

ISSA Proceedings 2014 ~ On The Benefits Of Applying Argumentation Theory To Research On The Simultaneous Interpretation Of Political Speeches

Abstract: Even though interpreting is to a great extent about the interlinguistic reproduction of arguments, argumentation theory is almost completely overlooked by interpreting studies, which partly explains the frequent production of pragmatically inappropriate interpreted texts. Against the theoretical gap, the paper puts forward a descriptive argumentation approach to political speeches with a view to their simultaneous interpretation, in the attempt to make the case for a systematic contribution of argumentation studies to interpretation theory and training.

Keywords: argumentative equivalence, simultaneous interpreting, source texts (STs), strategic manoeuvring.

1. Introduction

The omnipresence of argumentation in everyday verbal communication is the hinge of argumentation studies (van Eemeren et al., 1996, pp. 1-2) and the main reason for their flourishing, from the classical period to a renewed spate of interest last century. What is probably less evident and certainly less studied is the fact that the socio-professional needs of the globalised world repeatedly demand that argumentation be reproduced in another language to cater for interlinguistic communication needs. In this respect, the present paper analyses how argumentation is and should be reproduced in interlinguistic settings requiring the interpreting service.

Argumentation is “the dominant mode of discourse in many *interpreted* situations” (Marzocchi, 1997, p. 182) and interpretation consequently implies a continuous argumentative interaction, thereby requiring at least an intuitive

knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of arguments on the part of interpreters (Marzocchi, 1997, p. 184). Notably, when the predominant focus of a communicative situation is on the discursive attempt to resolve a difference of opinion, the quality of the interpreter's performance is assessed on the basis of his/her ability to convey the argumentative purpose of the original text, "possibly to the detriment of other kinds of equivalence or of received ideas concerning fidelity" (Marzocchi, 1997, p. 183). This particularly holds true for political argumentation, in which the systematic and subtle implementation of strategic manoeuvring (Zarefsky, 2009, p. 115) to overcome a conflict between different lines of action demands specific equivalence standards not only concerning the content of the message but also its persuasive and ethotic dimensions, which are less important in other communicative events such as specialist conferences.

However, despite the significant development of argumentation studies in the last few decades and the argumentative character of several interpreted situations, the extent to which knowledge of argumentation theory by the interpreter could benefit the overall comprehension of the original or *source text* and favour the production of the respective *interpreted text* has yet to be explored (Crevatin in Marzocchi, 1998, Preface, p. xiv). More precisely, the growing interest in argumentation has gone mostly unnoticed in interpreting scholarly settings, in spite of its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature. This is partly due to the fact that interpreting research is a fairly young and largely unexplored discipline (Garzone & Viezzi, 2002, p. 2), and the contribution of argumentation makes up one of most overlooked albeit potentially fruitful domains.

The paper outlines the preliminary findings of a broader PhD project focusing on the empirical examination of recurrent argument schemes in a multilingual corpus of political speeches. By harnessing the hermeneutical and contrastive functions of argumentation analysis (Marzocchi, 1998, p. 8), the study uncovers substantial differences in speakers' adoption of argument schemes, thereby making the case for enhanced language-specific, argumentation-driven interpreter preparation. In this respect, the present paper is primarily concerned with the applicability of argumentation concepts and methods to interpreter training.

The study of political argumentation in interpreting settings entails a specific focus on simultaneous interpreting, since it is the most widely adopted modality for the interpretation of political speeches. However, the remarks will also hold

true for consecutive interpreting because, though progressively ousted by the simultaneous modality, it is still adopted and included in university curricula, and thus fits the training-oriented rationale of the study. In section 2, evidence of interpreters' difficulty in reproducing the original arguments in the interpreted text is shown and discussed; sections 3 and 4 will respectively briefly present the reference corpus and illustrate the methodological underpinnings of the study; section 5 will explore the main findings, which are eventually discussed in section 6.

2. Interpreting is first and foremost a translational activity, involving a "source-text induced target-text production" (Neubert, 1985, p. 8).

Reflection on the relation between the source text (ST) and the interpreted text (IT) is therefore inescapable, and the ST-IT comparison, aiming at determining relations of equivalence and standards of quality, is at the heart of translation and interpreting studies.

Interpreting can be distinguished from other types of translational activity by its immediacy:

Interpreting is a form of Translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language. (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 11)

Therefore, unlike written translation, interpreting is characterised by ephemeral presentation and immediate production. These severe time and cognitive constraints intensify in the simultaneous modality, in which the interpreter listens to the ST through headphones and delivers the IT into a microphone, almost simultaneously, with a slight delay (*décalage*) between message reception and message production. Therefore, the *hic et nunc* nature of the activity confronts interpreters with the task of constructing a mental representation of the text as it progressively unfolds. This further challenges the attainment of an "acceptable" degree of equivalence, rendering interpreted texts more prone to substantial pragmatic shifts than translated texts, which are instead supposed to be produced after careful work. Indeed, what is required in interpreting is not equivalence *in toto*, but the equivalence of the communicative function (Viezzi, 1999, p. 147), or "pragmatic quality" (Kopczyński, 1994, p. 190) ensuring a high degree of "intertextual coherence" (Straniero Sergio, 2003, p. 147) between the ST and the IT.

However daunting, the task can be appropriately performed after the development of procedural competence (Riccardi, 2005, p. 755) and only by relying on extra-textual knowledge and anticipation, i.e. prediction “based on previously acquired contextual and discoursal knowledge” (Garzone, 2000, p. 73). This means that training and advance preparation play a major role in determining the success of an interpretation (Gile, 1995, pp. 144-145), in that they are vital resources making up for the lack of the necessary time to process a novel text. In other words, professional interpreting is not limited to the actual oral translation of a speech but covers a larger lapse of time, catering for the otherwise insufficient minutes or hours interpreters would have qualitatively to perform an unnatural (Riccardi, 2005, p. 756), extremely delicate and “unstable” activity, potentially engendering substantial pragmatic shifts (Colucci, 2011).

Building on its “instability” and based on the translational needs for compensation (Harvey, 1995) and reformulation (Falbo, 1999), interpreting has been compared to a chemical experiment, in which *matter* and *energy* remain unchanged before and after the operation, despite the likely alteration in their distribution (Snelling, 1999, p. 203); matter may be considered to refer to the propositional content of the original message and energy is identifiable with the pragmatic force of the ST. However evocative and vivid, though, the comparison is not a faithful description of the activity, but only a useful methodological suggestion, because interpreting is not subject to laws of physics; both matter and energy are systematically threatened by alteration, more often resulting in “dissolution”, i.e. omission of text segments or mitigation of the pragmatic force of statements, and less frequently leading to “aggregation”, i.e. arbitrary additions and “parallel formulations” (Straniero Sergio, 2003, pp. 159-160).

The quantities of matter and energy can be altered by various factors, which may be said to fall into two categories. On the one hand, there are intrinsic factors compounding the translational task, among which linearity or “the fact that the text becomes available only gradually” (Shlesinger, 1995, p. 193); co-text dependence (Garzone, 2000, p. 71), leading interpreters to lose sight of the context; and the specific language combination, posing targeted problems mainly deriving from the different syntactic rules of the language-pair in question. However challenging, though, these intrinsic obstacles are gradually overcome through the development of procedural competence.

On the other hand, there are “contextual” triggers of matter and energy

dissolution and/or aggregation, and they are all ascribable to the interpreter's scarce preparation or insufficient individual knowledge regarding the topic, the speaker and the type of text (Riccardi, 1998, pp. 173-174). Unlike intrinsic constraints, these factors have a more pronounced individual dimension and are directly linked to interpreter training, particularly to the need gradually to develop the "textual and discoursal competence" (Garzone, 2000, p. 73) enabling interpreters to tackle the speeches with a reasonable degree of confidence. In this respect, extra-linguistic knowledge-related mistakes can be considered a direct consequence of the scarce attention devoted to STs in interpreting studies (Garzone, 2000, p. 69), which is ascribable to a general underrating of pragmatics (Viaggio, 2002, p. 229) that, especially in the interpretation of political speeches, is partly determined by a marked neglect of argumentation theory (Marzocchi, 1998).

The consequences of incomplete interpreter curricula and scarce preparation of the genre, content and ethotic dimension of the ST are evident in the example provided in Table 1, showing the interpretation of an excerpt of Obama's 2009 Inaugural Address, broadcast live on Italian television and performed by a professional interpreter. The example is drawn from CorIT, the television interpreting corpus developed at the University of Trieste. The Italian interpretation has been retranslated into English and displayed in the right column.

ST - Obama, Inauguration Speech, 20 th January 2009	IT – retranslation into English
Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short, for they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose and necessity to courage. What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long, no longer apply.	Now, there are a few questions standing before these ambitions. Our system can't tolerate big plans. One always tends to forget. Many have forgotten what our country has already done, what free men and women can do when their imagination is joined to the will to do good things. And often did the ground tremble beneath us. And now there are problems related to consumption capacity.

Table 1: "Argumentative dissolution" in the ST-IT passage

ST - Obama, Inauguration Speech, 20th January 2009 Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short, for they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free

men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose and necessity to courage. What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long, no longer apply. IT - retranslation into English Now, there are a few questions standing before these ambitions. Our system can't tolerate big plans. One always tends to forget. Many have forgotten what our country has already done, what free men and women can do when their imagination is joined to the will to do good things. And often did the ground tremble beneath us. And now there are problems related to consumption capacity.

Rather than an experiment, Table 1 looks more like a chemical disaster. Despite the partially conjectural nature of mistake aetiology in Error Analysis (Falbo, 2002, p. 115), the origin of a mistake can generally be gleaned with a certain degree of precision during the comparison between the ST and the IT. All the more so when, as in the above passage, neither incomprehensible referents nor particular difficulties stand out. In this particular case, the ST delivery speed was at times considerable and the pressure deriving from interpreting live the first message of the newly-elected President of the United States cannot be overlooked. Neither can the peculiarities of TV interpreting; whereas in conference settings interpreters are generally given the texts of the speeches and therefore have at least a few minutes to prepare, in televised interpreted events they hardly ever have the opportunity to see the text (Straniero Sergio, 2003, pp. 169-170). However, despite being unquestionable compounding factors, information density, unhelpful employers and excessive delivery speed are not excuses for poor translation, because their potentially detrimental consequences can be partially obviated by attentive and selective listening (Palazzi, 2007, p.

Therefore, given the groundlessness of the above hypotheses, the “dissolution of argumentation” is likely to have been triggered by the presence of a *straw man argument* in the ST. Since “when an opponent’s position is distorted or exaggerated in a straw man argument, the effect is often to divert the line of argument to irrelevant issues” (Walton, 2004, p. 22), the sudden shift towards irrelevance may have compounded comprehension and challenged relevant translation. In simpler terms, an interpreter, uninformed of the exaggerating implications of the *straw man*, has difficulties in grasping the argumentative move and may reasonably dread an impending launch of a personal attack by the speaker or, in Politeness terms, a *face-threatening act* (FTA) against another politician. Its translation would require enhanced attention to proper names, politeness strategies and the careful reproduction of the pragmatic force of the message, exposing the interpreter to the risk of *committing an FTA against him/herself*, i.e. staining his/her interpreter reputation.

This is only an example, but it corroborates the hypothesis that unawareness of the specific argument strategies adopted by source language speakers is bound to add a further obstacle to the attainment of a quality interpretation and put the interpreter at a disadvantage against the rhetorical abilities of politicians.

3. *The corpus*

The study is based on a recently assembled multilingual corpus that is composed of three hundred and thirteen political speeches on the current financial and economic crisis, which are almost equally divided into American, British and French speeches; a hundred and nine were delivered by Barack Obama, a hundred and one by David Cameron, a hundred and three by Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande (respectively fifty-three and fifty). All the speeches were delivered between 2008 and 2014 and make up a sample of the discourse on the financial and economic crisis that has monopolised political communication over the last few years, probably outranking the discourse on the war on terror, at least in the United States. The speeches have been selected for their being delivered within international settings requiring the interpreting service (e.g. the G20), but also national speeches have been taken into account, as they are often chosen for exam sessions in translation and interpreting faculties.

The corpus has been named ARGO, for its reference to *argumentation* and after

Ulysses' dog because, just as the dog recognised his owner when he returned to Ithaca twenty years after leaving, the corpus is meant to promote the recognition and internalisation of recurrent argumentative strategies before the interpretation.

4. The methodological scope of interpreting-oriented argumentation analysis

The interpreting-oriented argumentation analysis is therefore a ST analysis, having little to do with the ST-IT comparison and rather aiming at studying the argumentation of source language speakers with a view to its recognition and reproduction in translation, with the observation of the interpreters' failures in reproducing argumentation patterns merely serving as a rationale for targeted argumentation analyses. The scope of this peculiar kind of analysis is determined by its specific informative, profession-oriented needs, which are only catered for by the descriptive study of content-related argumentation. More specifically, interest in argumentation in interpreting research is directed towards the findings of applied studies, focusing on both text analysis and the didactics of argumentation in the attempt to promote anticipation and enhance the argumentative competence of interpreter trainees (Marzocchi, 1998, p. 43).

Among all the crucial concepts in argumentation theory (van Eemeren, 2001), the present research was limited to the detection and description of argument schemes, because their study provides insights into the generalised content of arguments (Garssen: in van Eemeren, 2001, p. 72) and provides textual and contextual information (van Eemeren, 2001, p. 20), thereby catering for the descriptive and content-related need of interpreting research.

Yet, however insightful theoretical dissertations may be, the boundaries of interpreting-oriented argumentation analysis and the specific focus of the paper are best explained by means of an example. Take the formal scheme of the argument from distress (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008, p. 334):

Individual x is in distress.

If y brings about A, it will relieve or help to relieve this distress.

Therefore, y ought to bring about A.

It is not unrelated to political communication, but the relevance of its internalisation by the interpreter of political speeches is questionable, as it does not provide him/her with a particular advantage during the interpreting process,

but only gives a content-abstract indication of what may or may not come up in a speech; moreover, interpreters are not interested in being told normatively how to argue, because their task is to reproduce the argumentation of others. Rather, they may benefit from knowing in advance the contextual implementation of the scheme by a given speaker.

(1) But it [the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act] will give millions of *families* resigned to *financial ruin* the chance to *rebuild*. (my emphasis) (Remarks by President Obama on the Mortgage Crisis, 18th February 2009)

Example (1) is one of the several enthymemic implementations of the argument from distress that have been found in the American sub-corpus. Particularly, the sentence rests upon a specific form of the argument, that can be named *Argument from Middle-Class Distress*.

The Middle Class is in distress.

If the government implements act x, it will relieve or help to relieve this distress.

Therefore, the government ought to implement act x.

Only content-related schemes have the potential to warn interpreters of the recurrent topicality of discursive practices legitimising specific political courses of action, like Obama's recurrent leveraging the middle class *topos* to gain consensus for economic policies. In the following section, other examples drawn from the corpus are examined in context, highlighting the focus on strategic manoeuvring in political argumentation and its key role in supplementing the education, background knowledge and procedural competence of the interpreter.

5. Findings

In pragma-dialectical terms, this chiefly content-related analysis may be described in terms of highlighting the topical potential of a specific instance of argumentation. The practice is highly relevant to interpreters' needs because, in the light of the predictability (Zarefsky, 2009, p. 115) of political argumentation, a descriptive account of the schemes recurrently used by a given speaker in a given context may raise text expectations in the interpreters' minds during the training and/or preparation phases, thereby easing the inferential and translation processes during the interpretation.

However, the predictability of political argumentation concerns not only the topical dimension but the whole of argumentation (Zarefsky, 2009, p. 115),

therefore also how it is presented and how it is adapted to audience demands, following the strategic manoeuvring categorisation (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 93).

Indeed, analysis of strategic manoeuvring in the corpus uncovers several argument recurrences; particularly, substantial disparities in the speakers' adoption of argument schemes stand out. Unlike Obama, for instance, David Cameron presents himself as an expert on the economic crisis, but he also uses simple argumentation. For example, he repeatedly compares the world economy to a global race in which every country runs alone and aims at winning the race. By doing this, he generally abides by the following argument scheme:

The UK is running a global race.

It risks being outpaced by other countries.

Therefore, it must run faster than others.

The scheme alone can act as a cognitive support by helping interpreters anticipate the general content of several speech passages, but highlighting the recurrent presentational devices associated with the *Global Race Argument* provides a further and equally helpful lexico-syntagmatic support, reducing processing and decoding efforts and paving the way for a higher quality translation. Quite unsurprisingly, *fast, quick, speed, win/lose, keep up with* are the recurrent lexical indicators of the scheme, that is also accompanied by vivid and less predictable sentences like "*the world is breathing down our neck*" and "*in this global race you are quick or you are dead*". Pointing out the presentational devices typical of a given argument scheme is instrumental, in that it warns interpreters of *what* the speaker is accustomed to saying, instead of limiting the research applicability to the indication of the generalised content of the arguments found in a specific discourse.

However, the sole focus on topical potential and presentational devices is not enough to give a faithful overview of the speaker's argumentative routines, because Cameron actually does not always resort to the *Global Race Argument* when dealing with the world economy: the presence of the argument is considerable only in national addresses, while in international settings it seems to be replaced by its opposite, that can reasonably be named *Argument from Multilateral Economic Cooperation*. The argument, shifting the argumentation to a completely different ground, has the following scheme:

We are living in an interconnected world.

Crisis in one country affects all the other countries.

Therefore, cooperation is needed for the sake of world economy.

The context-dependent alternation between the *Global Race Argument* and the *Argument from Multilateral Economic Cooperation* corroborates the pragma-dialectical tenet that argumentation is systematically adapted to the audience. In this particular case, the standpoint is adapted, or rather overturned, too because, when dealing with the role of nations in the world economy, Cameron defends a different standpoint depending on the relevant audience. From an interpreter's point of view, this means knowing in advance what the speaker generally says (and therefore will probably say) in a specific communicative context.

The adaptability, culture- and context-based heterogeneity of the above arguments are substantially confirmed by the analysis of ARGO. It is true that also a few similarities have been detected among the different sub-corpora, but they concern typically "political" arguments, namely the *straw man argument*, giving the opponents a bad name, the *topos of history* (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 80), comparing the present crisis to past predicaments, and the *locus of the irreparable* (Zarefsky, 2009, p. 123), urging the implementation of economic policies. However, apart from these distinctly "political" arguments, the speakers generally steer their speeches towards highly different thematic and argumentative corners, which is, however, also a consequence of the specific national implications of the global recession. Their choice of argument schemes differs substantially, as far as topical selection, adaptation to audience demands and presentational devices are concerned. For instance, in line with his focus on the middle class, Obama tells vivid stories of the resilience of the American people in the face of the crisis, showing a predilection for *anecdotal arguments* (Govier & Jansen, 2011, p. 75) breaking the flow of rational argumentation.

(2) When Bryan Ritterby was laid off from his job making furniture, he said he worried that at fifty-five, no one would give him a second chance. But he found work at Energetx, a wind turbine manufacturer in Michigan. Before the recession, the factory only made luxury yachts. Today, it's hiring workers like Bryan, who said, "I'm proud to be working in the industry of the future". (State of the Union Address 2012)

Cameron and Sarkozy opt for a more specialist discourse, presenting themselves as experts on the economic crisis. While Cameron explains the causes of the crisis and the looming consequences of certain policies with intricate slippery slope

arguments (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008, p. 114), Sarkozy recurrently adopts an argument that may be named *Argument from Need for Regulated Capitalism*, defending the need for state intervention in the economy, which is perfectly in line with his interventionist political stance (Mayaffre, 2012, p. 15).

(3) *L'idée de la toute puissance du marché qui ne devait être contrarié par aucune règle, par aucune intervention politique, était une idée folle. L'idée que les marchés ont toujours raison était une idée folle.*

The very idea of a *free, non-regulated* market was a crazy idea. The idea of markets being always right was a crazy idea. (my translation, my emphasis)
(Sarkozy's Speech in Toulon, 25th September 2008)

Rather, Hollande's argumentation heavily relies on the argument from thrift (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 105).

(4) *2014, ce sera aussi l'année de décisions fortes. [...] D'abord, je veux réduire la dépense publique. Nous devons faire des économies partout où elles sont possibles.*

2014 will also be the year of tough decisions. [...] First, I want to *reduce* public spending. We must *save* whatever we can. (my translation, my emphasis)
(Hollande's New Year's Greetings, 31st December 2013)

This is actually and formally an argument from sacrifice, enabling the speaker to anticipate the persistence of tough economic times and legitimise government policies.

6. Conclusion

The length of this paper prevents a thorough listing of the most recurrent schemes, but the examples are indicative of the variations in the speakers' argumentative choices when faced with the same topic. The analysis shows that the most recurrent argument schemes in the ARGO corpus are culture-specific and context-dependent, and also personal or idiosyncratic in some way because, even though they share the same culture and communicative contexts, Sarkozy and Hollande resort to different argument schemes.

This has specific implications for the interpreter: in the light of the heterogeneity of arguments and given the interpreter's difficulty in processing argumentative

passages, the study suggests that previous knowledge of topic-related and speaker-related argument schemes renders certain aspects of STs comparatively predictable, and may therefore act as a cognitive and lexical support during interpretation. This fosters the systematic adoption of argumentation analysis as a source text research methodology, providing interpreting research with findings of direct training applicability, potentially enhancing the communicative skills of interpreter trainees by gradually strengthening their discourse competence. In this respect, a promising line of research could lie in the extension of the practice to other political topics, speakers and languages, in the attempt progressively to build up repositories of data-driven hints on the predictability of political STs.

Moreover, in addition to finding instrumental scope in interpreting research and training, argumentation theory also provides a theoretical and operational contribution to interpreting activity, suggesting a particular interpreter approach to ST argumentation in the attempt to attain an acceptable degree of argumentative equivalence in the IT. Just as the argumentation analyst takes a differentiated view of manoeuvring rather than viewing it as a monolithic whole (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 93), the interpreter of argumentative texts ought to see his/her activity in relation to what could be named the *Strategic Manoeuvring Equivalence Triangle*.



Figure 1: The Strategic Manoeuvring Equivalence Triangle

In order to recognise and reproduce the speaker's illocution and perlocution, thereby guaranteeing the correct transfer of argumentation patterns, three aspects have to be taken into account:

- *topical coherence*, respect for the topical choice made by the source language speaker;
- *respect for audience demands*, even though the relevant audience may change from the ST to the IT. For example, in the European Parliament the ST audience corresponds to the target audience, as all the participants share the same context

of situation and the same communicative interests. Yet, during an interpreting exam, for instance, the IT audience is composed of interpreting professors who are in charge of assessing the quality of the student's performance. Or, in television interpreting, the audience shifts from the actual participants in the original event and the TV audience sharing the language and culture of the speaker to the TV spectators in the target culture, which renders the activity an example of documentary interpreting as opposed to instrumental interpreting (Viezzi, 2013, p. 384). However, respect for audience demands is paramount under any circumstances, because the interpreter's task is to show the speaker's attitude towards his/her audience.

- *presentational coherence*, or the preservation of the ST presentational devices. This third category is controversial, because the pragma-dialectical notion of "presentational devices" encompasses a variety of features that cannot be always reproduced in the IT. Think of alliteration, that is often bound to perish against the intrinsic differences between languages. However, its reproduction is not demanded despite the rhetorical mitigation in the IT, as interpreters are generally dispensed from the task of "translating the untranslatable", to paraphrase Reboul's assertion on the untranslatability of rhetoric (1991, p. 110). Yet the systematic study of ST argumentation highlights a number of presentational devices that can be more easily reproduced, such as Obama's recurrent use of the historical analogy between the crisis and the Great Depression, or Sarkozy's and Cameron's habit of appealing to liberal and conservative presumptions (Zarefsky, 2009, p. 122).

Against this background, argumentative equivalence may be viewed as the faithful reproduction of the features of strategic manoeuvring into the IT. The focus on words and their contextual meaning, which is inherent in the analysis of strategic manoeuvring, is certainly not unknown to interpreting studies. For instance, Gile (1995, pp. 35-36) addresses the interpreter's need to pay attention to both form and function in terms of dealing with *content* and *packaging*, while the need to adapt the argumentation to audience demands may be inferred from Kopczyński's (1994, p. 190) thorough analysis of the situational variables of interpreted events and the considerable number of studies on the pragmatic aspects of conference interpreting (Schäffner, 1997; Setton 1999). However, the literature on interpreting lacks a specific focus on argumentation, whose distinctive features are only tangentially addressed and whose scattered, incomplete and non-harmonised study stands in the way of its internalisation by

interpreters and further shapes the heterogeneous and often ambiguous metalanguage of interpreting studies (Gambier, 2008, p. 64). The focus on strategic manoeuvring, instead, provides a comprehensive and intuitive framework for understanding the threefold notion of argumentation and, by implication, the importance and nature of argumentative equivalence between the source and the interpreted text.

This does not mean that the swift internalisation of the notion of strategic manoeuvring and the superficial study of ST argumentation are destined to solve the ever-present problems of performing “unstable” interpreting activity. Rather, the relevance of the pragma-dialectical approach to STs in interpreting research has to be sought in its explanatory potential, highlighting the salient features of a given instance of argumentation, and in its methodological and operational guidance, shedding light on the best way to transfer the pragmatic and argumentative nuances of STs. This is, in substance, the contribution of argumentation theory to interpreting research and, consequently, to the interpreting profession: it promotes *matter* preservation by emphasising the ST topical potential; it helps preserve *energy* by showing the speaker’s strategies of adaptation to audience demands; and it promotes both *energy and matter* preservation by highlighting the distinctive presentational devices of STs, thereby preventing chemical disasters.

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