ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Analysis Of Fallacies in Croatian Parliamentary Debate

1. Introduction

1.1 Political structure in Croatia

Political system in Croatia is multi-party parliamentary republic. The State Authority is divided into the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Authority. The Legislative Authority is Croatian Parliament that may have a minimum of 100 and a maximum of 160 members, who are elected directly by secret ballot based on universal suffrage for a term of four years. 6th assembly of the Croatian Parliament was constituted on 11 January 2008 following the parliamentary elections held on 25 November 2007 in 12 electoral districts. 153 representatives were elected. Currently the Croatian Parliament has 153 members. They are in session twice a year: the first session runs between 15 January and 15 July, while the second session runs from 15 September to 15 December. The Croatian Parliament can also hold extraordinary sessions at the request of the Croatian President, the Government or a majority of parliamentary deputies. Extraordinary sessions may be convened by the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament after obtaining the prior opinion of the clubs of parliamentary parties. Executive powers are exercised by the Croatian Government that consists of the Prime Minster, one or more Deputy Prime Ministers and ministers. The organization, mode of operation and decision-making of the Government are regulated by law and the rules of procedure. Currently, the head of the Government is Jadranka Kosor and the Government is formed by HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) in coalition with HSS (Croatian Peasant Party) and SDSS (Independent Democratic Serbian Party). Political life in Croatia includes political parties as well. From the beginning, i.e. from the first free, multiparty democratic elections in 1990, the number of parties is constantly changing. Šiber (2001:103) says that that kind of numerical instability, as well as parties with vague political profiles, are typical for countries in transition. He continues that political parties in stable democracies have tradition and clear and stable programs, while countries in transition are still trying to form their party system because political parties

merge, fraction, appear and disappear. Čular (2001:89) points out that Croatian party system consists of 7 larger parties: HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union), SDP (Social Democratic Party), HNS (Croatian Peoples Party), HSLS (Croatian Social Liberal Party), HSS (Croatian Peasant Party), IDS (Istrian Democratic Assembly) and HSP (Croatian Party of the Right). In January 2008 there were 11 parties: above-mentioned plus HDSSB (Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja), HSU (Croatian Party of Pensioners), SDSS (Independent Democratic Serbian Party) and SDA (Party of Democratic Action of Croatia).

1.2. *Left-wing and right-wing parties in Croatia*

According to the *Lexicon of basic political terms* the dominant feature of left-wing parties is liberalism. Prpić (1994:223) defines it as a political philosophy that takes freedom to be the main criterion for the evaluation of social institutions. Key terms of liberalism are freedom, individualism, equality, social justice and democracy. On the other hand, dominant feature of the Right is conservativism which is considered to have great influence on the development of modern states. It implies the respect for authority while the key terms are law, legality, sovereignty, nationalism and union. According to the research conducted by Banković-Mandić (2007:5-6), the identity of the Right is seen through a great amount of pathos, moralizing and emotions thus reflecting law, sovereignty and nationalism. The identity of the Left is connected with reasoning, situation analysis, rationality, lack of emotions, social justice and equality. Political parties in Croatia use their programs to declare their affiliation to the Right or Left option, or to the Centre. But the research by Banković-Mandić (2007:5-6), based on the usage of rhetorical figures, as well as the public opinion survey, have shown that many parties have problems with their profile – they classify themselves one way and the public perceives them differently. There is also a discrepancy between the wing the party belongs to (and public identity) and political statements members of particular party give. For example, HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) emphasizes their vicinity to the Centre, but the public sees them as the Right. IDS (Istrian Democratic Assembly) declare that they are left-wing party, but the public perceives them as right-wing. Interesting results appear concerning HSP (Croatian Party of the Right) which classify themselves as right-wing party (even ultra right-wing 10 years ago) while on the basis of the statements from their members they are considered to be the Centre, even slightly left-wing. Left-wing parties in Croatia are thought to be SDP (Social Democratic Party) and HNS (Croatian Peoples Party). Struggle for the equality of

all citizens and abolition of impregnability as left-wing trademarks, have been assigned to HNS. HSLS and HSS have been recognized as the Centre just as they classify themselves. Škarić (2009:15-16) used to talk about left-wing parties and their ideology and rhetoric as well as how people perceive that ideology in Croatia. "Left-wing ideology is much safer because those who represent it have taken position of those whose ideology does not need explanations. Those who are left-wing are therefore a priori right, at the same time they are more ethical, and they are in position to criticize without having fear for their own position. On the other hand, those who are in the Centre and on the Right are in the position that constantly makes them feel guilty about their ideology."

2. Theoretical Background

Fallacies in argumentation have been in the spotlight for many years and analyzed by many argumentation theorists. Therefore, many definitions and different classification of fallacies have been made, but all of them agree that fallacies are mistakes in reasoning. Hamblin says: "As almost every account from Aristotle onwards tells you, a fallacious argument is the one that seems to be valid but is not so." (1970:12). The first classification of fallacies was given by Aristotle who made difference between *fallaciae dictionis* (refutations that depend on language) and *fallaciae extra dictionem* (refutations that do not depend on language). After Aristotle there were many classifications of fallacies, but for the purpose of this research, Tindale's classification has been used. It includes a great number of fallacies and covers most of the fallacies used in political discourse as well as in everyday argumentation. Tindale says: "A fallacy is a particular kind of egregious error, one that seriously undermines the power of reason in an argument by diverting it or screening it in some way."(2007:1). In Tindale's classification there are: fallacies of diversion, fallacies of structure, problems with language, ad hominem arguments, other "ad" arguments, the ad verecundiam and misuse of experts, sampling, correlation and cause and analogical reasoning. The other author who was also of great importance for our research is Weston. He simply states that "fallacies are mistakes, errors in arguments" (1992:52) and that some are more common then the others. The two most common fallacies by Weston are: generalizing from incomplete information and overlooking alternatives. We included them in our analysis.

3. Purpose and Hypothesis

The research has several closely connected purposes. Firstly, the aim is to find

out how often do Croatian politicians in Croatian Parliament make fallacies. Their argumentation is of main interest, as well as their tendency to use "false arguments". Secondly, the aim is to see whether the politicians are going to differ in the usage of fallacies according to the party they belong to as well as according to their position in the Parliament. Previous research (Kišiček, 2008:189-203) analyzed fallacies in argumentation according to the gender of the politician (regardless of the party he or she belongs to). The paper has shown that there are fallacies that are more typical for male as those that are more typical for female speakers (e.g. argumentum ad verecundiam was used more by male speakers and argumentum ad misericordiam was used more by female speakers). However, most of the fallacies were used equally by both male and female (argumetum ad populum, generalizing from incomplete information, false cause, overlooking alternatives, red herring, etc.). The purpose of this research is to find out differences on the basis of political affiliation.

Starting hypothesis was based on the main characteristics of the Left and the Right. Taking into account that left-wing parties are in favor of equality of all people and equal rights, it was expected to see them using more argumentum ad populum, ad misericordiam and overlooking alternatives. On the other hand, right-wing parties that represent respect for authority, national awareness and moral are expected to use more argumentum ad baculum, ad hominem, ad verecundiam and generalizing from incomplete information.

However, it is believed that the great number of fallacies will be equally used by all parties and the type and frequency will depend on the topic of discussion. For example, if the topic is the prevention of juvenile violence or violence against women, ad misericordiam is likely to be used, if the topic is house building, there will be false analogy, red herring, false cause and if the topic is the modification of the Constitution, non sequitur, ad baculum and ad hominem will probably appear.

4. Materials and Methods
For the purpose of the research 20 sessions of the Parliament (from 23 September 2009 to 20 May 2010) have been analyzed. Duration of the session depends on the agenda and the topic discussed. However, on average they last for two hours.

In order to see whether the type and number of fallacies in argumentation is influenced by the topic of discussion, different topics have been taken; from Act

on Golf Courses and Juvenile Violence Act to constitutional changes that are most interesting to the media. As one session (the discussion on one topic) lasts two hours in average, altogether about 40 hours of material have been analyzed. The procedure was made easier by the fact that all sessions from the past few years are available for viewing at the official internet site of Croatian Parliament (http://itv.sabor.hr/video/).

The list of the fallacies obtained from the analyzed sessions includes the following information: name of the fallacy, name of the person who used it, date and time, and the topic of discussion. In determining whether the mistake in reasoning really happened, the context of the fallacy was taken into consideration. The material gathered is analyzed in order to find out which fallacy is used most often in the Parliament as well as in order to see which party is most prone to the usage of fallacies. However, the main goal of our research is to find which "side" i.e. which ideology (right of left) makes more fallacies and are there differences in the types of fallacies they make. Therefore, we were not interested in particular speakers and their duration and frequency of speaking, but in the duration and frequency of member of particular party. Finally, what was important for the analysis was that both "sides" (left and right) participated in analyzed parliamentary debate for the same amount of time.

For this purpose, Tindale's (2007) classification of fallacies has been used as well as Weston`s division on "two great fallacies" (1992:52-53).

5. Results and Discussion

The analysis of fallacies in Croatian Parliamentary debate includes 404 fallacies which are listed according to the frequency of their usage.
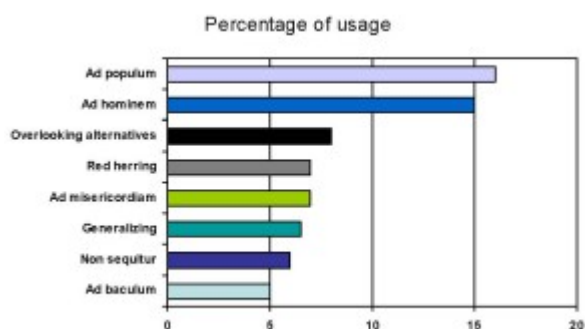
Most often used fallacy is argumentum ad populum – a fallacious argument that

concludes a proposition to be true because many or all people believe it. This fallacy is often accompanied by words like: "Everybody knows that.", "It is common sense." and similar. Argumentum ad populum was equally used by all politicians regardless of their political position. However, IDS representatives with 43% have the greatest percentage of usage among Parliament Members. They are followed by HDZ with 25% and SDP and HNS, both with 13%.

Another fallacy on the top of the list is argumentum ad hominem. However, that fallacy is not used by all Members of Parliament and all political parties equally. It can be found in the speeches given by the members of HDZ in much higher percentage – 66%. Other parties use it occasionally, SDP – 20%, HNS -7%, HSS – 7%. This kind of ad hominem distribution confirms the starting hypothesis that right-wing parties will use Argumentum ad hominem more often. It is important to note that the party that uses ad hominem most often is the party in power. When being criticized for their way of governing, it was more or less expected from the party in power, in lack of arguments, to reach for this kind of fallacy in order to attack and discredit the opposition.

The third fallacy according to the percentage is considered to be one of the two greatest fallacies by Weston (1992:53). The usage of overlooking alternatives also confirmed our hypothesis. It was mostly used by the parties in opposition, by left-wing representatives who form their claims proposing only one possibility that would bring social justice, fairness and equality. The fallacy of overlooking alternatives is distributed in the following way: 43% SDP, 38% IDS, 16% HNS and only 3% HDZ.
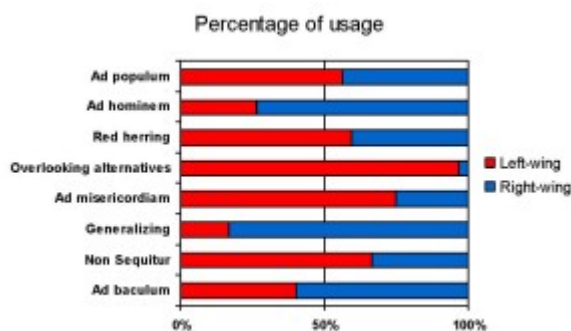
Right next to the fallacy of overlooking alternatives in the percentage of usage is red herring known also as diverting attention. This fallacy includes the introduction of a new equally interesting topic in order to temporarily or permanently conceal the lack of arguments on the topic discussed. It can be found in speeches of all parties, i.e. IDS – 47%, HDZ – 25%, SDP – 14%, HNS – 14%.

Another fallacy that was not evenly distributed among left-wing and right-wing parties is argumentum ad misericordiam or the appeal to pity. Our hypothesis that it would be used more by left-wing parties has been confirmed: SDP – 50%, IDS-20%, HDZ – 17 %, independent representatives – 13%.

On the other hand, fallacy that was used more by right-wing parties is

generalizing from incomplete information. Faced with a lot of criticism, the party in power gives incomplete information and makes general conclusions in order to justify their actions. Therefore, the percentage of usage of this fallacy by HDZ is 66%, by SDP 17% and by independent representatives 17% as well.

There are other fallacies that are constantly used in Croatian Parliamentary Debate by both the Right and the Left, although not so often: non sequitur, ad baculum, concession, false analogy, false cause, qualification, peticio principii, slippery slope, equivocation, straw man, argumentum ad verecundiam.

No.	Fallacy	Example
1	argumentum ad populum	*"As you already know, a lot of families have small flats and now children have been born. What they need are larger flats." – M. Matanović-Dropulić, HDZ (Right-wing) "It is perfectly clear that this law goes in favor of construction mafia."* *– G. Beus-Richenberg, HNS (Left-wing)*

2	argumentum ad hominem	*"When mister Kajin takes the golf club, I assure you that he will be Tiger Woods in every sense." (in a debate on golf courses) – B. Rončević, HDZ (Right-wing) "When she was talking about those writings, one immediately came to my mind: Cook woman, talk less, so your meal won't be mess."* *– J. Rošin, HDZ (Right-wing)*
3	overlooking alternatives	*As there are no signs of banks paying attention to the real situation, the Government must react with this law." (in a debate on the Special Interest Tax Law) – D. Zgrebec, SDP (Left-wing) "The only reasonable solution that goes in favor of Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens is to vote in Croatia."* *– Z. Milanović, SDP (Left-wing)*

| 4	red herring	*"Nobody should talk in favor of soft drugs." (in a debate on school violence)– K. Markovinović, HDZ (Right-wing) "The church is important. It is a good thing that Bozanić said that all violence should be reported, including that of the priest. I know that we are not Ireland..." (in a debate on school violence)* *– D. Kajin, IDS (Left-wing)*
5	argumentum ad misericordiam	*"Even today I remember how I bid farewell to all those boys and girls. Then I used to cry just like today (crying). You should take care of them, minister, take care that they have all they need. They represent Croatia for years. You are held responsible for their lives." – Ž. Antunović, SDP (Left-wing)"Is that the destiny of our people, to be housemaids and porters to the rich?"* *– I. Antičević-Marinović, SDP (Left-wing)*
6	generalization from incomplete information	*"Minister of health has introduced a large number of innovations." (in a debate on the quality of work of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare)– A. Hebrang. HDZ (Right-wing)*

7	non sequitur	*"Please, do not mess with the number of commercial courts because the one in Pazin is most efficient."– D. Kajin, IDS (Left-wing)*
8	argumentum ad baculum	*"You are going to vote in favor of this Act, but beware in two or three year's time when it becomes the subject of inquiries. Those who were laughing are no longer in the Parliament; we all know where they are."– D. Lesar, independent representative*
9	false analogy	*"This Act will improve Croatian tourism. Just like tennis was trendy 30 years ago, the same way golf will be the centre of tourism one day."– B. Rončević, HDZ (Right-wing)*
10	false cause	*"The act of buying flats would decrease the number of illegal flat leasing."– B. Kunst, HDZ (Right-wing)*
11	qualification	*"We are sending more soldiers to the lost mission in Afghanistan."– D. Kajin, IDS (Left-wing)*
12	peticio principii	*"All I ask is for things to be sorted out in a transparent way and was not the case for the past 20 years because everything was settled behind closed doors." – Z. Milanović, SDP (Left-wing)*

13	slippery slope	*"We should take them back from Afghanistan because it will come our turn, so our boys will get killed." – D. Kajin, IDS (Left-wing)*
14	equivocation	*"We are for compromise, but compromise is not when you want everything yours to be 100% approved. I agree we have to find key points, but through compromise, not dictate. "– Vladimir Šeks, HDZ (Right-wing)*
15	straw man	*"It is not true that Croatia has to fulfill every condition so that it can be praised for its cooperation."– D. Lesar, indepentent representative*
16	argumentum ad verecundiam	*"Oscar Wilde said that golf was a bad way to interrupt a good conversation."– I. Antičević-Marinović, SDP (Left-wing)*

Table 1
List of fallacies according to the percentage of usage

When analyzing fallacies according to the parties speakers belong to, most fallacies were made by HDZ – 31 %. Right behind in the number of fallacies are IDS representatives, particularly one representative Damir Kajin, with 29 %. 24 % of all fallacies belong to SDP, 8 % to HNS, 7 % to independent representative Dragutin Lesar and 1 % to HSS.

Percentage of usage

Legend: HDZ, IDS, SDP, HNS, Independant, HSS
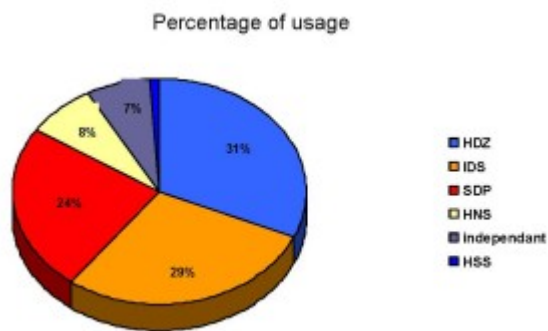
Overall analysis shows that left-wing parties, which are in opposition to the party in power, make more fallacies than right-wing parties. However, Parliamentary debates very often take form in which the opposition is in fact the Affirmative trying to change the existing state and therefore they make more confrontation, more criticism and more fallacies. The party in power, even when proposing an act, has parliament majority so they take the position of "the defense" as they argue in favor of their ideas.

6. Conclusion

Concerning the given analysis, one can conclude that Parliamentary debates are full of fallacies in argumentation. Every politician included in the analysis had made a fallacious argument during the session. However, not all politicians provide the same amount of fallacies in argumentation. Although, on the basis of Škarić's (2009:15-16) conclusion, one would expect less fallacies from the Left because they are *a priori* in the position of representing ethical goals that do not need explanations, the analysis has shown the opposite. The reason for such results is their current role of opposition in the Parliament, meaning that they criticize more often; they contradict the Parliament majority more often and therefore make more fallacies in argumentation. This does not mean that they are less logical or that right-wing party in Croatian Parliament has better argumentation, it just goes to show that left-wing Members of Parliament make a stand more often.

The analysis has shown that there are certain fallacies that are more characteristic for particular parties. For example, argumentum ad hominem is definitely the fallacy typical for HDZ – right-wing party that is currently in power, while the fallacy of overlooking alternatives is typical for left-wing parties in opposition. Most often used fallacy is argumentum ad populum that is equally characteristic for all political parties.

Further research might include the analysis of Parliamentary Debate from 2000 to 2004 when the circumstances concerning the party in power and the opposition were reversed; when left-wing parties were in power. It would be interesting to see whether fallacies were used differently back then, i.e. whether the argumentation (and fallacies in argumentation) depends on political ideology or political position.

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