or self-laudatory contents, since it presents them as evident or readily accommodable within the common ground. In this sense, *vedere* supports persuasion through implicitness: it reduces the need for explicit justification and mitigates the interactional risks associated with attacks or self-praise by embedding such moves within a presupposed evidential space.

The corpus data support this functional distinction. *Guardare* more frequently appears in the second-person plural form *guardate*, often used to introduce a SO or NI. It predominantly appears in the LP of the host clause, where it operates as a relevance marker guiding the audience's attention. As for *vedere*, its most frequent PM forms, *vedete* and *vede*, are strongly associated with the presentation of contents as evidentially accessible and already anchored in the shared situation. These forms activate a presupposition that the claim introduced can be recognised or verified by the addressees, which helps explain their recurrent use with ATs and SPs. In this respect, *vedere* contributes to inclusion by positioning the audience as competent co-evaluators of what is presented as evident. *Veda* and *vediamo*, though less frequent, nuance

this picture. These forms retain a higher illocutionary force and show discourse behaviours closer to *guardare*, particularly in their role as topic shifters. Their morphological properties allow them to simulate intentional acts of cognitive orientation, thereby bridging the gap between experience and agency. These forms extend the directive potential of *vedere*, highlighting how even within a single lexical root, subtle morphological variation can yield distinct rhetorical functions.

Taken together, these findings highlight how *guardare* and *vedere* perform complementary roles in the management of presupposition in parliamentary debates. *Guardare* constructs inclusion by inviting the audience to evaluate a perspective that is presented as relevant but not yet fully shared. *Vedere* constructs inclusion by treating the audience as already able to recognise, verify, or accommodate the speaker's claim. The contrast is therefore between two ways of managing common ground: *guardare* opens a space for shared evaluation; *vedere* frames content as already accessible within a shared evidential field. Both verbs contribute to stance-taking and persuasion, but through different pragmatic pathways rooted in their lexical semantics and aspectual properties.

Future research could explore the diachronic development of these uses or examine similar patterns in other languages. Extending the analysis to other political or media genres may also shed further light on the interplay between visual cognition, evidential framing, and persuasion.

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