L’ANALISI
LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA

FACOLTÀ DI LINGUE E LETTERATURE STRANIERE
UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

ANNO XVI - 2008

VOLUME 1

SPECIAL ISSUE

Proceedings of the IADA Workshop
Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue

Homage to Sorin Stati

EDUCATT - UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE
L'ANALISI
LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA

FACOLTÀ DI SCIENZE LINGUISTICHE
E LETTERATURE STRANIÈRE

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

ANNO XVI 2008

SPECIAL ISSUE

Proceedings of the IADA Workshop
*Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue*

Homage to Sorin Stati

Milan 2008, 15-17 May

VOLUME 1

edited by G. Gobber, S. Cantarini, S. Cigada, M.C. Gatti & S. Gilardoni
1. Rethinking argumentation theory

A genuine interdisciplinary enterprise needs to include the ‘multiple voices’ from different disciplines which all address the same object. If this object is considered to be a natural object of performance, we have to go beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries and to take the complex whole as our starting point. I think, nowadays we no longer need to fall back on reductionist theories but are capable of facing complexity and of developing a genuinely holistic model which includes the voice of rationality as well as the voice of persuasion in argumentative games and integrates the meaning of words into a theory of action. A concept of meaning defined in an abstract code will not come up to ‘living with uncertainty’ (Toulmin 2001). We are looking for a concept of meaning that is open, flexible, adaptable to ever-changing conditions. The point where competence and performance meet neither makes rules more precise nor gives hope for enlightenment by empirical data; the place where competence and performance meet is in the minds of human beings. As social individuals we are able to orient ourselves in ever-changing surroundings by applying rules as far as they go and drawing individual inferences where rules come to their limits. It is this extraordinary human ability of competence-in-performance which enables us ‘to come to terms with whatever life throws at us’ (Sampson 2005: 193). We proceed not by abstracting from disturbing factors and searching ‘in the underground’ of protected competence nor by subjecting ourselves to the arbitrariness of empirical appearance. Instead, competence-in-performance means knowing how to deal with empirical variability and adapting to ever-changing conditions. In performance, there is no absolute truth determined by codes; the world is dependent on the eye of the perceiver. Adaptation means giving up models restricted to rules as well as models restricted to a concept of language as spoken language. The authentic text is not an autonomous entity. If the study of dialogue is limited in that way, it seems inevitable that major aspects of dialogic interaction will remain a mystery.

To get to the heart of the issue: We have to rethink what theorizing means. To my mind, it means devising a theory about an object. A theory about an artificial object, such as codes, may consider lexical meaning as encoded in signs and argumentation restricted to rationality. A theory of natural performance however has to take account of the fact that we do not put signs into use but negotiate meaning and understanding in the action game. Consequently, the lexical issue does not relate to the interface be-
between encoded and intended meaning but addresses from the very beginning meaning as a flexible concept which is adaptively used in the speaker’s interest. The same is true of argumentation. The argumentative game in performance is not a game which exclusively relies on logical rules but is a game which proceeds using different voices, both rational and persuasive ones. In performance we do not “pragmatically narrow and broaden encoded lexical meaning” nor can argumentation be reduced to “a kind of constrained mind-reading” (Carston 2002: 12, 364f.). Communicative meaning is, from the very outset, created by human beings in their interests as social individuals and negotiated in argumentative dialogues by a variety of communicative means. Encoded meaning and discourse, encoded meaning and dialogic performance do not go together.

2. Argumentation as a mixed game

Let me briefly take up the issue of what a holistic model looks like which is able to describe and explain how argumentation works in performance (Weigand 2006). Argumentation in performance is not a game in the abstract; it starts from human beings’ minds. Human beings are social individuals, guided by self-interest but forced to respect social concerns. Completely neglecting social concerns would in the end lead to self-destruction. In dialogic interaction we use our abilities to achieve what we want. Our abilities are interconnected and cannot be used otherwise. Speaking interacts with perceiving and thinking and is influenced by emotions. Rationality is not a universal feature but a guideline for action shaped by Western culture. A model based on the addition of two separate domains, rationality versus persuasion and emotion, remains a model constructed in the abstract; competence-in-performance proceeds by means of different voices which interact. What determines human action from the very outset is not logic and pure rationality but evaluation in one’s self-interest. We are persuasive beings and apply communicative means and techniques as far as they seem useful for our purposes, among them means of rationality or reasonableness.

Words play an important role in the dialogic action game, not as signs which have meaning on their own by definition and are simply put to use, but as communicative means applied by the speakers in their interests. The meaning of words is to a certain degree open, uncertain and flexible as it is dependent on the speakers’ individual evaluation and their different points of view. Words do not have power on their own but achieve power through the speakers who are clever enough to use them in their own interests. To give a clear authentic example: in the current American election campaign words play a crucial role. They have the power to decide the outcome of the elections if they express what the Americans want. It seems to be that they want change. Barak Obama succeeded in winning the elections in Iowa and other states by the use of this word. We believe in change is his motto. It is not the encoded meaning of a sign change put to use; it is the open-endedness of meaning which enables the speakers to use words in a way that moves people’s minds.
One might object that an election campaign is not a game of argumentation as argumentation is conceived of in traditional argumentation theories. This is right but it refers to an artificial concept of argumentation which is restricted by methodological exigencies. The decision for a theory of competence-in-performance presupposes that we start from our natural object, i.e. argumentation ‘embedded in the stream of life’, which is not a game in the abstract of encoded meaning nor a game played exclusively at the level of reasonableness. If reasonableness is to be understood as a relevant guideline in performance, i.e. as what Toulmin (2001) calls ‘practical reason’, it will be dependent on individual evaluation and particular action conditions.

Competence-in-performance cannot rely on absolute truth. There is no absolute truth but only the speaker’s claim to truth. Otherwise, argumentation, even in the classical sense, could not take place. The world we perceive is dependent on the observer. It is the individual nature of human beings that lets them perceive the world differently and shapes meaning individually. It is the dialogic, social nature of human beings that inevitably requires, to some degree, a common ground of meaning in order to come to an understanding. Argumentation starts from divergent views. Different claims to truth are expressed by representative speech acts and then negotiated in argumentative dialogues. Arguing for or giving reasons for a specific position is not restricted to representative games about the world but can be part of other games as well, for instance, games of positioning oneself as the best candidate. Every candidate starts with the same claim to be the best. The campaign thus changes to a debate based on individual representative claims which are supported by arguments, for instance, Obama’s claim:

1. I am the best candidate as I will bring change to America.

Looking at argumentation from a speech act theory point of view, we can distinguish between games of argumentation and moves of arguing. The classical game of argumentation is a representative game of negotiation about the world between thesis and antithesis:

\[
\text{thesis} \leftrightarrow \text{antithesis} \\
\text{claim to truth} \leftrightarrow \text{claim to truth} \\
\uparrow \text{arguments} \leftrightarrow \uparrow \text{arguments}
\]

*Fig. 1 Representative game of argumentation*

Moves of arguing, i.e. of providing reasons, are representative subordinate moves which can appear in every game, not only in support of representative claims but also in support of claims to volition:

\[
\text{representative game} \leftrightarrow \text{directive game} \\
\text{claim to truth} \leftrightarrow \text{claim to volition} \\
\uparrow \text{arguments} \leftrightarrow \uparrow \text{arguments}
\]

*Fig. 2 Arguing in representative and directive games*
Argumentation as well as arguing is action in the speakers’ interests. The interest selects the arguments and determines the way they are expressed. It is not the words themselves but words used by the speaker which give the argument its power in the whole constellation of the particular game. If we liberate the notion of argumentation from methodological restrictions, we are always more or less arguing in dialogic interaction and use the power of communicative means if we do not want to use physical power.

One might be inclined to admit that argumentation takes place in performance as a mixed game that combines rationality and persuasion and integratively applies different communicative means but nevertheless still be in doubt about what a theory of the mixed game might look like. What is at stake here is “the architecture of complexity”, as Simon (1962) called it, or the methodology of a holistic theory which needs to be derived from the complex object. We need in any case a substantial idea of the complex whole and a key to opening it up. I have to be very brief here with respect to this issue and can only summarize what I have expounded elsewhere.

With the notion of the dialogic action game or the mixed game we grasp the complex whole with human beings acting and reacting at the centre. We always act in specific games such as the game of positioning oneself as the best candidate. Our interests, purposes and needs give us the key to opening it up. Purposes or speech act functions are expressed by communicative means; interests mostly remain hidden behind verbal expression and act as a driving force or strategy that determines the sequence of speech acts. Performance is not completely governed by conventions but is, in principle, based on speakers’ expectations or Principles of Probability.

Human beings orient themselves as complex adaptive systems within ever-changing surroundings by principles of probability of various kinds, constitutive, regulative and executive ones. Constitutive principles are the principles of action, dialogue and coherence. They are always accompanied by regulative principles, basically those that regulate the mutual influence of reason and emotion and those that regulate the speaker’s self-interest and his/her social concerns. Executive principles, finally, are primarily underlying strategies that determine the sequencing of speech acts.

Rhetoric in the mixed game is not an independent part that can be separately addressed. The mixed game is in any case a game played in the interests of the interlocutors, consciously or unconsciously. The interlocutors may choose the benchmark of logic or reasonableness or put a premium on persuasion in the hope of being successful. Rhetoric is at work everywhere, determines the regulation of interests and the choice of communicative means and strategies. The selection of words is crucial for the effect of speech. The argumentative power of words however is not the power of the words themselves but arises from their persuasive use in a particular game.
3. Words and action

Lexicology and action theory have usually been treated as separate areas. In recent years, however, it has become more and more evident that words and actions are interconnected. Issues such as the polysemy of isolated words are issues of theory not of language use, as Sorin Stati (e.g., 1986) repeatedly emphasized. Words are used in multi-word units or phrases which range from rather fixed phrases to more or less variable units. Their meaning is open to change and affected by the particular game. That is the point speakers can make use of in their attempts to move people’s minds.

What we need is a theory that can explain how human beings act and react in the dialogic action game. Human beings are neither completely rational nor chaotic beings. They are able to reflect rationally and are sometimes overwhelmed by emotions. Their abilities are mutually dependent, speaking interacts with perceiving and thinking, and together all three make up the extraordinary human ability of being competent in performance. Human beings basically tackle complexity by focusing attention on what seems to be relevant in the actual case and proceed by adapting to ever-changing conditions. Adaptation implies broadening or even changing one’s point of view.

The Mixed Game Model as a holistic model starts from the complex whole of the action game with human beings at the centre. Human beings are social individuals who have to regulate their double interests of being selfish individuals and social beings at the same time. It is not enough to simply express directly what we want to achieve; we have to negotiate our goals with our fellow beings in dialogue, i.e. with respect to what other human beings want. In order to be successful it is often advisable not to express directly what we want but to proceed indirectly, step by step, and sometimes even to hide our real intentions. In this case, we apply strategies behind openly expressed purposes. What we want to achieve is not a simple entity but is in itself complex, a structured hierarchy of meaning. Searle’s formula \( F(p) \) needs to be complemented by the basic category of INTEREST:

\[
\text{INTEREST}[F(p)] \\
\text{INTEREST}[\text{PURPOSE (REFERENCE + PREDICATION)}]
\]

\textit{Fig. 3 Speech act functions}

Our interests determine what we say, i.e. the choice of speech acts and how they are expressed. Purposes or speech act functions \( F \) are based on claims to truth and volition. They are not autonomous but related to propositions or states of affairs which are constituted by reference and predication. The hierarchy of meaning is thus built up by different types of meaning:

- What we mean is guided by superordinate interests and needs which – even if hidden – determine the course of action or the sequence of speech acts.
- Speech acts are defined by their purpose.
• Purposes relate to states of affairs.
• A state of affairs is constituted by reference and predication.

Having focused on the hierarchy of meaning or the functional side of the action game, we have now to address the issue of how we express what we want to achieve. That is the issue which includes the role of words among the communicative means and techniques we use in order to successfully negotiate what we want.

We have various verbal means at our disposal which interact with perceptive and cognitive means, such as gestures and inferences, and together they form the utterance which is the carrier of action. Words are part of the verbal means and play a specific role integrated with other verbal means. The meaning of ordinary words is not defined by a code but rooted in habits of life. Life means 'living with uncertainty' which usually happens rather smoothly on the basis of habits. Sometimes, however, diverging interests lead to conflicts which cannot be solved by the conflicting parties themselves.

What is needed is a superordinate institution, the institution of the law, which draws on definitions and provides reliability for human interaction. Words in the language of law or other languages for specific purposes aim at having a meaning which is defined, i.e. a meaning which is not negotiable. Nonetheless, the law and its legal terms have to be interpreted with respect to cases of performance. Their defined meanings are not universally valid but dependent on the individual culture of the legal system. Languages for specific purposes are however not at issue here.

We are interested in the general theoretical question of what part in the hierarchy of meaning is expressed by words. This question is crucial for a theory of language as it marks the point where words and action meet. It should be clear from the very beginning: we do not act with words, we act with utterances in dialogic sequences. Action is not speaking, but speaking, perceiving and thinking in integration. Utterances are the complex whole of different communicative means used to carry out an action. Not even speech act verbs carry out the action; in explicit performative utterances they predicate what action is carried out. To be more precise: it is not the verb itself that predicates, it is the speaker who predicates by the use of a specific verb. He/she is not obliged to use a verb that literally faces facts. For instance, the executive of a department can express an official request to his/her secretary by saying

2. I am asking you to rewrite this page once again.

An official request is not an action of asking. Nonetheless, for reasons of politeness or of business culture, the executive predicates an action of asking which is in fact an order. To my mind, predication is, in general, the way lexical phrases are used, not only verbal phrases but the other parts of speech as well. We predicate by phrases not by single words. Phrases are the lexical units. As constituents of the utterance they need to be syntactically defined. Predication is, of course, not completely free to the speaker but bound to certain restrictions of the current speech act and of the game in general. Nonetheless, utterance grammar allows us a certain leeway we are able to exploit in our
own interests. This is a very interesting point because it demonstrates how lexical conventions interact with the individual interest of the speaker or how in general conventions interact with individuality.

The other verbal means also fulfill their task as parts of the complex utterance. Grammatical words are applied for referring, syntactical and suprasegmental means are used for putting into action what we mean, i.e. for creating the utterance as the carrier of action.

Having clarified to some degree the nuts and bolts of an utterance grammar, we can now tackle the issue of how words get their power to move people’s minds. Words are communicative means in the speakers’ hands. As human beings are unable to recognize the world as such, there are no facts as such, everything depends on speakers and their views and interests which determine how they predicate the facts. Speakers’ attitudes may make it desirable to keep to the facts; they will therefore prefer a clear and honest way of expression. Their interests may however also require them to colour or even change the facts. In the mixed game, both voices interact. Words get their power since they allow speakers to predicate the facts in a way which is favourable to them.

Human beings normally do not pursue ideal interests but aim to achieve success or to get ‘adherence’ from their partners (Perelman 1977). In some games, clarity and rationality are the techniques which promise success. For instance, in scientific argumentation, we aim to expound our views as rationally as possible. In other cases, for instance in business negotiations, it is more advisable to conceal what we really want or to change the facts a bit to our own advantage. As the meaning of words is to some degree open and flexible, speakers can make words and phrases fit their interests by adjusting them to the conditions of the game.

Predicating is subordinate to action. It is words which are used as a key to action as they are capable of making the interlocutor perceive the world in the way the speaker wants and of triggering specific individual inferences. The way we predicate is crucial for effectively negotiating our claims to truth and volition. If we consider communication from the perspective of people who act and react as purposeful, interest-guided beings, communication turns out to be intrinsically rhetorical even if no specifically rhetorical figures are applied.

In communication we can speak with various voices, not only the voice of reasonableness and the voice of persuasion, we are also confronted with the voices of manipulating, deceiving and simulating power. The choice of our voice is, at bottom, an ideological choice. If we choose reasonableness and rationality, we aim to convince our partner that our claim to truth is justified. If we choose persuasion, we aim to move our partner’s mind to act in a certain way. This dichotomy of rationality and persuasion in the narrow sense as a dichotomy of representative and directive games does not affect the general desire of human beings to be accepted, i.e. human beings’ nature as persuasive beings. Burke’s well-known dictum (1950) of “meaning is persuasion” represents a general principle of human communication as a mixed game: we always try to gain our fellow beings’ adherence, be it in games of practical reason or games of emotion, in
games in which we simply position ourselves in a favourable light or even in games in which we change the facts and deceive the others.

4. How to move people’s minds with words

Let us now consider in more detail a few rhetorical techniques by which we can move people’s minds with words. As just mentioned, we might put a premium on facing facts or on changing facts. I will take this distinction as a structuring principle and start with the voice of rationality or sticking to the facts.

4.1 The voice of rationality

Rationality relies on the fact that the steps of argumentation are conclusive and on the clarity and lucidity of how we depict what we want to present as facts. Sincerity does not necessarily play a part. For many games, for instance, scientific argumentation or instructions for use, clarity of expression should be a prerequisite. The question of how the voice of rationality can draw on lexical meaning is a difficult one. Without doubt, direct and literal expression of the action function and the sequencing of actions will be an appropriate means. Indicating the structure of our discourse helps to facilitate understanding and to avoid misunderstanding. Moreover it allows us to underline the points we want to focus on and to make clear the position these points have in the sequencing of our argumentative steps.

Devices indicating the action function are traditionally called illocutionary devices. They consist of lexical means, speech act verbs or phrases, and grammatical means such as modal categories and particles. In explicit performative utterances such as

3. I am of the opinion, my position/thesis is, I object, I concede, I admit, I agree ...

we indicate the argumentative step we are taking.

These phrases often contain hedges of various kinds which are not to be taken compositionally or literally:

4. I have to object, I would like to call into doubt, my advice would be ...

Hedged performatives modify the performative phrase by a modal verb which however does not touch on the action function. I have to object, I would like to object, I wanted to propose are objections and proposals which are only formally hedged by modal verbs. Hedges take account of politeness routines which only seemingly weaken the action function but in fact represent persuasive means (Weigand 2003: 186) and demonstrate that we are moving in the mixed game.

We also have at our disposal lexical and grammatical means to indicate precisely the structure of our argumentative discourse. We can use verbal phrases such as

5. I start from the assumption, I have to come to a close, we also have to take into account ..., we can conclude ...
or particles, adverbs and connectors such as

6. firstly, secondly, not only – but also, additionally, by the way, in passing

For specific games such as scientific argumentation, it is certainly in the speakers’ interest to stick to rationality, at least in part, in order to achieve adherence by conviction through objectivity and matter-of-factness. Nonetheless, in performance, these games are mixed games; pure rationality remains an artificial concept.

4.2 The voice of persuasion

Let us now focus on the voice of persuasion in the sense of putting a premium on communicative means which allow us to *depict and colour the facts* in our own interest. This does not necessarily mean changing the facts but expounding them in a way which is favourable to our aims. Various devices can be differentiated, among them the following:

- the call to rationality
- magical words
- the culture code
- the appeal to emotions, especially compassion
- non-falsifiable predications
- provocative words
- phrases of politeness

What I categorized as ‘call to rationality’ is an interesting technique as it demonstrates that even rationality and clarity can become a matter of persuasion. With phrases such as

7. I am in favour of clear realities and facts, in plain language

the speaker primarily implies that the opponent’s arguments lack clarity and plain language (Weigand 1999: 59). These phrases are not only used as a statement to strengthen the position of the speaker but also to trigger off inferences to the disadvantage of the opponent.

Persuasive techniques mainly rely on emotions and desires in order to move people’s minds. A very powerful means is the use of *magical words*. Magical words have a meaning which evokes desires, hopes and fears. They can mobilize whole peoples and decide elections. Their meaning is deliberately left open, uncertain, and thus induces the audience to complete it in the concrete framework of the game. There are famous utterances which can serve as examples, for instance, the use of the word *evil* by George Bush:

8. If this is not evil, evil has no name.

*Evil* is not used here as a sign with encoded meaning. It is predicated on Sadam’s actions and has the magical power of deterrence. Evil has to be suppressed by any means.
This magical word is thus used in an indirect speech act as an effective means to trigger off the quasi-inevitable inference that a pre-emptive war should be accepted.

In the debates on the war in Iraq, the use of other words such as force versus diplomacy is also illuminating with respect to the power words can have over specific audiences. These words do not contain evaluations in the abstract which, for instance, tell us that force is to be avoided and diplomacy to be chosen. There is no marker inherent in the lexical items; it is the way they are used in phrases and the actual conditions of the game that change their meaning.

A very effective sample of the power of magical words can be observed in the current American election campaign with the use of the word change. This word is being used to mobilize the American people, and it enabled Obama to win first in Iowa, and then in other states. After years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, what most American people want is ‘change’. ‘Change’ is again not a word with a defined meaning. We could define it as a single word but argumentation does not mean putting single defined words to use. Words get their meaning by being used in specific cultural settings. This can be clearly seen in Obama’s brilliant speech in which he thanks his voters after the elections in Iowa (internet references 1). I can only pick out a few moves of this speech. Obama starts by throwing in the magical word ‘change’, first as an open concept – time for change, coalition of change – which is capable of binding people’s hopes and desires:

9. ... we are one people; and our time for change has come. ... to build a coalition for change ... sending a powerful message that change is coming to America.

He then states more precisely what he means by ‘change’ by making a series of contrasts between the present situation and the situation to come:

10. ... the time has come to tell the lobbyists ... that they don’t own the government; we do; and we are here to take it back. The time has come for a President who will be honest ... who will listen to you and learn from you ... who won’t just tell you what you want to hear, but what you need to know.

He positions himself as that President who will bring the change. ‘Change’ is used as argument in an indirectly directive game which starts from a representative-commissive speech act:

representative-And in New Hampshire, if you give me the same chance
commissive that Iowa did tonight, I’ll be that president for America.

directive (indirect) Therefore: Vote for me!

Fig. 4 Change as argument in an indirect directive game
He emphasizes by repetition what he will change:

11. I’ll be a President who finally makes health care affordable …
    I’ll be a President who ends the tax breaks for companies …
    I’ll be a President who harnesses the ingenuity of farmers and scien-
    tists … to free this nation from the tyranny of oil …
    I’ll be a President who ends this war in Iraq and finally brings our
    troops home …

At the end of his speech, he comes back to the message of change:

12. … our destiny will not be written for us; but by us, by all those men
    and women who are not content to settle for the world as it is; who
    have the courage to remake the world as it should be.

The clear argumentative structures of this speech in such an emotional situation, the
power displayed by the use of the word ‘change’, is amazing (see Appendix).

His opponent, Hillary Clinton, also appeals to emotions but puts a premium on
another magical word: the American dream. Having lost the elections in Ohio, Hillary
Clinton changed her rhetoric from positioning herself on the issue of ‘inner security’
to partly joining the line of change but primarily calling the Americans by what they
desire or believe to be, by what they believe to be able to achieve, by what they dream.
It is the greatness of America she envisages and the will to work for it (see Appendix).
In doing this she succeeded in getting more votes than Obama in the primary elections
in New Hampshire. The phrases she uses in her speech after the primary win (internet
references 2) are astonishingly similar to what Rapaille (2007: 197) describes as the
Culture Code for America, namely “keeping the dream alive”:

13. I intend to be that president, to be a president who puts you first …. I
    believe deeply in America, in our can-do spirit, in our ability to meet
    any challenge and solve any problem. I believe in what we can do to-
    gether.

14. … that people across our country know what’s really at stake, that we
    will all be called upon to deliver on the promise of America … that
    every generation will have their shot at the American dream …

It is the promise of America she repeatedly appeals to, the ‘call to greatness’ which she
considers to be the force that can unify her supporters and persuade others to join in:

15. … we are called upon to deliver on that promise. And if you join in
    this call to greatness, we will together answer.

And again, she uses phrases that predicate how Americans want to see themselves:

16. So, tomorrow, we’re going to get up, roll up our sleeves and keep going
    … We’re going to tap into all of the spirit, the talent and just the
    plain grit of this great nation again. … We are determined to tackle
    our toughest problems and stand up for those who most need a cham-
pion, because we are determined to make America work again for all of our people.

It is these phrases, the rhetoric of the American dream, which Hillary Clinton uses to call on Americans to follow her:

17. ... on behalf of this country we love so much. ... I’m going out there accompanied by millions and millions of people who believe as I do that this country is worth fighting for.

She therefore positions herself as the person who as President would be able to deliver on the promise of America. In doing this, she is more cautious, one might even say, more honest than Obama as she expresses it as her intention, not as a promise:

\[
\text{representative} \quad I \text{ intend to be that president who is able to deliver on the promise of America.}
\]

\[
\downarrow \quad \downarrow
\]

\[
\text{directive (indirect)} \quad \text{Vote for me.}
\]

\textit{Fig. 5 The American dream as argument in an indirectly directive game}

Again we see that a strategy based on emotions, desires, dreams is more powerful in moving people’s minds than factual information or expertness. If people do not have any desire or see any interests of their own in the subject matter, they can hardly be moved by words and arguments.

Besides magical words such as change or the American dream that catch a mood which is in the air, the Culture Code also includes desires and driving forces hidden in the mind. According to Rapaille (2007: 14), “most people don’t know why they do the things they do”. The American dream certainly does not represent an unconscious dream. Nonetheless Rapaille organized conversational sessions to find out what makes up the Culture Code for America at an unconscious level. The result completely matches the phrases used by Hillary Clinton. First of all, however, Rapaille uses his technique of conversational sessions in the service of the advertising industry. It can easily be imagined that businesses can gain great advantages from knowing the unconscious desires of people so that they can use them as an argument to sell their products. In advertisements various emotions are appealed to depending on the product to be promoted. To know the ‘culture code’ is very useful. If a culture likes freedom, even cigarettes can be advertised by promising this feeling. If the culture code for a certain type of car puts a premium on reliability and security, we will find adverts like the following:

18. Toyota does not break down.

There is no direct indication of a directive speech act nor of the argument of reliability. The predicating phrase \textit{does not break down} is intended to trigger off the inference of ‘that’s what I want’.
The Allianz company launched a similar advert:

19. We are on your side, wherever you are.

What seems to be a representative speech act, *we are on your side*, is dependent on a condition which is not explicitly expressed: ‘if you are a member’. This condition is precisely what the text aims at by promising reliability and assistance: ‘become a member’. The means used to strengthen the claim to volition are sophisticated means of persuasion that manifest the power of words and syntactic constructions.

*Appeals to emotion* are a very effective persuasive technique, especially the appeal to compassion. Politicians know the power of compassion and use it in their interests. Georg W. Bush, for instance, in his famous speech in Congress on the State of the Union of January, 28, 2003, employed this technique in picturing in detail a terror scenario by using a sequence of representative utterances in order to get acceptance for a pre-emptive war against Iraq:

20. Iraqi refugees tell us how *forced confessions* are obtained: by *torturing children while parents are made to watch*. International human rights groups have catalogued other methods used in the *torture chambers of Iraq*: *electric shock, burning with hot irons, dripping acid on the skin, mutilation with electric drills, cutting out tongues, and rape*. If this is not evil, then evil has no meaning. [Applause]

At the literal level, he uses the phrase *torturing children while parents are made to watch* as an argument to excite compassion, and he lists violations of human rights as further arguments using phrases such as *electric shock, burning with hot irons*, etc., which will provoke indignation. He thus evokes powerful emotions in this indirect directive game in order to move his audience.

There is a nice story on the Italian internet which once again demonstrates the power of words and of indirect speech acts. It is the story of an anonymous author, not the description of an authentic case. The story compares two ways of asking for help in the case of a blind beggar. The beggar first writes directly and explicitly on the sign beside his hat:

21. I am blind. Please help me.

using his blindness as argument, and gets very few coins. A copywriter passes by and changes the text, expressing the argument of blindness using other words as an appeal to compassion and leaving the claim to act verbally unexpressed:

22. Today, it’s springtime, and I can’t see it.

And the hat fills up with coins. People are more likely to be moved by persuasive appeals to their emotions than by direct demands telling them what to do (cf. also Weigand forthcoming.)

Another persuasive technique frequently used in political debates gets its power from *predicating in a way which cannot be falsified*. It is based on an interesting type of
words which refers to the opponent’s mind and predicates evil intentions or missing capabilities. Such derogatory predications, for instance, *to deceive, to drag out, to be unable*, can simply be put forward without any argument because nobody can look into the mind of another person. Assertions based on non-falsifiable predications of this type are therefore often used in demagogic speeches and provocative attacks such as the following authentic and well-known examples.

We owe that not least to Mrs Nicole Fontaine, because if she had not made such a good job of *dragging out* the Berlusconi and Dell’Utri immunity procedures ... you would no longer have the immunity that you need.

24. (Schröder, SPD, about his opponent Stoiber, candidate for the CDU/CSU)
Sie möchten regieren, aber Sie sind unfähig dazu.
“You want to govern but are unable to do it.”
(supporting his own directive claim to be elected)

The other way round, the same technique can be used to position oneself by simulating power and other capabilities (Weigand 2008):

Schröder (defiantly): “I’m sorry, of course I can.” (be the strong leader of a new government)

Another well-known example is Bush’s rhetoric against Sadam:

26. (Bush about Sadam)
The dictator is not disarming. To the contrary, he is *deceiving*.
(supporting his directive claim to accept the necessity of a pre-emptive war)

The argumentative power of these words in weakening the opponent and strengthening the own position is masked as a statement which is intended to trigger off the desired inference.

The provocative use of words is not restricted to attacks as was the case with Schulz’s provocation against Berlusconi, in example (23). It is also exploited in explorative games where it has the function of eliciting knowledge that is not willingly delivered or should not be made public. Questions using provocative words tend to emphasize the confrontational strategy of so-called ‘hard interviews’. They not only have the cooperative function of providing knowledge but primarily aim to bring to the fore what the interviewee wants to hide (Bollow 2007). Thus a cooperative interview could, for instance, start with the neutral question:

27. Wie ist ihr Gespräch mit dem Kanzler verlaufen?
“How did your conversation with the Chancellor go?”
whereas the confrontational type relies on the power of provocative words as in the following authentic example:

28. Hat Ihnen der Kanzler den Kopf gewaschen?
   “Did the Chancellor give you a good telling off?”

By the use of such provocative words in the syntactic format of a question the interviewer can bring in his view as a presupposition. He/she thus exploits a technique that allows them to include their argumentative position in the format of an interview.

The interviewer could also use a prestatement as an argument as another authentic example demonstrates:

29. Die Wirtschaft liegt am Boden. Wie gehen Sie mit der Situation um?
   “The economy is in crisis. How are you going to deal with the situation?”

Again we see, meaning is persuasion from the very outset, and the lexicon is at the core of the game. Phrases such as am Boden liegen “to be in crisis” or den Kopf waschen “to give a good telling off” are used to provoke the politician to disclose what lies behind the official mode of presentation.

Finally I would at least mention the technique of ingratiating oneself by routines of politeness which are not an honest expression of respect but a communicative means to further one’s own interests. Flattering words or compliments can be used in this sense. What seems to be intended to support the position of one’s interlocutor, is used in a deceitful way to support one’s own position.

5. Words as a key to action

As we have seen, language use provides many subtle and sophisticated techniques in order to move people’s minds with words. What they reveal is, in my opinion, crucial for our understanding of argumentation and of dialogic interaction in general. Argumentation starts in the minds of interacting people and relies on various human abilities which are used in favour or against certain positions in a process that can be described as a mixed game. Words play a key role in the game as they express how speakers predicate the world. It is the speaker’s individual point of view which lies behind the use of words and gives them their argumentative power. Human beings are persuasive beings by nature. In the mixed game, they use different integrated means of communication to achieve their goals. They may put a premium on rationality or on emotion, on cooperative or on confrontative strategies and even proceed by manipulative, deceptive techniques. Words not only predicate but by their very predication trigger off inferences which are intended to strengthen certain positions. They thus display their power in use as a key to action.

Human beings are able to create signs, but in ordinary language use we do not put signs to use. In ordinary language use, we attribute meaning to words and negotiate
meaning and understanding in dialogue. Lexical conventions are flexible and can be modified by individual interests in our minds. This process cannot be represented by the addition of different theories which are by definition incompatible. Argumentation in performance is not a process of definition but a process of adaptation and negotiation, a mixed game of competence-in-performance which is played by multiple voices and various techniques of exercising influence and power.

References


Internet References


2. retrieved 14 January 2008 from www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/08/AR2008010804092.html
Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Iowa Caucus Night (Internet reference 1)
Des Moines, IA, January 3, 2008
Thank you, Iowa.
You know, they said this day would never come.
They said our sights were set too high.
They said this country was too divided; too disillusioned to ever come together around a common purpose.

But on this January night – at this defining moment in history – you have done what the cynics said we couldn’t do. You have done what the state of New Hampshire can do in five days. You have done what America can do in this New Year, 2008. In lines that stretched around schools and churches; in small towns and big cities; you came together as Democrats, Republicans and Independents to stand up and say that we are one nation; we are one people; and our time for change has come.

You said the time has come to move beyond the bitterness and pettiness and anger that’s consumed Washington; to end the political strategy that’s been all about division and instead make it about addition – to build a coalition for change that stretches through Red States and Blue States. Because that's how we’ll win in November, and that's how we'll finally meet the challenges that we face as a nation.

We are choosing hope over fear. We're choosing unity over division, and sending a powerful message that change is coming to America.

You said the time has come to tell the lobbyists who think their money and their influence speak louder than our voices that they don't own this government, we do; and we are here to take it back.

The time has come for a President who will be honest about the choices and the challenges we face; who will listen to you and learn from you even when we disagree; who won’t just tell you what you want to hear, but what you need to know. And in New Hampshire, if you give me the same chance that Iowa did tonight, I will be that president for America.

Thank you.

I'll be a President who finally makes health care affordable and available to every single American the same way I expanded health care in Illinois – by--by bringing Democrats and Republicans together to get the job done.

I'll be a President who ends the tax breaks for companies that ship our jobs overseas and put a middle-class tax cut into the pockets of the working Americans who deserve it.

I’ll be a President who harnesses the ingenuity of farmers and scientists and entrepreneurs to free this nation from the tyranny of oil once and for all.

And I’ll be a President who ends this war in Iraq and finally brings our troops home; who restores our moral standing; who understands that 9/11 is not a way to scare up votes, but a challenge that should unite America and the world against the common threats of the twenty-first century; common threats of terrorism and nuclear weapons; climate change and poverty; genocide and disease.

Tonight, we are one step closer to that vision of America because of what you did here in Iowa. And so I’d especially like to thank the organizers and the precinct captains; the volunteers and the staff who made this all possible.
And while I’m at it, on “thank yous”, I think it makes sense for me to thank the love of my life, the rock of the Obama family, the closer on the campaign trail; give it up for Michelle Obama.

I know you didn’t do this for me. You did this—you did this because you believed so deeply in the most American of ideas – that in the face of impossible odds, people who love this country can change it.

I know this—I know this because while I may be standing here tonight, I’ll never forget that my journey began on the streets of Chicago doing what so many of you have done for this campaign and all the campaigns here in Iowa – organizing, and working, and fighting to make people’s lives just a little bit better.

I know how hard it is. It comes with little sleep, little pay, and a lot of sacrifice. There are days of disappointment, but sometimes, just sometimes, there are nights like this – a night-a night that, years from now, when we’ve made the changes we believe in; when more families can afford to see a doctor; when our children-when Malia and Sasha and your children-inherit a planet that’s a little cleaner and safer; when the world sees America differently, and America sees itself as a nation less divided and more united; you’ll be able to look back with pride and say that this was the moment when it all began.

This was the moment when the improbable beat what Washington always said was inevitable. This was the moment when we tore down barriers that have divided us for too long – when we rallied people of all parties and ages to a common cause; when we finally gave Americans who’d never participated in politics a reason to stand up and to do so.

This was the moment when we finally beat back the politics of fear, and doubt, and cynicism; the politics where we tear each other down instead of lifting this country up. This was the moment.

Years from now, you’ll look back and you’ll say that this was the moment – this was the place – where America remembered what it means to hope.

For many months, we’ve been teased, even derided for talking about hope. But we always knew that hope is not blind optimism. It’s not ignoring the enormity of the task ahead or the roadblocks that stand in our path. It’s not sitting on the sidelines or shirking from a fight. Hope is that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it, and to work for it, and to fight for it.

Hope is what I saw in the eyes of the young woman in Cedar Rapids who works the night shift after a full day of college and still can’t afford health care for a sister who’s ill; a young woman who still believes that this country will give her the chance to live out her dreams.

Hope is what I heard in the voice of the New Hampshire woman who told me that she hasn’t been able to breathe since her nephew left for Iraq; who still goes to bed each night praying for his safe return.

Hope is what led a band of colonists to rise up against an empire; what led the greatest of generations to free a continent and heal a nation; what led young women and young men to sit at lunch counters and brave fire hoses and march through Selma and Montgomery for freedom’s cause.

Hope—hope—is what led me here today – with a father from Kenya; a mother from Kansas; and a story that could only happen in the United States of America. Hope is the bedrock of this nation; the belief that our destiny will not be written for us, but by us; by all those men and women who are not content to settle for the world as it is; who have the courage to remake the world as it should be.
That is what we started here in Iowa, and that is the message we can now carry to New Hampshire and beyond; the same message we had when we were up and when we were down; the one that can change this country brick by brick, block by block, calloused hand by calloused hand – that together, ordinary people can do extraordinary things; because we are not a collection of Red States and Blue States, we are the United States of America; and at this moment, in this election, we are ready to believe again. Thank you, Iowa.

_transaction_ Clinton Thanks New Hampshire for Comeback after Primary Win (Internet reference 2) 
_CQ Transcripts, January 8, 2008
Thank you. Thank you. 
I come tonight with a very, very full heart. 
And I want especially to thank New Hampshire. Over the last week, I listened to you and, in the process, I found my own voice. 
I felt like we all spoke from our hearts, and I am so gratified that you responded. Now, together, let's give America the kind of comeback that New Hampshire has just given me. 
For all the ups and downs of this campaign, you helped remind everyone that politics isn't a game. This campaign is about people, about making a difference in your lives, about making sure that everyone in this country has the opportunity to live up to his or her God-given potential. That has been the work of my life. 
We are facing a moment of so many big challenges. 
We know we face challenges here at home, around the world, so many challenges for the people whose lives I've been privileged to be part of. 
I've met families in this state and all over our country who've lost their homes to foreclosures, men and women who work day and night but can't pay the bills and hope they don't get sick because they can't afford health insurance, young people who can't afford to go to college to pursue their dreams. 
Too many have been invisible for too long. Well, you are not invisible to me. 
The oil companies, the drug companies, the health insurance companies, the predatory student loan companies have had seven years of a president who stands up for them. It's time we had a president who stands up for all of you. 
I intend to be that president, to be a president who puts you first, your lives, your families, your children, your futures. I believe deeply in America, in our can-do spirit, in our ability to meet any challenge and solve any problem. I believe in what we can do together. 
In the future, we will build together. There will be no more invisible Americans. So we're going to take what we've learned here in New Hampshire and we're going to rally on and make our case. We are in it for the long run. 
And that is because we are in it for the American people. 
This victory will serve notice that people across our country know what's really at stake, that we will all be called upon to deliver on the promise of America. We'll be called upon to deliver on the promise that the middle class will grow and prosper again, to deliver on the promise that government will be of the people, by the people and for the people, not just the privileged few. 
To deliver on the promise that every generation will have their shot at the American dream, to deliver on the promise that we'll have the will and the wisdom to end the war in Iraq the right way. 
To deliver on the promise to take care of our brave veterans and restore America's standing, respect and credibility around the world.
We know that for the promise of America to be real, we are called upon to deliver on that promise. And if you join in this call to greatness, we will together answer. So, tomorrow, we're going to get up, roll up our sleeves and keep going.

I invite you to come join us at hillaryclinton.com. We're going to tap into all of the spirit, the talent and just the plain grit of this great nation again.

We are determined to tackle our toughest problems and stand up for those who most need a champion, because we are determined to make America work again for all of our people. We came back tonight because you spoke loudly and clearly.

You want this campaign to be about you, because there is so much at stake for our country. I have so many people to thank. I want to thank the two most important people in my life, Bill and Chelsea.

I want to thank them for their incredible commitment, their passion and their heart. I want to thank my entire family, particularly my mother, who is watching tonight.

I want to thank the extraordinary team here in New Hampshire that never faltered one minute. And that team had a great staff. It had volunteers and supporters from across the state and this country.

I want to thank the young people across New Hampshire who came out. They asked the hard questions, and they voted their hearts and their minds, and I really appreciate it.

And finally, I want to say how much I respect our Democratic candidates. Senators Dodd and Biden, who were in the race earlier, have given great service to our country.

Governor Richardson, Congressman Kucinich, Senator Edwards and Senator Obama – they all... They all have put themselves on the line day and night on behalf of this country we love so much. This campaign will transform America, because we will take on the challenges. We will seize the opportunities. Every single day I am not going out there on my own. I'm going out there accompanied by millions and millions of people who believe as I do that this country is worth fighting for.

Thank you, and God bless you.