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Genres and persuasion[1]

Linguistic and argumentation perspectives

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Proceeding along parallel paths, both linguistics and argumentation theory have recognised the role of variation as a function of the context in language at large and in argumentative exchanges, respectively. The most all-encompassing linguistic model which anchors language use to the context is Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1985/2003), with its threefold definition of register, embracing the categories of *field*, *tenor* and *mode*. *Field* refers to the activity that is being accomplished through language, *tenor* entails the relational aspects holding among the participants, and *mode* refers more closely to the function performed by the language. The pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation, in its extended version (van Eemeren 2010), includes the notion of strategic manoeuvring, which revives Aristotle's perspective, reconnecting logic and rhetoric, after centuries of neat separation between the two disciplines. In doing so, it posits that the pursuit of rhetorical effectiveness does not necessarily lead to a derailment of dialectical rigour, countering the prejudice held by formal logicians towards rhetoric. This reappraisal of rhetoric inevitably brought context to the fore, as the three aspects of strategic manoeuvring – the content (topical selection), the interpersonal dimension (adaptation to the audience), and the linguistic means selected by the parties involved in a critical discussion (presentational choices) – can only be appreciated in the context of situation in which argumentation occurs. Moreover, it is to be noted that these three aspects are reminiscent of Halliday's metafunctions of language, as they respectively involve ideational, interpersonal, and textual components.

Within the pragma-dialectical framework, research on how contextual factors impact on argumentative practice has set to identifying dialectical profiles, i.e.

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[1] This introduction reflects the design of the book conceived by all the Editors. Degano is responsible for the material drafting of Sections 1 and 2, Francesca Santulli is responsible for Section 3, and Dora Renna for Section 4.

argumentative patterns typically enacted in specific settings. The focus shift from what is generally true of argumentation – an endeavour that produced the pragma-dialectical comprehensive model of the *critical discussion* – to what is context-specific, in its turn, has created a greater space of convergence for argumentation and discourse studies. The convergence is stronger with approaches to discourse that focus on specialised communication, such as *genre analysis* and *language for special purposes* (LSP), where research has, likewise, increasingly turned to rhetorical aspects. While initially specialised discourse was seen as merely oriented to conveying technical contents, with attention given principally to the terminology and the grammar characterising a given genre, research has then revealed a nexus of extralinguistic aspects, impacting on the interpersonal dimension, and on the mode of discourse. Driving forces, in this sense, are the construction, maintenance and defence of professional identities, the migration of genres to the Web, and their hybridisation, as well as the user's creative manipulation of genres – all factors that may contribute to destabilising genre integrity.

Even before the inclusion of strategic manoeuvring in the pragma-dialectical model, which paved the way for a greater contamination between the two disciplines, argumentation theory and discourse analysis had at times been connected. Van Rees (1995) considered how the parties involved in a critical discussion cope with politeness and face preservation concerns (Goffman, 1955, 1959; Brown and Levinson, 1987). The same author addressed explicitly the interrelation between argumentation theory and discourse analysis, calling for greater integration of the two (van Rees, 2007). French scholars Plantin and Amossy had already taken a more radical approach, holding that argumentation is a pervasive feature of discourse, not limited to a few openly argumentative genres (Plantin, 1996. p. 18; Amossy and Koren, 2004; Amossy, 2006, 2009). Furthermore, Amossy argues that in linguistics the focus should shift from *langue* (i.e. the analysis of the linguistic construction of arguments) to *discours* (i.e. the analysis of the actual occurrence of argumentation and of its function in context). Thus, with argumentation considered an intrinsic dimension of discourse, beyond its open manifestation in properly argumentative texts (Amossy, 2005), argumentation becomes an integral part of the studies on language use, hence the call for including arguments and schemes of reasoning in the frame of Discourse Analysis (Antelmi, 2012)

This book sits at the interface of argumentation and discourse studies, exploring different genres belonging to public debate across different domains (political, corporate, legal), and reaching into academic and research contexts. It also includes investigations aiming to discuss the quality of argumentation and the manipulatory limits of persuasion. The volume provides insights on the integration of discourse and argumentation perspectives, leaving room at the same time for different approaches to the analysis of persuasion, beyond argumentation theory

proper. This introduction focuses on the role of context and variation in both language use and argumentation, offering insights on the relationship between the linguistic and the argumentative perspective. The emphasis is mostly on genre analysis on the one hand and on pragma-dialectical principles, on the other, with a final exploration of previous research relevant to the aim and scope of this volume.

1.   Variation and context: The perspective of language use

Following in the tradition of British Linguistics inaugurated by J. R. Firth (1957/ 1968),[2] Halliday's model has laid a solid foundation for the analysis of language variation as a function of contextual factors. Functional grammar proved an ideal theoretical framework for discourse studies, and all the more so for the strands addressing domain-specific discourse, namely register and genre analysis, but also language for special purposes (LSP). Far from focusing of narrow lexico-grammar features of technical languages, all these analytic perspectives have addressed a number of extra-linguistic factors, which can be conveniently summed up by the following manifesto of LSP:

> For us the LSP agenda is to characterise the ways in which language is used in specific contexts by specific groups for specific purposes, to explore the extent to which language use in such contexts is stable, to examine the role of language in establishing, maintaining and developing group values and self-identification, and to identify and evaluate the means by which people can become proficient in using language in specific contexts for their own specific purposes and can graduate to membership of their target group or groups.   (Gollin-Kies *et al.,* 2015)[3]

Whoever has any familiarity with the research on genre analysis will have recognised in the quotation above similarities with the now all too famous definition of *genre* provided by Swales, as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes [...] recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community" (Swales, 1990: 58). Such communicative purposes shape the schematic structure of the discourse and impose constraints in terms of content and style, leading to the conventionalization of core

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2. Halliday wrote of Firth: "the most important influence on my own thinking came from my teacher J. R. Firth … It is from Firth, of course, that the concept of system is derived, from which systemic theory gets its name; and unlike most of the other fundamental concepts, which were common to many groups of post-Saussurean linguists, particularly in Europe, the system in this sense is found only in Firth's theoretical framework (Halliday 1985/2003: 186)".

3. No page number is indicated as the quotation comes from an electronic edition where page numbers are not indicated.

features, which then become expected in new textual realisations of a same genre. Texts belonging to the same genre consequently present similarities in their content, structure, style, and intended audience, so much so that as Swales affirms, "If all high probability expectations are realised, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community" (ibidem).

Such a conception of text genre departs from original studies of specialised languages, which focused on directly observable microlinguistic lexical and grammatical structures. Genre analysis in fact pays attention to them, but starting from the macrolinguistic level, i.e. variables like the communicative purpose, the social practice and the community of discourse, which jointly determine the choice of microlinguistic features. Garzone (2015:1) sums up this perspective shift affirming, with regard to the origins of *genre analysis*:

> In linguistics and discourse analysis the notion of genre started to receive scholarly attention and be applied to non-literary texts only in relatively recent times, within an analytical approach (or, rather, a cluster of analytical approaches) aiming not only at surface-level description, but also at providing insights into sociocultural and cognitive aspects underlying discursive and formal choices.

At the heart of this conception of genre lies the notion of cognitive structure, which presides over the actual textual realisation. Directly dependent on the communicative purpose (Bhatia, 1993:32), the cognitive structure is organised into moves and steps (Swales 1990:140), which are conventionally recognised as constitutive of a given genre, within the relevant professional community. Some moves are obligatory and allow the identification of the genre itself, while other more peripheral moves can be present or not.

Resting on this core, genre analysis has proliferated in the past three decades, with a twofold focus. On the one hand, it has concentrated on description of specific genres, often employing corpus linguistics techniques for the investigation of large representative samples of given genres (e.g. Catenaccio 2012; Tessuto 2012; Bondi 2014; Falco 2013; Whitt 2018). On the other hand, it has given attention to the macro levels of discourse discussed above (Candlin and Crichton 2013), relying also on ethnomethodological approaches, which favour the contact with professionals from a given community of discourse, taken as informants. This second focus is underpinned by the assumption that LSP is used not only to convey specialised contents, but, as is the case with discourse at large, to serve social purposes. The language reflects and at the same time constructs the values of a community of practice, and such values express the identity of the members of said groups, hence the necessity for prospective members to master the relevant specialised discourse in all its multifaceted features in order to gain full membership.

Parallel to this evolution, research on genre has progressively recognised variability within genres. Whereas early studies concentrated on the typical features of a genre, i.e. what different textual realisations of the same genre had in common, attention subsequently turned to the elements of variation which speakers can creatively bring to a given genre, thus destabilising its integrity (Bhatia, 2004, p. 29; Garzone, 2014). Strictly related to the latter aspect are phenomena of hybridisation and genre bending, deriving from the relations among different genres (Candlin, 2006; Bhatia, 2010), whereby the discursive features of one genre are appropriated by another. An example to the point is the appearance of an advertising drive in genres which were not originally promotional, as is the case of the advertorial (advertisement+editorial), resulting from the mixing of the editorial formal features with an advertisement intention. Other examples are the progressive assimilation in arbitration awards of litigation discursive traits typical of adjudication (a process known as 'colonisation' – Gotti, 2012, Bhatia *et al.,* 2012), or the fund-raising letter, in which a letter, per se not a promotional genre, is bent to the promotional aim of persuading potential donors to support a certain project. As shown by some of these examples, such changes in traditional genres are often driven by a persuasive intent, which further lays the ground for integrating discourse analysis and argumentation, insofar as the persuasive effort is associated with a rational defence of the sender's position.

2.   Variation and context: The argumentation perspective

In argumentation studies, context was forcefully brought back into the picture by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca with *La nouvelle rhétorique* (1958), but also, more specifically, by Toulmin's distinction between field-invariant and field-dependent arguments (Toulmin, 1958/2003). In doing so, Toulmin establishes a continuity of sorts with the distinction between general and special topics drawn by Aristotle, whom he reads as "more of a pragmatist, and less of a formalist" (Toulmin, 1958/2003, p. viii). While formal notions of argument validity are assumed to be generally applicable, assessment of validity related to the context are procedural in nature, and rest on the observation that different types of backing are relied on in different fields of practice and argument. Throughout many of his works, Toulmin contrasted the view championed by formal logic that a standard set of moral principles can be applied to solve moral issues regardless of the context. Toulmin argues that such an approach can be hardly relevant to real-life uses of arguments, which are often subject to judgements of acceptability that vary across fields, with different forms of reasoning being conventionally accepted within different contexts. The following arguments offer an example of such variability:

'Petersen is a Swede, so he is presumably not a Roman Catholic'; 'this phenomenon cannot be wholly explained on my theory, since the deviations between your observations and my predictions are statistically significant'; 'This creature is a whale, so it is (taxonomically) a mammal'; 'Defendant was driving at 45 m.p.h. in a built-up area, so he has committed an offence against the Road Traffic Acts' (Toulmin 1958/2003, p. 14). More specifically, some aspects of reasoning are, according to Toulmin, valid across fields, i.e. field-invariant, while others are field-dependent. To explain the difference between them, Toulmin starts from the different meanings of the modal verb 'cannot', per se a typical indicator of a standpoint.[4] Taking a number of propositions containing the verb 'cannot', what they have in common is that they are 'courses of action' against which there are conclusive reasons, with the modal verb ruling out one relevant possibility (1958/2003, p. 27–28). This implication is field-invariant. What is field-dependent is "what counts as 'ruling out' the thing concerned [...] the implied grounds for ruling out, and the sanction risked in ignoring the injunction" (ibidem). Four main meanings are attached to 'cannot': (1) physical impossibility, (2) terminological impropriety, (3) offence against laws or moral and (4) conceptual incongruence. The different grounds defending the claim that something *cannot* be the case would be respectively someone's physique, a given jargon, a father's relationship with his son, the concepts of physics and chemistry, or the axioms of geometry. More generally, Toulmin concludes, the meaning of 'cannot' entails two aspects: *force*, i.e. the injunction that something has to be ruled out, and *criteria*, i.e. the standards, grounds and reasons on which the ruling out rests. It is the criteria that vary from one field to another, begging the question of how argumentation changes across domains.

For a review of scholars who have further elaborated on Toulmin's notion of 'field' of arguments, cf. Ilie (2017). For the purposes of this book Willard's definition is the one that comes closer to Halliday's, conceiving of fields as "sociological entities and psychological perspectives that are brought to life by the practices of people" (1982, p. 46, in Ilie 2017, p. 3).

From the pragma-dialectical perspective, the theoretical anchorage to the context is originally provided by Walton and Krabbe's notion of "dialogue types" (1995), with differences between types lying in the goals of the dialogue and of its participants. This has informed the pragma-dialectical notion of *communicative activity type*, intended as "conventionalized communicative practices whose

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4. The negation particle 'not' is the constitutive element of the argumentative text type, according to Werlich (1983, 107), which consists in a negated simple quality attributed sentence. Whether explicitly codified or not, it indicates that argumentation entails defence of a judgement against someone who takes or may take a different view.

conventionalization serves to meet the institutional exigencies of the communicative domain in response to which they have developed" (van Eemeren 2010, pp. 139–145). These are normative models, defined each in its own respect by its initial situation, the participants' individual goals, and the aim of the dialogue as a whole, with dialogue rules (protocols) establishing what types of moves are allowed during the argumentation stage (Walton and Krabbe, 1995). The six basic types of dialogue originally recognized by Walton and Krabbe (1995) encompass persuasion, inquiry, negotiation, information-seeking, deliberation, and eristic dialogue. To these the *discovery dialogue* was later added (McBurney and Parsons, 2001). Besides dialogue types, also the empirical notion of 'design' (Aakhus, 2003; Jackson and Jacobs, 2006) inspired the pragma-dialectical view of an 'activity type'. Design is intended as "an activity of transforming something given into something preferred through intervention and invention", and when applied to communication it implies a focus on the forces "structuring, shaping, and conditioning discourse", as manifest in "the varieties of designs for communication apparent in the institutions, practices, procedures, and technologies present in the built-up human world" (Aakhus, 2007. p.112).

Following this empirical orientation, the pragma-dialectical approach identifies adjudication, deliberation, disputation and communion seeking activity types as some main clusters, with specimen in the same cluster sharing "institutionally distinctive argumentative properties" (van Eemeren et al, 2014, p.560). Incidentally, it is worth pointing out that such clusters are denominated 'genres' in the pragma-dialectical approach (van Eemeren et al., 2014, p.560), but the notion does not perfectly overlap with the concept of (text) genre developed in genre analysis, as discussed in the previous section. For the sake of exemplification, the institutional differences between adjudication and deliberation determine that in adjudication a third party with jurisdiction is to decide, while in deliberation it is for the parties themselves or for a non-interacting audience to make a decision. In the case of adjudication starting points are mostly explicitly elicited or refer to codified rules, whereas in deliberation they tend to remain implicit and are normally intersubjective. In adjudication facts are brought as conditions for the application of a legal rule, while in deliberation incompatible standpoints are defended by means of critical exchanges. In terms of their outcome, the two genres differ in that adjudication necessarily concludes with a third party's motivated decision, while in deliberation it is envisaged that the participant may not be able to reach a solution, which may still lead to the non-interacting audience taking a decision (van Eemeren 2010, p.151). Some activity types are prototypical of a given genre: a criminal trial embodies adjudication, parliamentary debates are core deliberative activity types, a keynote speech at a conference or a scientific paper fully represent the genre of disputation, while informal activity types in the

interpersonal domain (e.g. a chat between friends) prototypically stand for the communion-seeking genre (van Eemeren et al, 2014, p.557). It is to be noted here that in pragma-dialectics the term "institutional" is used with reference not only to formal organisations or practices, but also to "all socially and culturally established communicative practices that are formally or informally conventionalized." (ibidem).

Resting on the assumption that each activity type has its own established conventions, which in turn determine what is 'admitted' in the resolution of a critical discussion, studies within the pragma-dialectical frame have explored different domains (legal, political, medical, and academic), aiming to advance our understanding of argumentation in context. In van Eemeren's words the drive underpinning this research endeavour is:

> (1) to find out in which ways in these domains the possibilities for strategic manoeuvring are determined by extrinsic institutional constraints stemming from the conventionalization of the various communicative activity types and (2) to detect which regular argumentative patterns of more or less fixed constellations of argument schemes and argumentation structures in support of a certain type of standpoint are stereotypically activated in these domains to realize the institutional point of the communicative activity types concerned in agreement with their institutional conventionalization.   (van Eemeren et al., 2014, p.581)

The argumentation-in-context agenda clearly shows that the scope of pragma-dialectics is in more than one respect coincident with the scope of genre analysis in particular, but also of discourse analysis at large. The search for discursive patterns in relation to the context in which language is used is perfectly in tune with the aim of discourse studies, and while argumentative categories may account better than linguistic ones for the underlying structure of argumentation, linguistics can provide more systematic and fine-grained categories for the analysis of the discursive realisations of argumentation (cf. Santulli and Degano, 2022, especially Chapter 3). There are also differences, of course, between the two disciplines: argumentation theory is normative, whereas discourse analysis is prevalently descriptive. The final aim of the former is to judge the quality of argumentation, so as to make it possible to identify cases where reasonability derails (what other approaches would normally call fallacies). This presupposes that the parties involved in a discussion or the non-participating audience should be ready to place reasonability above all other values, and relinquish adherence to a given view if it does not stand dialectical testing. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, seems more inclined to accept that the borders between what is legitimate and what is not can be quite blurred, as shown for example by the difficulty in defining the concept of manipulation (van Dijk, 2006), which risks being an epithet for

the ideological positions one dislikes. Whether the two approaches can be reconciled under this respect is a matter for future research. However, a description of argumentative activity types in their context is a preliminary step to their quality assessment, proving at the same time a natural intersection between argumentation and discourse analysis.

3.   Linguistics and argumentation

Prominent among linguistic approaches to argumentation is the French discourse analysis tradition, where scholars like Ducrot and Grize developed the theory of argumentation *in* language, which conceives it as a property of language at large that begins with the construction of a sentence, (Plantin, 2003, p. 81 in van Eemeren et al, 2014, p. 480), and not limited to exchanges related to the solution of controversies. Under their influence the French research on argumentation relies on the notions of *topos*, doxa and stereotype (ibidem), but focuses in particular on the linguistic construction of arguments, and on the implicit elements conveyed through language use. In opposition to formal logic, argumentation is seen as a discursive entity to be taken necessarily in the setting in which it occurs, with attention accordingly given to how the truth of the premises is established (van Eemeren et al, 2014, p. 483). In this respect, the natural logic approach has it that any discourse entity is a linguistic sign associated to a given meaning, which is always underdetermined to some extent (Borel, et al., 1983; Grize, 1986, pp. 49–50). Each entity has a set of properties and entertains relations with other entities, which need not be codified linguistically in their entirety, as they are simply attached to a given entity in the mind of the participants to a linguistic exchange. When organised into a text, discursive entities are constrained into a given *schematization* which is meant to serve the purposes of the text producer, trying to orient the reception of the text so as to make the receiver adhere to the views conveyed in it. The scope of natural logic is purely descriptive and aims to understand the logico-discursive operations[5] that are put at work in the construction of argumentative schematizations (van Eemeren *et al.,* 2014, p. 484). Each schematization "accentuates specific aspects, masking the unavoidable side effect

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5. Logico-discursive operations are of three types, according to Grize (1982, pp. 174–177) and Borel (1989, pp. 39–41) (1) determination, including operations like classification, predication, restriction of the speaker's commitment; (2) justification, encompassing all the activities aimed at making the listener accept what is proposed by the speaker; and (3) configuration, i.e. operations that signal the relations between propositions, whether made explicit by means of linguistic indicators or not.

of partiality inherent in selecting and constructing a schema" (van Eemeren *et al.,* 2014, p. 486).

In the same tradition, Ducrot and Anscombre's radical argumentativism (1989) rests on the assumption that argumentativity is inherent in sentences, even when their formulation seems to be neutral. The argumentative component is added by means of association with "certain sets of argumentative principles, comparable to the Aristotelian topoi" (van Eemeren et al, 2014, p. 492), which aim to lead the receiver to a certain conclusion. For example, the predicator "expensive" referred to a restaurant may activate the topos "the less expensive a thing is, the better deal acquiring it is" or its opposite – "the more expensive the restaurant is, the better the quality of the food" (van Eemeren *et al.,* 2014, p. 493–494), depending on the context. Another fundamental point in Anscombe and Ducrot's theory is the concept of polyphony, potentially entailed in any discursive entity, as more than one voice can be represented in the same utterance. A main distinction is made between the locutor, i.e. the source that is responsible for the utterance or part of it, and the enunciator, a character who expresses a point of view referred to by the locutor, without the locutor being committed to such views (Ducrot 1984). This distinction accounts for those cases in which "through the enunciator, the speaker or writer can introduce a certain view on what is being said by a locutor, whether this locutor is someone else or the current speaker or writer" (van Eemeren et al, 2014, p. 494). Scholars in the French tradition often pay attention to linguistic operators such as connectives, which point to argumentativity and polyphony. This attention has inspired research by argumentation scholars (Snoeck Henkemans, 1995; van Eemeren *et al.*, 2007) and linguists (e.g. Degano, 2016, Chapter 2 in this volume) on indicators of different aspects of argumentation.

Contemporary approaches to argumentation in the francophone discourse analytic perspective have been strongly influenced by Ducrot and Anscombre's work, even if with some differences. Plantin, for example, shares the general frame but departs from radical argumentativism insofar as he holds that argumentativity lies in the context (i.e. in language use) and not in the language per se. The connector "but", for example, is a potential marker of argumentation, but it is the context that determines whether this is the case or not (Plantin, 2010). Plantin's work has also drawn attention to the role of emotions in argumentative discourse, attributing to them a role as interactional strategies (Plantin, 2011, p. 189). Plantin's work has in turn influenced Doury's research on argumentation in polemical contexts, such as everyday conversation, talk shows, letters to the editors, and debates (1997, 2004, 2005), taking an ethnographic approach. From this perspective, Doury has also addressed the issue of how ordinary arguers evaluate the arguments put forth by others.

Midway between Ducrot and Anscombre's view of argumentation as a linguistic phenomenon and Perelman's view of argumentation as a matter of discursive efficacy, Amossy has developed the Argumentation in Discourse approach (2005, 2006, 2009), an analytic frame for text analysis which draws on argumentation, discourse analysis and the New Rhetoric. Central to this approach is the idea that argumentation is a matter of degree. While there are texts that are eminently argumentative, overtly aiming to persuade someone about something controversial (i.e. discourses with an *argumentative aim*), there are also others that do not tackle highly controversial issues, but still try to orient the reception of a given representation of reality on the part of an interlocutor, as an effect of an *argumentative dimension* that is inherent in any text (Amossy, 2002, p. 388). Accordingly, it can be the case that argumentation is put to use not to persuade someone, but to reinforce or slightly modify a point of view, or to orient a reflection on something (Amossy, 2005, p. 90). Special regard is had in Amossy's approach to common knowledge (*doxa*) and stereotypes (*topoi*), which are at the basis of fruitful exchanges.

Topoi are also the fulcrum of the Lugano-based semantic-pragmatic approach, which led to the elaboration of the Argomentum Model of Topics (Rigotti and Greco Morasso, 2009, 2010), conceived as an advancement of the pragma-dialectical understanding of schemes. The model highlights the connection between the pragma-dialectical notions of material (content-based) starting points and procedural (formal, logical) starting points, which are both charted in the AMT representation of a *topos*. The elements included in such representation are meant to identify the inferential connections activated in a given argument, thus highlighting "the source of the force, the *topos* itself, when applied to a given argumentative exchange" (Rigotti and Greco Morasso, 2010, p. 500). The procedural elements of a *topos* are the locus and the maxim that can be found in existing typologies; the material starting points (*endoxon* and minor premise) provide an anchorage to the discourse at issue. Together, the two sets of starting points allow the reconstruction of a given example of argumentation as an instantiation of a specific *topos*.

Related to the realisation of *topoi* in context is the interest taken by the Luganese school in cultural keywords, i.e. words that can generate given inferences in a given culture, thus contributing to explaining it. According to Rigotti and Rocci's definition (2005, p. 125), they are "words that are particularly revealing of a culture and can give access to inner workings of a culture as a whole, to its fundamental beliefs, values, institutions and customs". Integrating semantics with a classical approach to argument analysis, they suggest cultural keywords can be identified by looking at the words that play the role of the middle term in enthymemes, as they have the power of pointing to an *endoxon*, from which a

stated or unstated major premise derives (Rigotti and Rocci, 2005, p. 131). Words with this status thus allow the recovery of unstated premises. For example, in the statement "He is a traitor. Therefore he deserves to be put to death", the word 'traitor' gives access to the unexpressed major premise "traitors deserve to be put to death" (Rigotti and Rocci, 2005, p. 130). This is so because the word 'traitor' is associated with shared values and beliefs in a given society (endoxon) which makes the unstated premise plausible.

As far as English-language discourse analysis is concerned, contacts between Linguistics and Argumentation have generally been less systematic. Discourse analysis recognizes the importance of argumentation (cf. for example the attention given to *topoi* by the Discourse Historical approach – Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Reisigl 2014), but all in all it seems reluctant to systematically appropriate the analytic categories of argumentation theory. Single notions are generally borrowed ad hoc, without reference to any broader argumentative theoretic frame. In the last few years, points of contact between argumentation and discourse analysis have become more numerous, partly as an effect of the increased interest in English for Special Purposes and the greater awareness of specialised texts' rhetorical complexity. Studies on argumentation in this strand of research have addressed political discourse (Partington, 2003; Degano, 2016; Santulli and Degano, 2022), legal texts (Stati, 1998; Santulli, 2006, 2008; Antelmi and Santulli, 2012; Mazzi, 2007, 2010; Sala, 2008, 2012; Garzone, 2017; Bowker, 2021), corporate discourse (Degano, 2009; Catenaccio, 2017) and academic discourse (Silver, 2006; Bondi and Diani, 2008; Mazzi and Bondi, 2009; Mazzi, 2012; Tessuto 2021).

Several of these studies also rely on corpus linguistics to retrieve patterns of use in given domains and genres, drawing on seminal studies that encouraged a synergy of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis (Stubbs, 1996; Hardt-Mautner, 1995; Partington *et al.,* 2004; Garzone and Santulli 2004; Baker, 2006; Degano 2008). Discourse scholars that have integrated corpus linguistics and argumentation include Reed (2006, who then moved on to argument mining, cf. Lawrence and Reed, 2020); Degano, 2007; Žagar, 2007; O'Halloran and Coffin, 2004; Mochales and Ieven, 2009; O'Halloran, 2009; Mazzi, 2007. A representative picture of the linguistic perspective on argumentation is offered in a volume edited by Ilie and Garzone (2017) within the Argumentation in Context book series. In the introduction, Ilie clarifies that the discursive perspective shies away from rigid attempts at categorising arguments, considering that several argumentative issues and practices transcend disciplinary boundaries. The challenge, rather, is coping with the "multifaceted manifestations of diversity and interconnectedness in patterns of thinking, feeling and acting at local and global level, across space, time and culture" (Ilie, 2017, p. 7). As a result of this complexity, the scope for the study of argumentation from a discourse analytic perspective

encompasses several aspects, like "subject area, goal, disciplinary membership, argument form, audience, world view and evaluation criteria" (Ilie, 2017, p. 6). It also comes in a wealth of different forms (concealed or open, verbal or visual, monologic or dialogic, sophisticated or aggressive) and contexts (public or private, large-scale or small scale, face-to-face or virtual, synchronous or asynchronous).

4.   The volume

This book is a collection of articles delving on the persuasive component of text genres from various fields, which brings together scholars adopting different methodological approaches to shed light on contemporary discursive phenomena related to argumentation. The contributions address specialised discourse, placing emphasis on the connections between the communicative purpose of a given genre or activity type and its institutionalised linguistic and argumentative features.

The editors believe in the potential of combining the discursive analytical toolkit with the exploitation of argumentative models to account for the pursuit of persuasion in institutionalised genres. The volume aims to advance understanding of argumentative practices in different communicative contexts, with special regard for those with heightened public resonance (politics, media, the news, and public debate in general). The exploration of the discursive aspects of persuasion includes both the explicit codification of arguments and the activation of implicit meanings.

The book opens with a paper that draws attention to the ubiquitous reference to argumentation across disciplines, and the attendant meanings attributed to the concept (Chapter 1), showing that connections cluster in particular around discourse analysis and computational argumentation.

The following chapters bring together different paradigms drawn from both argumentation theory with special regard for pragma-dialectics and linguistics, to further explore the relations between contextual factors and discursive realisations. Attention is given on the one hand to argumentative structures such as prototypical *topoi* and schemes within given strands of discourse (Covid-related public communication, corporate sustainability, international adoptions), and, on the other, to aspects of strategic manoeuvring related to presentational choices. The latter is the ground where the connection between argumentation theory and discourse studies emerges more patently, with a wealth of models and categories from linguistics that can be brought to bear. Among them, Chapter 10 explores the exploitation of the implicit in deliberation, emphasising its importance in the

educational perspective, while Chapter 9 draws attention to the cognitive components of field-specific speech acts.

The fields of discourse covered in the book include: the public sphere (political speeches, the news, press releases: Chapters 2, 3 and 4); corporate communication (Chapter 5); specialised discourse, in different contexts ranging from international adoption procedures to academic writing (Chapters 6 and 9), and the less-trodden path of art critique (Chapters 7 and 8). A few papers also turn attention to the assessment of the quality of argumentation, drawing a line between legitimate and illegitimate practices, touching on manipulation, fallacies, and conspiracy theories (Chapters 10, 11 and 12).

More specifically, in Chapter 1, Todorovic, Lepori and Rocci combine bibliometric methods with linguistic analysis to understand scholarly communities and discourses on argumentation. The analysis of over 10,000 publications from the Scopus database for the period 2000–2019 containing in the title, keywords or abstract at least an instance of 'argumentation' leads to the identification of six broad semantic clusters, which can be readily interpreted in terms of the main conversations scholars are engaged with. The analysis also allows the identification of bridges between conversations, such as the one between discourse analysis and computational argumentation. Highly-cited documents are analysed in each cluster, extracting examples of semantic context and meaning through a qualitative Key Word In Context (KWIC) analysis. Investigating scholarly communities and discourses in argumentation, the Authors emphasise argumentation's significance in diverse domains, such as law, politics, computer science, psychology, cognitive science, and education.

In Chapter 2, Chiara Degano delves into the discursive construction of starting points for argumentation by analysing a corpus of UK editorials and comment articles related to the Brexit referendum with a specific focus on populism. Even though editorials and comment articles are monologic texts, they engage a dialogue with previously expressed points of view and more generally with the positions of an intended audience. Brexit is used as a case study because it partly reshuffled traditional political partisanship, often begging for a renegotiation of objects of agreement. By looking at the specific debate surrounding the referendum, the analysis contributes to advancing knowledge about argumentative profiles, through a corpus-based examination of the moves carried out by the parties in the opening stage of a critical discussion, retrieved thanks to linguistic indicators.

In Chapter 3, Bigi, Grata and Mosconi explore persuasion strategies adopted in Italy during the Covid-19 pandemic to induce the population to the adoption of restrictive measures. The analysis of a corpus of speeches delivered during the first and the second pandemic wave by prominent political leaders reveals that

policy makers largely relied on pragmatic argumentation, in which values played a significant role. The Authors also examine a corpus of interviews by experts who either supported or criticized policy makers' decisions. Beside argument schemes, the exploitation of values largely turns out to rely on framing strategies, based in their turn on ethical (or emotive) words. Rhetorical figures (e.g. metaphor or personification) are exploited to enhance the negative representation of the virus and, conversely, the desirability of restrictive measures. Thus, the combination of argumentative reasoning and its discursive realization conveys the sense of a highly sensitive message, in which a hierarchy of values has to be established, aiming to convince the population and obtain the desired behaviour.

In Chapter 4, Jekaterina Nikitina analyses English-language press releases of three leading vaccine-manufacturers – AstraZeneca, Moderna and Gamaleya-RDIF – drafted in the period directly preceding the launch of active vaccination campaigns. Starting from a close analysis of press releases as a genre, the Author relies on a composite discourse analytical and argumentation framework to compare two moves, namely boilerplate descriptions and citations. The findings identify a number of common leitmotifs, as well as differences, among the three companies considered for the analysis. Boilerplates, on the one hand, perform a mixed informative-promotional function, drawing on common knowledge implicatures capable of leading to favourable conclusions. Citations, on the other hand, by virtue of their apparent external origin, have a strong persuasive force and function as actual vehicles of promotion. Moderna and AstraZeneca use convergent techniques of persuasive argumentation, whereas RDIF at times glides towards fallacies and manipulative strategies.

Chapter 5, by Paola Catenaccio, contributes to the debate on the discursive construction of corporate legitimation by adopting an argumentation-theory informed perspective for the analysis of Corporate Social Responsibility reports published by companies operating in the contested fields of agri-biotechnologies (GMOs) and the mining and extraction industry. Drawing on principles of pragma-dialectics, the Argumentum Model of Topics and visual argumentation, the Author aims to identify and describe recurrent argument schemes and tropes deployed in contested corporate fields with a view to explicitating tacit premises and conclusions, thus contributing to a better understanding of the ideological underpinnings of institutionalized legitimation strategies.

In Chapter 6, Brambilla explores argumentation in a corpus of international adoption dossiers (IADs) issued by an adoption agency based in Italy and facilitating adoptions from India. The IAD can be viewed as a hyper-genre, in that it is a systematic collection of documents (legal texts, medical certificates, financial declarations, psychological assessment reports, reference letters) required by the native country of the adopted child to prove the eligibility and suitability

for adoption of prospective adoptive parents. With a main focus on the argumentative style used in the different documents, the study reveals that the same standpoint (the eligibility of Italian prospective adoptive parents) is expressed either explicitly or implicitly and defended with different arguments, while traits of either detached or engaged argumentative styles are displayed in the different texts. This "combination" can be considered prototypical of the communicative activity type at issue and the domain of international adoptions, as it is functional to radiating objectivity and commitment alike.

Chapter 7, by Mena Mitrano, challenges the prevailing hermeneutics of suspicion in literary scholarship, which has lost its effectiveness and devolved into standardized debunking rhetoric. It examines the relationship between persuasion and the pursuit of knowledge in the Humanities through close readings of texts by Jane Austen, Michel Foucault, and Eve K. Sedgwick, exploring how persuasion has transformed parallel to the ethical turn in critical inquiry. The overall aim of the analysis is to illustrate the progressive withdrawal of persuasion from the oratorical public setting theorized by Aristotle, which presupposes a uniform collectivity, to a much more shadowy subjective dimension of tensions and conflicts. Mitrano tracks the disentanglement of criticism from the classical oratorical tradition, inviting a re-examination of persuasion in the ways we read and argue in the academic public sphere. Thus, the chapter offers a fresh perspective on the intersection of persuasion and knowledge in the Humanities, providing valuable insights into evolving persuasive techniques.

In Chapter 8, Paul Tucker takes discourse on visual art as a case study, to show how cognitive and communicative strategies are employed across languages and time. The Author considers text as a result of verbally mediated cognitive explication, intertwining speech acts for discourse coherence. He thus emphasises argumentation's cognitive essence in text, exemplifying its role in structuring communicative events through the verbal individuation of entities. Both the predicative structures of the propositions realising the interactions (the pragmatic textual "warp") and the ways they are connected to obtain coherence (the textual "weft") are involved in the cognitive-and-interactional argumentative process, contributing to emphasising the importance of eliciting responses that indicate acceptance. Examples are extracted from texts in English, Italian and French, dating from the seventeenth century to the present, to show that the same strategies are played out in texts of different languages and periods, which allows them to be compared and contrasted both synchronically and diachronically.

In Chapter 9, Tiziana Roncoroni explores the argumentative style of sociolinguistic research articles, comparing a German and an Italian paper. Drawing on the pragma-dialectical approach, she aims to identify prototypical argumentative patterns and the strategic design in the two papers. The results of her analysis

point to a characterization of a pattern for argumentation aimed at substituting present knowledge or models with more suitable approaches, while appealing to overarching scientific paradigms and principles. The structure is subordinative, and while symptomatic and comparison schemes may occur at the higher levels of the structure (ie. arguments directly supporting the standpoint), the argumentation generally draws its force from pragmatic arguments, operating at the lower levels of the subordinative structure. In spite of a strong epistemic stance associated with the prescriptive intent of both papers, the style is described as indirect and explorative, with standpoints reached gradually, deriving them from previous remarks, with a fair extent of weighting, and anticipation of criticism, thus showing that indirectness can go along with argumentative strength.

In Chapter 10, Giunta and Lombardi Vallauri delve into the crucial role of implicit meaning in deliberation, starting from the assumption that information implicitly provided in discourse requires the recipient to reconstruct the missing part of the message, which leads to lesser critical vigilance. It cannot be denied that recognising implicit meanings can be essential for the addressees of argumentative discourse to make free choices and, on the other hand, learning how to manage their production is highly desirable as well. Within this framework, the Authors offer a report on what interventions have already been carried out in Italy and abroad and what educational resources are available to promote knowledge and awareness of the implicit. In this chapter, the role of argumentation in public life is strongly emphasised, with a view to promoting further research involving different populations and age groups, which can be functional to developing more refined educational strategies and raising the level of public awareness on the matter.

Chapter 11, by Ross Charnock, addresses the intricate relationship between rhetoric and reason focusing on Bentham's "Book of Fallacies" (1824), which presents itself as a form of rhetorical self-defence. Bentham asserts that fallacies, a clear indication of corruption in themselves, serve as counter-arguments, hindering political reform and impeding social progress. However, Bentham rejects the effectiveness of such rhetorical arguments, contending that only the weak-minded and uninformed are susceptible to persuasion. By comparing the "Book of Fallacies" with the "Anarchical Fallacies," the Author highlights Bentham's preference for an analytical and atomistic mode of argumentation over rhetoric, and shows the contrast between Bentham's own view on argumentative rhetoric and his own discursive technique, which may be seen as a reluctant recognition of the power of rhetoric over common sense and reason.

In Chapter 12, Tom Werner asks how a dialogue can be opened with the supporters of conspiracy theories, who are notoriously impervious to dissuasion and take counterarguments as a reinforcing factor. Having recourse to the concept of

language game and to Chomsky's notion of transformations, Werner considers the effects of transforming the basic proposition of a conspiracy theory into yes-no or wh-questions. While yes-no questions presuppose that one of the two parties must necessarily lose the game, which triggers an immediate emotional escalation, a *wh-* or *how-* question generates a presupposition of existence, which allows the two parties to engage in a dialogue over the details of the conspiracy at issue. At the same time, *wh-* questions require to feed in unfilled thematic roles, which become a target for destabilizing linguistic moves. The process of imagining the conspiracy details might induce those who believe in such theories to reconnect with reality, thus getting out of the conspiracy closed system and possibly shaking the otherwise unconditioned adherence to such a belief.

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