ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Quote … Unquote. Direct Quotation As A Strategic Manoeuvre In The Confrontation Stage

1. *Introduction*

In argumentative texts in newspapers and especially in newsmagazines, speakers**[i]** frequently use direct quotations and they probably do so for a variety of reasons. They may find it difficult to improve on the source's original words in a paraphrase or they may want to heighten the realism of the reported event by putting readers in direct contact with the very words of the quoted speaker. In case of a controversial opinion the speaker may also consider it safer to repeat the source's own words to prevent being accused of libel. In many cases direct quotations are actually used as evidence that a specific opinion on a topic exists and that the quoted speaker can be held accountable for the standpoint that is presented. Although empirical analysis of direct quotations, in spoken and written texts, suggests that they are less likely to duplicate speech word-for-word than to selectively depict certain aspects while omitting others (Clark and Gerrig 1990) or distorting them (Lehrer 1989, p. 902-906, Slembrouck 1992, p. 104-110), the separation of direct quotes from other text constituents via inverted commas signals them as an exact replication of what somebody has said (Coulmas 1986, p. 2). As several researchers have indicated (Sternberg 1982, Waugh 1995, McGlone 2005) direct quotations even suggest that not only the words but also the intentions behind these words are replicated. In this paper I would like to discuss two examples in which this suggestion of replicating a speaker's words and with these words the quoted speaker's attitude, is exploited in the strategic manoeuvring aimed at presenting ones standpoint more convincingly.

2. *Strategic manoeuvring in argumentative discourse*

In pragma-dialectics normative and descriptive dimensions of argumentative discourse are linked together by a methodical reconstruction of actual discourse from the projected ideal of critical discussion. Starting from the pragma-

dialectical model of a critical discussion in which a procedure is developed for establishing methodically whether or not a standpoint is defensible against doubt or criticism, argumentative reality is investigated empirically to achieve an accurate description of actual discourse processes and the various factors influencing their outcome (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2001, p.150). According to van Eemeren and Houtlosser, the parties engaged in argumentative discourse may be assumed to be committed to the pragma-dialectical standards of reasonableness while at the same time attempting to resolve the difference of opinion in their own favour. Maintaining the image of people who play the resolution game by the rules, their speech acts may be assumed to be designed to reach particular rhetorical goals. It is this combination of dialectical and rhetorical objectives that typically gives rise to strategic manoeuvring: speakers and writers use the opportunities available in a certain dialectical situation 'for steering the discourse rhetorically in the direction that serves their own interests best' (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2001, p. 151).

For a more detailed and systematic specification of the rhetorical objectives of participants in a specific dialectical situation, the dialectical model can provide a starting point. As each of the four stages in the resolution process is characterized by a specific dialectical aim and as the parties involved want to realize this aim to their best advantage, the presumed rhetorical objectives of the speaker or writer can be specified according to stage. In the confrontation stage, where the difference of opinion is defined and the dialectical objective is to achieve clarity concerning the specific issue that is at stake and the positions that are taken, viewed rhetorically the participants will try to direct the confrontation in the way that is most favourable for them (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002, p. 138). In order to define the difference of opinion in such a way that the chances for achieving a favourable result are optimal, the speaker or writer will for instance present his standpoint in a way that makes it look more acceptable. A possible way to present ones standpoint in such a way, is to confront the listener or reader with the sayings of another speaker – by means of direct quotation, by which the intentions and beliefs of the quoted speaker seem to be automatically demonstrated.

3. *Manoeuvring strategically in the confrontation stage by means of direct quotation*

I would like to look now at two excerpts from Dutch newsmagazines in which the use of direct quotations seems to be instrumental in achieving the objective of

presenting ones standpoint in such a way that the reader may be more inclined to accept it as the facts seem to speak for themselves.

Excerpt 1

Writers as well have done very little to elucidate the role of editors. When the drafting suits them, they are grateful, but their bad experiences are more well known. Henry James called editing 'the butcher trade'. Byron made an association with castration and, in his own words, does not want to be 'unmanned'. D.H. Lawrence compared it to an attempt to 'trimming his own nose with a pair of scissors'. And John Updike says: 'It feels a bit like … going to the hairdresser', to which he ads: 'And I don't like to have my hair cut'. Or listen to the contempt of Nabokov: 'With editor you mean corrector I presume.' There are all different kinds of editors of course – from fact checkers and people who are putting their initials all the time (so well known from *The New Yorker*), to press preparers and copy editors and editors who have an overall view but skip the details. But in practice they are lumped together nonchalantly as big-time crooks, bouncers, or to speak with Nabokov again: 'puffed up, dumpish granddads'. Those who can write, write; those who cannot, become an editor – that seems to be the rule. I rather join in with T.S. Elliot. To the question whether editors are nothing more than failed writers essentially, he answered: "Perhaps – but that goes for most writers too." (*Vrij Nederland*, September 3, 2005)

In the first paragraph of this excerpt the speaker argues that editors are not rated at their true value. Writers are to blame for this as well, he suggests, because chiefly their bad experiences with editors are well known. Sayings from famous writers are quoted, by which their horror about the work of editors is demonstrated as well as their undisguised contempt for the whole professional group. But, the speaker argues, different types of editors, from fact checker on to editor in chief, are wrongfully put in one box. 'Rather' than commit himself to the rule that 'those who can write, write' and 'those who can not, become an editor', which seems to be so broadly shared, the speaker joins in with T.S. Elliot.

As the speaker has been arguing up to this point that editors don't get the recognition they truly deserve, as famous writers have wrongfully abused their work, one would expect Elliot to defend the work of editors by saying that they actually can write. The entire preceding argument seems to be meant as a prelude to the presentation of this standpoint. But relying on the direct quote, the only standpoint that may be ascribed to Elliot is that most *writers* are failed writers essentially, and that this may hold for editors as well. Elliot does not deny

with this that editors cannot write, neither does he implicate that some editors actually can. In fact Elliot does not seem to have said anything in favour of the issue about which the speaker seems to be so much concerned although the speaker is suggesting that he actually did. It seems to be this suggestion in combination with the direct quotations of famous writers in the first paragraph that makes the presentation of the speaker so convincing.

The fact that so many utterances have been quoted from famous writers who are depicted here by the speaker as unsympathetic, arrogant people who made it a habit to talk about editors with a conceited little smile, makes it well possible that the reader will almost immediately choose for the side of editors, whether they can or can not write. When the speaker then refers to another famous writer like Elliot who actually has been speaking up for editors, or so the speaker suggests, it seems likely that not very much more will be needed for the reader to be convinced that the speaker is absolutely right: many editors indeed can write.
The point is though that although the speaker surely wants to convince the reader that editors know their trade, this is not the standpoint which he actually defends. The speaker actually defends the standpoint that writers should hold their tongue as many of them cannot write and tries to win the reader over to his side by implicating that Elliot meant something more than he has actually said. As the first part of the postulate which says 'Those who can write, write' may be brought down by the statement from Elliot – and Elliot might know because he possesses no slight writer qualities himself – the second part of the postulate may be disqualified as well, as seems to be the line of reasoning of the speaker. If it can apparently not just be assumed that writers *can* write, as is the assumption in the postulate, then it can not be assumed either that editors can *not* write. What does not hold for the first clause of the postulate, does not hold for the second clause either, seems to be the implicature of the speaker. But why should this actually be the case?
What the speaker seems to be alluding to is that writers, of whom an expert says that the majority of them are nothing more than failed writers essentially, do not have the right to speak so slightingly of the editor's work. The fact that examples of negative statements of Henry James, Byron, Updike, D.H. Lawrence and Nabokov are quoted, writers of whom we thought that they actually could write, makes this implicit discussion move even more succinct. But although this move may be effective from a rhetorical point of view, the speaker is committing an *ad hominem fallacy* here (the *tu quoque* version). It may be the case that most

writers can not write, but that does not mean that they are not allowed to criticize the editor's work.

Because of the rather complicated way in which the speaker makes this discussion move – via quotations of contemptuous utterances of famous writers followed up by a direct quotation of Elliot, surely an authority in the field, with whose actual statement ('most writers are failed writers essentially') the reader may now even be more willingly to agree, there is a good chance that he will leave it at this. The reader will probably tacitly agree with both the suggestion that writers are not allowed to criticize the editor's work as well as the suggestion that many editors actually can write. It is doubtful though whether the speaker would have been equally convincing when no disdainful utterances of famous writers had been quoted and when the underlying reasoning could at once have been seen through. The more so since no arguments have been given from which might be concluded that editors really can write. Probably the speaker would have been far less convincing when he would have said straightaway that it is beyond doubt that editors can write although the opposite is presumed, and that writers are not allowed to criticize as most of them in fact cannot write. It seems that the direct quote of Elliot as well as the other quotes that were used have been very helpful in putting forward this standpoint in an indirect but therefore probably more convincing way.
In the following excerpt the speaker also uses a direct quotation to make his standpoint look more acceptable. Although the reasoning of the speaker is less complicated here, his conclusion seems to be equally convincing.

Excerpt 2
While his wife Hillary is still with both feet wading through the political mud, as a senator of the opposition should, Bill seems to have turned his mind purely to the main issues: poverty control, world peace, greenhouse effect. During the last electoral campaign in which he was involved, he even said with this typical, raspy and southern laugh: "It looks as if I am the only one in the country who admires both men." To give an advice to vote for Kerry subsequently. (*De Groene Amsterdammer*, September 23, 2005)
In the first sentence of this excerpt the speaker contrasts the conduct of Bill Clinton with that of his wife Hillary, about whom he says that she is still wading trough the political mud as might be expected from someone in the opposition. Clinton himself seems to have turned his mind purely to the main issues, the

speaker says. Although this last statement is presented here as a cautious observation, as something that may be objectively observed, it can actually be reconstructed as a (sub)standpoint of the speaker. It is not Clinton who has claimed that he has turned his mind purely to the main issues, it is merely the speaker who is claiming that he did.

In their book '*Argumentatieve indicatoren in het Nederlands*', in which indicators for argumentation in Dutch language are discussed, van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2005: 41) indicate that a statement may be reconstructed as a standpoint when 'it is clear that the speaker supposes, or when he may be expected to suppose on the basis of the reaction of the listener, that his assertive is not immediately acceptable'. Whether this criteria has been met in a specific case, can become clear from an utterance of opposition from the listener or, in case of an implicit discussion, from an assertive used by the speaker. To be able to determine how it can become clear from the presentation of a statement that the speaker presupposes that the statement is not acceptable just like that for the listener, two different types of presentation-indicators are discerned: 'propositional attitude indications' and 'illocutionary force modifications'. As in the excerpt that I want to analyse here only an illocutionary force modification has been used, I will only discuss the theory on this subject briefly here.
According to van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans the use of illocutionary force modifications like 'to my mind', 'it surely is the case that', 'naturally' and 'it seems', can be an indicator for putting forward a standpoint when an assertive is used. The speaker may use an illocutionary force modification to explain the illocutionary force of his assertive, but he may also use it to indicate that this explanation was necessary because he is expecting that the listener will not accept the statement just like that. When the latter is the case, the use of an assertive can be reconstructed as the presentation of a standpoint.
To determine whether the speaker indeed has wanted to indicate that he expects the listener not to accept the assertive without further ado in a specific case, one has to find out whether the illocutionary force modification that is concerned (a) can be used parenthetically and (b) whether it has indeed been used in this way. Expressions can be used parenthetically according to the authors, 'when they can be placed in different positions in a sentence without leading to an ungrammatical utterance' (2005, p. 43).

In the excerpt that is involved here an illocutionary force modification is used in

the assertive ‘Bill seems to have turned his mind purely to the main issues: poverty control, world peace, greenhouse effect’. On the basis of the insights that have been discussed before the use of this assertive can be reconstructed as the presentation of a (sub)standpoint here, as the illocutionary force modification ‘[it] seems [that]’ which is used in this sentence, can be put in different positions in sentences and is also used parenthetically here. This can be inferred from the following paraphrases:

– Bill has turned his mind purely to the main issues it seems: poverty control, world peace, greenhouse effect.

– It seems that Bill has turned his mind purely to the main issues: poverty control, world peace, greenhouse effect.

The standpoint the speaker puts forward can be paraphrased as: ‘It is my standpoint that Bill has turned his mind purely to the main issues: poverty control, world peace, greenhouse effect. Another reason to analyse the statement ‘Bill seems to have turned his mind purely to the main issues: poverty control, world peace, greenhouse effect’ as a standpoint, is that the speaker puts forward argumentation in the second sentence of the excerpt to demonstrate the acceptability of the foregoing statement. This argumentation is made up of the fact that Clinton has said himself, according to the speaker, that he admires ‘both men’, (Kerry and Bush) which utterance is represented in the direct quotation ‘It looks as if I am the only one in the country who admires both men’.
That the direct quotation must be conceived as argumentation, can be inferred from the part of the sentence in which the quotation is introduced. In this part of the sentence the speaker says that Clinton during the last electoral campaign in which he was involved *even* has said what is represented in the direct quote. With the use of the adverb ‘even’ the speaker indicates that the direct quotation has the function of argumentation.
With the use of ‘even’ the speaker indicates that it runs counter to all expectations – or maybe it would be more accurate to say against the speaker’s expectations, that Clinton admires Kerry *and* Bush. Clinton being a member of the democratic party, the speaker apparently expected him to admire exclusively a democrat, which would be Kerry in this case. This implicature can be derived in a Gricean manner; would the speaker not have expected Clinton to do anything different from what he actually does, the use of ‘even’ would have been superfluous here. It is because of this word ‘even’ that the speaker makes clear

that he finds it at least surprising that Clinton has said that he admires both men. At the same time, with the use of 'even' the speaker insinuates that it not only *looks* like Clinton has turned his mind to the main issues, but that he has actually said so himself. With this the speaker is insinuating that Clinton has also put forward the assertion in the first sentence. The question arises how this suggestion can be explained.

Utterances that are connected by means of the adverb 'even' can consist of sayings which come entirely on account of the speaker, but they can also partly consist of sayings that are quoted, as in direct quotations. As long as no quotations are used, it is only a matter of different assertions of one and the same speaker, from which the second one – the one in which the adverb 'even' is used, forms a specification of the first one. Only when quotations are used an argumentative relation between the utterances comes into existence. This may be exemplified with the following sentences:

(1) It is warm, it is even sweltering hot.
(2) I think he will come, I even think he will come today.
(3) He seems to have ambitious plans, I even belief he is going to rent an aeroplane.
(4) He seems to have ambitious plans, he even said he is going to rent an aeroplane.
(5) He seems to have ambitious plans, he even said: "I am going to rent an aeroplane".

In the sentences (1) up to and including (3) all assertions come on full account of the speaker. Only in sentences (4) and (5) in which quotations are used, utterances of other speakers are quoted to demonstrate the acceptability of the assertion of the speaker in the first half of the sentence, by which an argumentative relation comes into existence between this assertion of the speaker and the utterance that is replicated by him. There is a difference though between sentence (4) and (5). Different from sentence (4), the suggestion in sentence (5) seems to be that the quoted speaker has said himself 'I am having ambitious plans, because I am going to rent an airplane', whereas in sentence (4) in which not a direct quotation but an indirect quotation is used, the assertion that the quoted speaker has ambitious plans seems to be rather an interpretation of the speaker himself. When the direct quotation in the excerpt that is analysed here would be maintained and the adverb 'even' deleted, the insinuation that Clinton is

doing something that is against all expectations as well as the suggestion that he has defended the standpoint that is presented in the first sentence, both disappear. This becomes clear from the following paraphrase in which the adverb ‘even’ is deleted:
Bill seems to have turned his mind purely to the main issues: poverty control, world peace, greenhouse effect. During the last electoral campaign in which he was involved, he said with this typical, raspy and southern laugh: “It looks as if I am the only one in the country who admires both men.” To give an advice to vote for Kerry subsequently.

In this paraphrase the direct quotation of Clinton rather has an informative function than that it is meant to underpin another assertion. There is not such a clear argumentative relation with the assertion in the first sentence now. The function of the direct quote now is rather to demonstrate the dependability of the assertion in the first sentence, with which it is also clear that an interpretation of the speaker is concerned here.
Although it is the speaker in the original text who is claiming that Clinton has turned his mind to the main issues, the suggestion is that Clinton has asserted this himself. The suggestion is that he would have said something like ‘As may be clear I am turning my mind purely to the main issues, as I am admiring Kerry as well as Bush’. It is because of this suggestion that the impression can be conveyed of Clinton behaving inconsistently. When you are saying that you have turned your mind purely to the main items and that you are admiring Kerry as well as Bush, you should not give an advice on how to vote as you are actually suggesting that you have raised yourself above the party political squabble. Since Clinton does give an advice though on how to vote, as is the implicit argument of the speaker, this edification Clinton is showing off is in fact nothing more than pretence. When the speaker states that Clinton is giving an advice on how to vote (‘To give an advice to vote for Kerry subsequently’), he accuses him of behaving inconsistently.
Although it is not at all certain that Clinton actually made the quoted assertion with the intentions the speaker suggests, the reader will almost certainly be convinced of the inconsistent behaviour of Clinton. In only three short sentences the speaker seems to have succeeded to defend a standpoint convincingly which he did not even put forward explicitly and which he has substantiated only very minimally in fact.

4. *Conclusion*

Although empirical research shows that direct quotations are less likely to duplicate speech word-for-word than to selectively depict certain aspects of what someone has said while omitting or distorting others, the suggestion remains that direct quotations are exact replications. Direct quotations even suggest that not only the exact words but also the beliefs and intentions behind the words are replicated. This suggestion of replicating a speaker's words and with these words the quoted speaker's attitude, can be exploited in the strategic manoeuvring in the confrontation stage of the implicit discussion underlying an argumentative text. In this paper two excerpts have been analysed in which is shown how this suggestion of depicting the quoted speaker's attitude can be actually exploited by the speaker in putting forward a standpoint in such a way that it almost seems to be beyond all doubt.

NOTE

[i] The expression 'speaker' is used as a general term to refer to the current speaker in a written text – i.e. the writer of the text, as opposed to the quoted speaker

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