ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Argumentation And Counter-Argumentation Using A Diaphonic Appropiation In A Parlamentary

1. *Introduction*

The purpose of this article***** is to show how with diaphonic appropiation (Roulet, 1985, quoted by Perrin, 1995) argumentations and refutations, topical negotiations and political rival´s disqualifications take part, turning the debate into a "language game", particularity when roles that are ideologically tied to institutional restrictions where the interactions take place.

In the study of reported speech two uses can be distinguished: polyphony and diaphony. In the first of them, the another´s words are raised as a reference object, but he or she does not become an interlocutor, so there is not a true interaction in the argumentative sense. In polyphony, the reference has only narrative aims. On the other hand, in a diaphonic structure the enunciator appropiates and gives a new interpretation to the addressee´s words in his or her own speech (L. Perrin, 1995). As a consequence of this, every diaphonic appropiation has a argumentative value. In Roulet´s words, "diaphonic appropiation's structure is also one of the privileged characteristics of points of view negotiations present in every interaction" (Roulet et al., 1985, p. 71). Our corpus belongs to a debate held on September 22nd, 2004, in the National House of Representatives, where the subject treated was the retroactive sanction of a bill submitted by the National Executive Power to allow the access to the country to foreign troops and the exit of national troops.

According to Miche (1996), parlamentary debate develops a triangular interaction between three actors: the speaker or direct enunciator, the receiver or interlocutor (indirect) and the blank actor, or assembly. Nevertheless, the kind of interaction in a parlamentary debate is a complex one, for different reasons. The first being that representatives are generally speaking in the name of broader collective enunciators, as *political blocs* are. Second, media often have cameras

and other transmission devices, ready to receive and spread representatives´ speeches to new audiences. Leaving to be defined who the real audience is, the people present or the television viewers. In conclusion, to reduce the actual communicative relationship in Congress to a triangular interaction is a matter of opinion. Using this, we will show, in this analysis, how this acting scheme becomes more complex when considering that participant's places in the debate are, in one way, previously determined, but in another they are roles developing during the speech and the communicative situation.

Although representative's statements are verbally addressed to a primary audience (in this case, the Speaker), turning the assembly into an indirect or secondary addressee, from the speech´s point of view it can be noted that the hierarchy is the opposite. When a statement is addressed to both at the same time, they are both direct audiences. So, if we look at the parlamentary debate as an example, the roles are filled by representatives, the Speaker and the audience, as complex enunciating devices. Each of the representatives exposes his point of view (in fact, it is a collective one, because it represents his or her whole block, party and constituent's desires). The public can be seen as a listener, a primary or secondary audience, and their identity depends on the discoursive construction and the situation (media, general public, people present). The Speaker, in addition to his role as addressee, has the task to give the order of speakers, to take control of the time used by each, and mainly to bring order to the discussion, avoiding deviations.

2. *Analysis of a discoursive identity construction*
Our corpus belongs to a debate held on September 22nd, 2004, in the National Congress House of Representatives, where the subject treated was the retroactive sanction of a bill submitted by the National Executive Power to allow the access to the country to foreign troops and the exit of national troops.

Its discussion and approval by a majority first occured in the Foreign Relationships and Worship Commission and then in the Parlamentary Labour Commission. The latter is where agreement is reached on the matters which will be considered in each session, the order, and the results of the treatment of each subject, previously known. Each bloc´s president is allowed to take part in these meetings.

It can be perceived, when the debates´ transcriptions are analysed, that the Speaker doesn´t make a single action when he speaks: it is more than the mere

act of speaking means more than this. In fact, in the start of the session, when the Speaker invites Luis Zamora[i] to speak, says:

(1) *"The representative for the Capital city –who has just asked for his place in the order of speakers- has the floor"*.

It should be noted that the subordinating clause "who has just asked for his place in the order of speakers" is adding unnecessary, but not irrelevant, information. Using this "extra" information, the audience can make his or her own hypothesis, in other words, find his or her own implication (cfr. Grice:1979). What could this implication possibly be? For example, that Zamora had no previous interest in the subject, or that he is entering the debate in an opportunist way. Zamora answers the direct statement, but he also responds to its implication:

(2) *"Mr. Speaker: Exactly, I´ve just booked to speak, but I´ve signed the dispatch in the Foreign Relationships and Worship Commission in total disagreement"*.

Also noteworthy is the importance of making present the implicit elements that are relevant in every argumentation analysis (van Eemeren, Frans and Grootendorst, Rob, 2004). Zamora makes clear that he got interested on time about the subject. The word *exactly* is a mark of polyphony (Miche: 1996): it confirms the validity of the previous enunciation and allows for the strategical maneuvering of concession, followed by a counter-argumentation introduced by the adversarial connector "but", where he shows his point of view, turning the mediator-Speaker into an opponent.

We suggested at the beginning that parlamentary debate is a complex interaction. What can be seen here is that from the start the role of the Speaker as neutral and regulatory, vanishes when, answering to his implicit assertion, Zamora treats him not on a mediator but as an opponent.

As van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) state, argumentation frequently makes use of non explicit premises (implicits). Sometimes it is easy to detect them and sometimes it is not, but "a logical analysis, based only on logical criteria of validation is then undecisive (…) It also requires a pragmatic analysis which makes use of the contextual information and the background" (p. 3). Taking into account this idea, in our example, it must be said that the Speaker of the House takes the place of the opponent because he shows the official block´s point of view.

When we note that it is necessary to add the rhetoric dimension to the analysis (cfr. van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2002), it can be seen, in addition to Zamora's

maneuvering of concession, the use of refutation, which runs parallel to the configuration of an *ethos*: Zamora configures a scene where he defines the protagonists and antagonists´ roles and he makes himself the representative of the people´s interests, also building the opponent´s image as the executor of political decisions connected to interests against the best interest of the nation.

Recently, different theorists of argumentation defend the importance of making a place for rhetoric in the dialectical device. We hold that the consideration of rhetoric is an undeniable part in every analysis of argumentative speech. "There is no reason – van Eemeren and Houtlooser state- to think that rhetoric norms of persuasion are necessarily in contradiction with the dialectic ideals of reasonableness, although both tendences, in fact, are always in tension". The need to soften this tension ends in what van Eemeren and Houtlosser call "strategical maneuvering". "Each part tries to fit optimally into the situation, using the available material in the context in the quickest way, taking into account the beliefs, preferences and expectations of the other party or of the audience, and expressing his own contributions in the more proper way" (van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2002). In this sense, we consider that self configuration (*ethos*) is the result of an advanced strategical maneuvering in the first stage of the argumentation, which allows the orator, on one hand, to select the most suitable topics to fit his own image as he presents it, and on the other, to take a position on the argumentative sense, identifying himself with several values and ideological points of view, and acting according to them. In doing this, he never gives up using his antagonist, in this way each party in the discussion builds his identity in opposition to the other. It should be noticed the efficacy of Zamora´s following intervention, where he appropiates his own words diaphonically again, making them operate as an ideological affirmation.

(3) *Some time ago we have said that it is an exercise of dignity that makes us proud that we can say no to these propositions of the government of President Kirchner – as for previous governments that acted exactly the same way- and to American pressures...*

It also appears in Patricia Walsh's intervention**[ii]**:
(4) *Mr. Speaker: Izquierda Unida´s block will vote against this bill. In previous opportunities, we have stated with fundamentals our position on this matter.*

Manouverings like these help to show a commitment with the construction of an

ethos proposing, while at the same time, an ethic identity and a way of behaviour.

In the first moment, the goal of Luis Zamora´s speech was to establish the topics of the discussion. It is not a matter, for Zamora, of the bill in itself but about of the conditions in which this law is being discussed. The object of the discussion is displaced over itself, over its own conditions. We are placed between the first and the second stage of what van Eemeren (2006) defines as a critical discussion, in other words, the confrontation stage, where a topic is brought, and the opening stage, where both parties find the common ground over which discussion is placed. Then, what kind of negotiation is held? On one hand, points of view are negociated (speech level), and on the other, the rules governing the discussion (meta-speech level). The conditions of debate under question can be divided in two blocks:

1) Zamora asserts the need to respect the law that orders that the Executive Power must send bills with enough time to be discussed by national representatives, because it asked Congress to sanction the law, when military operations had already begun a few days ago.

2) Zamora speaks at against the trend usually House discusses, numerical questions (number of soldiers, guns, costs, etc.) but not the goal and who the issue relates to the idea of what the country should do. To do this, he uses an argumentative scheme based on the strategy of the analogy:

(5) *It would be interesting to listen to some of the representatives that took part in a previous debate, when the problem that arose in Osetia was discussed; I mean, those of them who said that the rejection to Bush´s policy was not in discussion there. As that policy is really in discussion now, it will be interesting to listen to them. They now say that they reject all kind of terrorism and also what Bush does."***[iii]***

Here we have an appropiation of other representatives´ words, with a diaphonic value, because the speaker is not only telling that some time ago other representatives said such things, but also, fundamentally, that it is useful for him to give a new interpretation. From this appropiation Zamora displaces the argumentation's point of view: the law itself is no longer being discussed (as the Speaker of the House suggested), but the subject will now be around Bush´s policy. As it can be seen, there is a further negotiation of the topic. This supports Zamora´s long argumentation, which could be summed up in a few propositions,

like the following:

a) President George Bush uses terrorist policies.

b) Representatives support the access to the country of President Bush´s troops to operate with Argentine troops.

c) Representatives support terrorist policies (so, bill mustn´t be passed).

In this sense, we can say that diaphonic appropiation is a particular way of strategical maneuvering with specific argumentative goals. Let´s look at the following part of Rep. Zamora´s speech:

(6) *For these reasons, I reject those who said that the issue I´m developing was not in discussion when the terrorist action of Putins and Bushes in the world took place to bring us all their ideals. Now it is to be decided if troops financed, paid and supported by the people of Argentina are going to take part in military operations with terrorists and torturers of Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo and Irak".*

The diaphonic appropiation functions to appeal to those who held that Bush´s policy was not being discussed and to put that point of view into the debate. In this case, the maneuvering is positioned at the confrontation stage, and its function is to defend its own point of view sustainability, referring to others´ judgement.

(7) Kerry**[iv]** *said that the United States should have intervened in Argentina, on December 19th and 20th, 2001. For these kind of operations –that the House is considering today- Army, Navy and Air Force are being prepared in our country.*

or the following:

(8) *Clarke´s book –he has been Bush´s functionary- agrees with other books written about that matter and U.S. Congress´s investigation. Bush asked for targets to bomb and occupy in several continents. (...) U. S. President thought about bombing Argentina, Brasil and Paraguay! It is now being discussed if Argentina will take part of operations with American army, that means international terrorists.*

In these cases, it is clear that polyphonic appropiation is a part of a strategical maneuvering with rethorical goals. It is a *conciliatio*. As soon as the reasons for considering the *tendentiousity, unscrupulousity* and *terroristness* of Bush´s military are accepted, the (implicit) point of view that everybody who cooperates with those operations is also a terrorist and should be considered in the same way.

From here it is useful to remember the difference between *rationality* and *reasonableness* set by van Eemeren and Peter Houtlosser (2002). This difference was already in Toulmin (*Return of reason*), who identified rationality with dialectics, and reasonableness with rhetorics. Rationality is a logical principle, while reasonableness means putting logic to work. Therefore, reasonableness is a pragmatic principle that places discussion in a frame of certain intersubjective agreements**[v]** (Van Eemeren and Houtlooser, 2002, p. 131). This is what shows the evolution of a dialectical model to a pragma-dialectical one. Now the question is: can real arguments – let´s suppose, those settled in a Congressional debate – be subjected to norms and schemes of the critical discussion model?

According to pragma-dialectics (van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Henkemans, 2002) four stages in every critical discussion can be distinguished: *confrontation, opening, argumentation* and *conclusion* (van Eemeren et al., 2002). Now, as the difference of opinion is defined in the *confrontation stage* and the agreements for any sustained discussion are settled in an *opening* stage (van Eemeren and Houtlooser, 2002), if these stages can not be completed, an *argumentative* stage will never be reached, and a conclusion will be much less possible. In this case, the *conclusion* will be the result of only practical actions, but not of a critical discussion. Our conclusion on this issue, according to what we have seen from our corpus, is that parlamentary debate cannot proceed past the confrontation and opening stages. It can also be said that as participants cannot reach an agreement on the discussion rules, this stage becomes a part of the argumentative stage, because when someone´s opinion is confronted, the frame of discussion is also put under discussion. Anyway, the agreement is still missing. As we have explained before, every representative in the House knows in advance the political and ideological position that the others will take, so it is generally unnecessary to make the difference of opinion clear, because the participants are expecting it. This is an example of what Michel Foucault described as *excluding proceedings from speech:* "The speech (…) the prohibitions lying on it, show very soon, its link to desire and power (…) speech is not just what expresses disagreements and power, but it is the cause and the means of that fight, that power which someone is hoping to get" (Foucault, 1980, p. 12).

Every diaphonic appropiation places as an object for an intervention a constitutional part of the dialogue held by the locutor and his interlocutor. The proceeding consists of referring to a real or potential speech act from his or her

addressee and the continuation of a talk begun from that act (Perrin, 1995). It is a constant in this parlamentary debate that representatives, when revealing their point of view, make the same maneuvering: they redefine the speech object by a diaphonic appropiation. Let´s look at an example:

(9) *Mr. Daniel* ESAIN**[vi]**: *Mr. President: (...) What is underlying here is if Argentina needs to have military forces or not. This is the key of this debate, beyond it is disguised as a behavior of subordination to the United States, which in fact is inexistent. If you want to discuss if military forces are unnecessary, you should do it openly (...) So, if we want to discuss here if military forces are unnecessary, do it openly. In this way, we can´t mix here, like Enrique Santos Discepolo would say, the Bible with the water heater.*

It should be noted here how the speaker redefines his point of view, at the same time considering the other´s point of view as a deviation or incongruence. The authority quotation with which he closes his enunciation is a polyphonic use of the lyrics of a tango, which serves as a counterargument for the former appropiation. Frequent expressions in our corpus, like "I mean that the expositions made here have nothing to do with the subject we are considering", "what we are considering is", "this has nothing to do with everything said until now", "I repeat that these are things with nothing to do with..." show that, when the potential topic is chosen, the strategic maneuvering in the confrontation stage is driven to the most effective choice between the potential topics for discussion, rectifying the "disagreement field" in the interest of both parties´s preferences. "In the opening stage, this is reached when the strategic maneuvering is aimed to build the most convenient point of view, for example, bringing to memory or taking the other part´s concessions" (van Eemeren and Houtlooser, 2002, p. 139).

In the interactionist approach (Filletaz, 1996), the speech´s referential dimension adopts, as a major principle, the mixed nature of speech forms. In this orientation the following representations can be distinguished: a) prototypic representations (those consentedly shared by both interlocutors); b) individual representations (linked to the individual point of view of one of the interlocutors), and c) the mixed interaction representations (which mix individual representations which complete each other to build the speech object). As a matter of fact, it is crucial, in a difference of opinion, to identify the issue in discussion as to select the most suitable arguments for defending the point of view and thus arriving to a more succesful resolution. Now, the starting point (the one that provokes the discussion) is not given once and for all, but, instead, it is up for negotiation.

Notice, however, that although this perspective shows how the speech object´s identification is attained by means of negotiations which lead to the co-partnership of that object, this interactive-modular formulation views the demands for precision done by the interlocutors as the recognition of the incomplete nature of verbal interactions, without stopping at the argumentative aspects of every negotiation. In this sense, the demands for precision, deviances and misunderstandings can´t be considered as bad *actualizations* or *wrongful actualizations* of the speech object. We would like to emphasize that it can´t be missed, in a speech analysis, until every act of naming an object is an operation of selection and designation, and so, it acquires an argumentative nature. Let us warn that every topical negotiation is located in a ideological and power field of battle.

3. *Conclusions*

In conclusion, we consider that the diaphonic appropiation of another´s word constitutes a substantial strategic maneuvering for topical reorientation, and its argumentative value lies on the possibility to define what can be discussed or not, including what is acceptable and leaving out everything considered irrelevant. So, the question is about the power to say. Each representative defines the topic, expressing a point of view of the object; in other words, he or she holds an ideological and ethical position, and in the same time he or she fights for the power to say it.

NOTES
* Translated from Spanish by Hernán Biscayart.
[i] Luis Zamora is a national representative, chief of a party in the oposition, Autodeterminación y Libertad (Selfdetermination and Freedom) . In December 2003 (almost a year before this debate in the House) he had asked for stopping the "Unitas Operation", and has accused President Néstor Kirchner to allow the access of army corps, ships, airplanes, helicopters and four hundred American marines, added to five hundred Spanish soldiers and corps and ships from other countries, with no Congress permission, as Constitution orders to do.
[ii] The daughter of the "desaparecido" writer, Rodolfo Walsh.
[iii] The current position of Rep. Luis Zamora is the same which he held on Septiembre 22nd, 2004, when the House approved a law proposal in rejection of terrorist actions in Beslan, North Osetia, Russia, on September 1st, 2004, when a command claiming for the retirement of Russian troops from Chechenia kept

under their power more than 300 people in a school in North Osetia Republic. In the attempt to rescue them more than 200 people were killed. Many of them were children, according to press reports. Because of that conflict, the House of Representatives discussed a law project.

[iv] Senator John Kerry was the Democrats´ candidate for United States President in the elections of 2004.

[v] For example: that argumentation must be based on sustainable premises, that it must fit in a particular situation and in a specific culture, and that participants must obey the rules of a critical discussion, until the difference of opinion is resolved.

[vi] A member of the parlamentary bloc "Participación Ciudadana".

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