

Parliamentary Discourses across Cultures

Parliamentary Discourses across Cultures:
Interdisciplinary Approaches

Edited by

Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu

in collaboration with Melania Roibu
and Mihaela-Viorica Constantinescu

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P U B L I S H I N G

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This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-4197-8, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4197-9

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INTRODUCTION

LILIANA IONESCU-RUXĂNDIOIU

1. Preliminary Remarks

This volume includes a selection of papers presented at the International Conference on the parliamentary discourse held in Bucharest, on September 23-24, 2011. The conference was organized in connection with a research project in progress at that time at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, sponsored by the National Council for Scientific Research in the Higher Education System (Rom. CNCSIS).

The topic of the volume is in accordance with the growing interest of different specialists in the problems of the political discourse, in general, and of the parliamentary discourse, as one of its major sub-genres, in particular. The authors of the papers are concerned with exploring various issues, traditions and discourse styles in different national parliaments inside and outside Europe, as well as in the European Parliament.

The analyses regard not only the situation of some countries with old and solid parliamentary traditions, like Great Britain, but also the situation of some former communist countries, where parliaments were created quite late, in the second half of the nineteenth century, ceased to fulfil their normal functions after the Second World War, and were re-created after the political events of 1989.

Our main goal is to offer a deeper understanding of the diversity of parliamentary practices across space and time. The papers aim at highlighting the particular roles played by local social and historical factors, ideologies, collective mentalities, and social psychology in building up culture-specific traditions of political institutions.

At the same time, the role of certain institutional factors, like, for example, constitutional frameworks, functions of parliaments within different political systems or representativity (Bayley 2004, 6), is taken into account.

The papers examine a great variety of topics. Some of them deal with the implementation and the functioning of a system of rules or of particular strategic practices in the activity of different parliaments. Others

explore the substance of the parliamentary debates, looking for a contextual, ideological or personal motivation of certain largely manifested attitudes towards important issues of the moment, such as anti-Semitism, nationalism or discrimination against sexual minorities. The way the members of parliament (MPs) construe a generic identity for themselves, as well as their distinctive self-images are also discussed in the volume.

Most of the papers tackle specific aspects of the discourse organization proper, at both macro- and micro-structural levels, basic pragma-rhetorical strategies and techniques used by the speakers, as well as some main issues connected with argumentation.

Even if parliamentary debate is the main object of analysis, other forms of parliamentary activity (such as the political statement) are also investigated. Moreover, the communicative behaviour of some prominent MPs during the parliamentary sessions is compared with their behaviour as guests in different TV political debates.

Having quite different scholarly backgrounds, the authors approach all these topics from a large variety of theoretical perspectives. Their investigations are based on flexible, interdisciplinary, and multi-layered methodologies, able to offer an image of the multifaceted manifestations of the parliamentary debates. Accordingly, one can get a more comprehensive and realistic image of the object under investigation.

2. Remarks on Some Previous Researches in the Field

Parliamentary discourse has become an area of interest for the researchers quite recently. It started being investigated by historians, political scientists and linguists from different perspectives, involving specific aims, as well as a diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches.

Historians are interested in grasping the differences and changes in the meaning of some basic political and social concepts and in connecting them with specific temporal, spatial and ideological contexts.

Political scientists focus on the way the MPs' institutional identity, but also their party affiliation, connected with a particular ideology, influence their discourse. This involves explaining why the same major events can be divergently commented on and interpreted by different political actors.

Linguists take into account some extra-discursive parameters too, but their aim is to describe and analyse parliamentary speeches as a "form of talk" (Goffman 1981), by identifying its specific structural features and strategies.

Nevertheless, the progress of research in each of these fields brought forward the necessity of an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration, given the complexity of the object under analysis.

One can notice some facts. For example, the linguists' growing interest in the study of parliamentary discourse is closely connected with the development of pragmatics and discourse analysis, domains that are by definition open to interdisciplinarity.

At the same time, some general philosophical ideas are valorised in different fields, grounding similar, though specific approaches. For example, L. Wittgenstein's opinion that language is constitutive for the world lies at the basis of both contextualism, a modern orientation in the study of history, and critical discourse analysis (CDA), a variant of discourse analysis (DA) frequently used in social sciences.

We also add the fact that different disciplines can share a certain object of interest regarding parliamentary discourse. For example, argumentation focuses the attention of linguists, but also of political scientists, the exchange of their results being mutually beneficial.

It is not our intention to present an overview of the previous studies on parliamentary discourse. We content ourselves with mentioning several contributions in the field of linguistics that can be considered significant for the present-day configuration of the research interests. One of the pioneering works belongs to Teresa Carbó (1996), author of the two volume study *El discurso parlamentario mexicano entre 1920 y 1950 (Un estudio de caso en metodología de análisis de discurso)*. It is relevant for having opened some directions of analysis, namely: the analysis of the discourse in a *national* parliament; the *diachronic* view on this discourse; the application of a particular *methodology* (*discourse analysis*) involving, among other aspects, the investigation of the interactional dimension of a discourse usually approached as monologic.

The volume edited by Paul Bayley (2004), *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse*, is certainly one of the most influential works devoted to this discursive form. As intended by the editor, the nine papers in the volume provide possible topics and methodological models (Bayley 2004, 7) for the analysis of various aspects of parliamentary debates. Even if all the papers reflect the general theoretical perspective of functional linguistics, there is a remarkable diversity of methodological frameworks: beside the systemic functional linguistics proper, CDA and corpus linguistics are also used. The volume attempts to balance the aim of verifying the applicability of different approaches situated within the functionalist paradigm and that of testing the limits of the explanatory power of these approaches (*ibidem*, 6).

As mentioned in the title, another innovation of the volume is the cross-cultural perspective most of the papers adopt when analysing a certain subject. Particular aspects of the debates held in the British Parliament—as a constant term—are compared with the corresponding aspects from other national European parliaments in the idea of determining the extra-linguistic parameters influencing the discursive variability.

The most recent volume, *European Parliaments under Scrutiny*, edited by Cornelia Ilie (2010), mirrors the current state and trends in the research of parliamentary discourse. The first remark concerns the diversity of theoretical models and analytical tools used by the authors. The largely acknowledged topics and procedures of the DA are complemented with relevant elements provided by modern rhetoric and argumentation theory. One can also notice the interest in different sub-genres of parliamentary discourse: besides the regular debates, some sub-genres reflecting the government control function of the parliament, such as the oral interpellations to the government or the presentation of the new government, are taken into account. As for the empirical data, they cover not only the traditional parliaments in Western Europe, but also the newly created parliaments in the post-communist Central- and East-European countries, as well as the European Parliament.

It is also worth mentioning some special issues of different journals, devoted to the analysis of parliamentary language and discourse. We have in view mainly *Journal of Language and Politics* 2003, 2 (1), opened by P. Chilton's substantial preface, and *Journal of Pragmatics* 2010, 42 (4), an issue edited and prefaced by Cornelia Ilie, entitled "Pragmatic Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse". *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 2010, LV (4), can be also added. Under the title "The Romanian Parliamentary Discourse: Tradition and Modernity. A Pragma-Rhetorical Approach", it includes some results of the Romanian research project which is illustrated in this volume too.

A final remark concerns the fact that, starting with some remarks about parliamentary questions (Crystal 1995), *Parliamentary discourse* has nowadays become a special lemma in the linguistic encyclopedias (see, for example, Ilie 2006).

3. The Theoretical and Methodological Framework of our Approach. Some Specific Aspects

The original contribution of this volume is that it brings together, in an attempt of a mutual accommodation, three main directions of examining

parliamentary discourse, coming from different scientific areas. One, originating in sociology, is based on approaching parliament as a community of practice. The other one, coming from modern historiography, will be generically called contextualism, even if usually one differentiates between the conceptualism of the German School and the contextualism proper of the so-called Cambridge School. The third research direction has in view the discourse *per se*, as a linguistic achievement, and involves adopting the pragma-rhetorical perspective in its analysis.

Each of these directions will be presented in the following.

3.1. Parliament as a Community of Practice

Usually, parliamentary debate is defined as a discursive form, whose distinctive features are closely connected with the specific institutional frame within which communicative interaction takes place.

According to P. Drew and J. Heritage (1992, 3-5), institutional interaction has some characteristics:

- it is task-related and goal-oriented in institutionally relevant ways;
- it represents the central medium through which the working activities of institutional agents are conducted in designated settings;
- participants make their institutional identities relevant to the activities performed;
- participants' conduct is shaped and constrained by their institutional orientation;
- the interaction determines some patterns of meanings, reference and action.

Even if this way of approaching institutional interaction captures some basic properties of the communication in an official context, it does not provide a convincing image of its dynamic character. The participants in interaction are given the rather passive role of complying with a system of institutional rules and constraints, not of direct involvement in construing it in accordance with their specific tasks and goals.

Understanding parliament as a *community of practice* seems to compensate for this shortcoming. The concept of community of practice represents a social construct enabling the researcher to explore the mutual relationship between the institutional practices and the individuals involved in these practices (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, 464).

Introduced by J. Lave and E. Wenger (1991), the concept was largely used by P. Eckert and S. McConnell-Ginet (1992, 1998, 2007) in gender studies, and also invoked in connection with the analysis of

politeness/impoliteness phenomena (Bousfield 2008, Mills 2009). Referring to politeness in the adversarial political discourse, S. Harris (2001) approached the House of Commons in the British Parliament as a community of practice and convincingly proved the efficiency of this approach of the parliamentary debates.

As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, 464) put it:

“A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor”.

The basic difference between this concept and the traditional concept of community lays in assigning relevance not only to the membership, but also to the common activity in which a group of people is engaged. Accordingly, the legitimacy of membership appears as different. Traditionally, communities are conceived rather as taxonomic entities, distinguished by some observable features, such as age, gender, ethnicity, etc. Their members are assigned the passive role of recognizing their group affiliation. Instead, the community of practice is a more dynamic configuration, with an internal legitimacy given by its members' involvement in a certain endeavour.

Becoming a member of a community of practice raises the question of being selected (that is accepted) by other people on the basis of some individual qualities and/or skills. In the case of professional communities, the selection is made by a limited group of experts in the field, on the basis of a set of well-defined criteria (see job interviews). In the case of the parliament, selection means elections, that is the vote of all citizens, who have in view a great diversity of criteria, some of which of a subjective nature (such as being a charismatic or a good looking person).

The full membership in a community of practice involves a complex process of situated learning, enabling a person to gradually overstep the bounds of his/her initial condition of legitimate peripheral participant. Considering the particular case of the parliament, becoming an MP involves a major change in a person's previous professional and institutional affiliation. This means committing to new tasks and goals, learning a specific repertoire of negotiable resources and working on the individual and group images, in order to comply with the general expectations both of the other MPs and the voters (see Harris 2001, 453-454).

Unlike the other communities of practice, for the parliament, discourse is not only one of the necessary conditions to perform a specific activity, but a constitutive aspect of this activity. Learning the rules and the sets of discourse practices that are recognized as appropriate in a certain

parliament, at a certain time, is crucial for a new MP (Mills 2009, 1057-1058).

This patterned communicative behaviour of the MPs represents the background against which they identify themselves and are identified by the others as legitimate members of that community of practice. At the same time, following those patterns, MPs create a necessary interpretive framework. It allows the audience to identify the marks of spontaneity and originality in a certain speech and to assign them a certain meaning, as well as to distinguish between acceptable and non-acceptable aspects.

Within every community of practice, parliament included, the adequacy norms change in time, being continuously revised and co-constructed (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2007, *apud* Mills 2009, 1058-1059), as a result of the mutual influence between the individual, the group and the cultural practices active at a certain moment in a given society.

3.2. Contextualism

Parliamentary discourses are analysed in this volume in a synchronic, as well as in a diachronic perspective. The authors tried to exploit some modern views about writing history, widely open towards interdisciplinarity. Two main directions are particularly taken into account: the conceptualism of R. Koselleck's German School (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and the contextualism of the so-called Cambridge School, in the quite different versions presented by J.G.A. Pocock and Q. Skinner. The foundations of the scholarly thinking of the above-mentioned authors, as well as their basic theoretical and methodological way of approaching history were thoroughly analysed by Iain Hampsher-Monk (1998).

What connects the representatives of both these schools is the general idea of approaching history through the study of the basic concepts recurrently used in a certain epoch and place, i.e. through the study of their linguistic expression and mainly of their specific meanings. This involves a careful reading of the texts produced by different political actors, in order to identify the linguistic means of expressing those concepts and, most of all, their specific meanings.

Accordingly, both conceptualism and contextualism could not avoid taking into account some major achievements of modern linguistics. Conceptualists adopt methods derived not only from traditional philological analysis of texts and hermeneutics, but also from linguistic semantics (semasiology, onomasiology, theory of semantic fields). R. Koselleck makes reference to F. de Saussure's well known dichotomy synchrony/diachrony. In his opinion, the link between synchronic events

and diachronic structures is analogous to that between “spoken speech”, viewed synchronically, and “the diachronically pre-given language” (Koselleck 2002, 30).

Besides this dichotomy, in J.G.A. Pocock’s writings, a special attention is given to another Saussurean dichotomy: language/speech (*langue/parole*). The author is mainly interested in the uses of language, that is in the discursive actualization of the system units. The meanings of these units, even if basically similar, are more or less variable from one discourse to another. These differences enable Pocock to delimit what he calls “paradigms” or “discourses”, which sometimes occur within the same text.

The speech act theory—a major product of the modern philosophy of ordinary language—has an important place in Q. Skinner’s studies. Approaching language through its capacity not of describing some state of affairs, but of affecting the world, Skinner tries to identify the discursive marks of the fight between the conventional and the innovative, conflictual or subversive uses of language at both the semantic and the communicative practice levels (Hampsher-Monk 1998, 42-44).

The scholarly differences in their theoretical background and traditions concerning the ways of approaching both language and history, as well as the differences in the political practices in Germany (before and after the unification) and the United Kingdom, resulted in different views of the above-mentioned authors concerning the relationship between the concepts and the realities they encode and express.

R. Koselleck (2002, 24) assigns a mediation function to language. Language enables people to act, understand, interpret, change and re-form societies (*ibidem*, 25). The history of concepts is a means to check the linguistically stored experience of a given society (*ibidem*, 37).

Concepts crystallize and store specific historical experiences (Richter 1990, 65-66) in a linguistic form. To express a concept, a word should encapsulate meanings from different technical languages in use in a certain epoch. Besides the “long in use” concepts, whose meaningful core has basically remained the same until now, Koselleck identifies a class of concepts whose earlier meanings have been effaced in time and should be reconstructed, as well as a class of concepts that appeared in the course of a social change process, directly affecting and shaping it (*ibidem*, 46).

Accordingly, concepts not only record the changes in a given society, but can also trigger and influence the evolution of these changes. Speaking about the Enlightenment epoch, for example, Koselleck distinguishes between compensatory concepts, reflecting no experience content when coined, orientative concepts, creating expectations and a certain urge to action, and concepts of empirical storing, in search of their junction with

the historical reality (Koselleck 2002, 292-294). It results that, regardless of their close connections, social and conceptual histories are viewed by Koselleck as being quite different. In his opinion, they do not have similar speeds of evolution (*ibidem*, 37). There are cases when the conceptualization of a certain aspect of reality can occur long after that reality had changed, and cases when the concepts can occur long before the new reality they are referring to had taken shape.

For British contextualists, language, as actualized in discourse, is not independent, but constitutive of the political reality. One cannot take the concepts out of the different synchronic contexts where they occur, in an attempt to identify their actual meanings, and then try to restore the system they belong to. Concepts take their meanings from the patterns of discourse where they function. Pocock considers that the different political languages he tries to identify (sometimes within the same discourse) entail particular linguistic conventions, constraining the conceptualization processes in specific ways (Richter 1990, 55). Skinner is more categorical in this respect, as for him speaking or writing is a goal-directed action. Each speaker or writer acts as an individual linguistic performer, who accepts, rejects or ignores the dominant linguistic conventions. Different ideologies result from the existence of sets of linguistic repertoires, meanings and practices, shared by a number of speakers (*ibidem*, 60).

Accordingly, linguistic actions can be more conventional or more original. What is important is to persuade the audience to accept the innovations. Skinner defines concepts as weapons or tools; they do not have a history of their own, but a history of their uses in argument (*ibidem*, 62). Different authors can assign different meanings to the terms used to express a certain concept, and can use the same concept to accomplish different actions, pursuing different goals. The presence of a new concept is closely connected with the creation of a new vocabulary in terms of which it is articulated and discussed.

As Melvin Richter notices, regardless of the important aspects that distinguish the views of the German and the Cambridge Schools, they cannot be considered as mutually incompatible, but rather complementary (*ibidem*, 70).

3.3. The Pragma-Rhetorical Perspective

Pragma-rhetoric provides a specific interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological framework for discourse analysis. The cooperation between the two disciplines (pragmatics and rhetoric) is legitimated not only by their common research object: language in use, but also by the

similarity of their perspective in approaching this object, that of the speaker's intention to produce a certain effect on the receiver. G. Leech (1983, 15) was the first one to characterize the approach to pragmatics as "rhetorical", as far as it focuses on a goal-oriented speech situation.

The modern attempts to redefine rhetoric brought closer the two disciplines under consideration. Traditionally, the domain of rhetoric was restricted to certain types of discourse (public speaking, literature) and the researcher was interested in the discourse itself and the author's art. Modern theories define rhetoric as "situated discourse" (Bitzer 1999, 215) and admit that, ultimately, any form of human discourse is rhetorical, as being produced in a particular situation. Accordingly, rhetorical activity is no longer understood as a one-way activity of an autonomous speaker, but as a special form of transaction, involving complex interactive processes between the speaker, the receiver(s) and/or the audience. Within these processes, participants construct and correlate their identities according to the circumstances (*ibidem*, 215).

There are some obvious analogies between pragmatics and modern rhetoric.

(a) Both use the concept of "situation": communicative situation, and rhetorical situation, respectively. Communicative situation includes not only a linguistic component, but also a sociological, as well as a cognitive and psychological one (Levinson 1983, X, 5). Each of these components has a specific impact on the structure and form of a discourse. Rhetorical situation is viewed as "the source and ground of rhetorical activity", the rhetorical discourse functioning as "a fitting response to a situation which needs and invites it" (Bitzer 1999, 220).

(b) In pragmatics, one speaks of discursive genres (Bakhtin 1986), forms of talk reflecting those frames, schemes and scripts (Goffman 1974) which are identified as functional by the members of a given community. Parliamentary discourse is part of the more comprehensive genre of the political discourse. It has some specific sub-genres, corresponding to the basic forms of parliamentary activity (debates, motions, oral/written questions, interpellations, etc.).

One also speaks of three basic rhetorical genres: deliberative, forensic and epideictic. Basically, parliamentary discourse belongs to the first genre, but—as already noticed (Ilie 2006, 190; 2010, 8)—it also includes certain features that, in some circumstances, bring it closer to the other two genres.

(c) Concerning the linguistic resources used to construct the discourse, there is a certain correspondence between some basic pragmatic and rhetorical structural categories. Pragmatics distinguishes between speaker-

oriented, hearer-oriented, and neutral utterances. Their relationship with the three main discourse components traditionally recognized by rhetoric: *ethos* (connected with self-image), *pathos* (connected with the receivers' emotional reaction), and *logos* (connected with ideas and their logical concatenation) is quite obvious.

Pragmatic categories are defined according to the concrete mechanisms of the functioning of communicative processes, whereas rhetorical ones take into account the main levels involved in the process of conveying a certain content. Unlike pragmatics, which is mostly descriptive, rhetoric is mostly evaluative, as focused on the complex effects produced by the discourse.

If, for example, we consider the use of the pronominal and verbal person forms, pragmatics defines some uses as strategic, revealing their role in setting the discursive perspective, as well as their consequences for the general structure of the discourse. Rhetoric interprets the same forms in relation to their contribution to construing a certain image of the speaker and to the process of influencing the reaction of the audience in a deliberate manner.

Pragma-rhetoric is a possible form of approaching discourse within the framework of the generally acknowledged functional paradigm. It involves an analysis of the discourse at both its macro- and micro-structural levels. In the particular case of the institutional discourses, which include parliamentary discourses, the macro-structural level analysis has in view aspects such as:

- the general organization of the discourse: opening and closing sequences; basic sequences; dialogical sequences; local adjustments;
- the degree of observing/violating the institutional norms and constraints;
- the general orientation of the discourse towards consensus or confrontation; relative weight and forms of agreement and disagreement; possibilities and forms of mediation;
- the relative weight and forms of expressing rationality and emotion in the discourse structure;
- the general structure of argumentation.

The micro-structural level analysis takes into account the specific way the main actional and interactional discourse aspects, as well as aspects concerning the argumentative dimension are actualized in a particular speech. Among these aspects, one can mention:

- speech acts (direct and indirect acts; forms of indirectness);
- deixis (mainly, designations for the speaker and the addressees);
- the implicit; forms and strategies of implicitation;
- the split of the speaker's voice: polyphony and multivocality;
- politeness/ impoliteness strategies (on record/off record strategies);
- meta-communicative forms,

as basic actional aspects, and

- address forms and other forms of implicating the audience;
- forms of reaction from the audience;
- dialogic strategies,

as basic interactional aspects.

The micro-level aspects of argumentation include:

- sources and types of arguments;
- argumentative strategies;
- fallacies;
- argumentative connectives.

A pragma-rhetorical approach involves both the description of the structural and linguistic choices made by a certain speaker, and a complex interpretation of their effects. As the pragmatic, argumentative and rhetorical dimensions of any discourse are organically interwoven in the communicative reality, this kind of approach is meant to restore the genuine convergence of the effects produced on each dimension as a result of a basic unifying function (the persuasive function, for the political discourse).

For example, if we take into consideration the particular case of quotations, which are quite frequently used in the parliamentary speeches, some comments are possible. Quotations have an important role in setting the discursive perspective (pragmatic dimension). They involve a split of the speaker's voice into an asserting voice (that of the quoted person) and an interpreting one (speaker's own voice). These voices can provide convergent or divergent evaluations of a certain issue. In the first case, the mutual alignment of two subjective positions can also act as a means of enhancing the strength of an argument (argumentative dimension). At the same time, it can add a supplementary element to the speaker's positive image (rhetorical dimension—ethos). In the second case, by dissociating him/herself from the quoted voice, the speaker can bring forward the inconsistency of the position expressed by that voice and even add counter-arguments to reject the standpoint expressed in the quotation. If the other voice belongs to a political adversary, the contrast between their relative images will become stronger.

4. A Brief Overview of the Volume

The structure of this volume takes into account the diversity of topics and approaches connected with parliamentary discourse. Papers are grouped into four main sections. The first section includes two papers devoted to the analysis of certain parliamentary concepts, from two different perspectives: one, of the political science, and the other, of the conceptual history.

Teemu Häkkinen's paper focuses on the concept of *royal prerogative*, which refers to the specific right of the British Government to decide about deploying military force abroad.

Following Q. Skinner, the author intends to offer an image of the state of the concept and its use in a particular historical moment: the beginning of the Gulf Crisis in 1990-1991. The debates held in the House of Commons have a more general relevance, brought forward by the analysis in the paper. They reflect the evolution of the views on the institutional relationship between Parliament and Government. The modern tendency to increase the role of Parliament, insisting on the sovereignty of its decisions, is manifest even in a typical constitutional monarchy.

Onni Pekonen's aim is to illustrate how specific historical and political conditions influenced the process of adopting European rules, practices and conceptual tools in the debates of the Finnish Parliament (the Eduskunta), in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

If Swedish models appeared as quite natural for the first Diet Act from 1869, given the previous more than five centuries of Swedish rule in Finland, the increasingly openness towards a diversity of European parliamentary systems was closely connected with the fight for autonomy.

The author analyses the changes in the meaning, as well as in the forms of expressing the concept of *parliamentary obstruction*. Originally designating a particular tactic used in the British House of Commons, the concept expanded in the Eduskunta to refer to other types of disputes between the minority and the majority. At the same time, beside the neologic designation, a Finnish equivalent was introduced in the early 1890s. The evolution of their meanings is thoroughly examined in the paper.

The papers gathered in the second section investigate the factors conditioning MPs' attitude towards a number of issues which animated the debates in specific historical circumstances, as well as their choice of arguments.

The paper of *Mathias Falter and Saskia Stachowitsch* is part of a larger research project in progress at the University of Vienna. The authors

analyse the debates on voting rights in the Austrian Parliament during the late Habsburg Empire (1861-1918), in a discourse-historical perspective. They focus on anti-Semitism, considered as a central discourse element in Austrian political culture before the First Republic. In their opinion, unlike anti-Semitism in some other contexts, parliamentary anti-Semitism functioned as an argumentative strategy closely connected with political, religious, and ethnic groups. It not only reflects the state of evolution of a certain society in a given period of time, but also has important consequences on the future evolution of that society.

The analysis of the anti-Semitic rhetoric in parliamentary discourse brings forward the meaning ambivalence of some basic concepts related to the definition of a democratic society, such as representation, citizenship or nationality. This fact proves the persistence of prejudice and discrimination, in spite of the changes produced in the general ideas concerning the legitimization of power.

Daniela Pastarmadzhieva takes into account the situation of a former communist country, Bulgaria, which became a parliamentary republic after 1989. The author tries to check MPs' attitude towards democracy using a series of 12 questions. Even if only 17 MPs answered her questions, the author was able to draw some preliminary conclusions. She suggests that although the MPs are familiar with the basic principles of democracy, as well as with the important role of the civil society in a democratic system, some non-democratic beliefs and attitudes are still persisting in the Bulgarian Parliament.

Further studies based on the answers of a larger number of MPs, representing all the political parties, should determine if such views reflect individual positions or are connected with a certain party ideology.

Manon Tremblay focuses on the debates in the Canadian Parliament that led to the official opening of civil marriage to same-sex couples (July 20, 2005). The author identifies two main sets of arguments used by the MPs, either in favour or against this decision: one related to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the other concerning the family.

The two conflicting positions expressed in the debates reflect the clash between the conservative views, centred on the concepts of tradition and cultural universality, on the one hand, and the more modern views, acknowledging the diversity and complexity of present-day societies, on the other hand. What puzzles the author is the absence of arguments related to feminism or the non-involvement of the State in the issues concerning marriage.

The papers in the third section focus on the parliamentary discourse proper, examining a large diversity of linguistic, as well as pragma-

rhetorical aspects within the comprehensive framework of the functional paradigm.

Coco Norén's contribution is part of a research project (*Europe en ligne*) examining the argumentative markers used by the members of the European Parliament in discourses held in French. It is a corpus based research, involving the semantic level, but aiming, at the same time, to extend the Scandinavian Theory of Linguistic Polyphony (ScaPoLine) to the discourse level.

The author focuses on the semantics of the French adverb *surtout* "above all" as a marker of increased argumentation. She also reveals some specific aspects of its functioning as an index of the focal point of an utterance in the parliamentary discourse.

Maria Svensson's paper is part of the same project (*Europe en ligne*) as *Coco Norén's*, using the same corpus of data. The author analyses the use of the French conjunction *si* "if" in concessive and adversative contexts, within the speeches of the French members of the European Parliament. She distinguishes this use of *si* from its use in conditional contexts. The differences regard both the formal and the text-organisational levels.

The concessive-adversative use of *si* is associated mainly with a definite form of the subject in *p* and occurs in the initial sequence of the speeches, whereas the conditional use is characterized by a greater diversity of the subject form in *p* and is recorded in the final sequence.

These features have important consequences on the argumentative role played by the two types of *si* constructions.

In her paper, *Maria Aldina Marques* examines, from an argumentative perspective, the discursive construction of emotions in a debate in the Portuguese Parliament. Considering that, given the conflictive nature of parliamentary discourse, negative emotions are prevalent, the author analyses the functioning of two basic emotions of this kind: indignation and irritation, as strategic devices in the argumentative processes. She comes to the conclusion that indignation triggers the amplification of disagreement, whereas irritation is mainly connected with the function of refutation. At the same time, concerning the interactional dimension, the author notices that the hetero-attributed emotion is negatively evaluated and enhanced, as opposed to the "convenient" self-attributed emotion.

Rodica Zafiu aims to investigate the place and role of the political statement, a sub-genre of the parliamentary discourse quite frequently actualized in the Romanian Parliament. The author identifies some structural and rhetorical characteristics that run counter to the defining features of the parliamentary discourse and reflect a strong influence of the mass media culture. In her opinion, political statements represent an

example of epideictic discourse, which illustrates three main discursive sub-types: celebration, polemic (and satiric) and action (decision)-oriented speeches.

Oana Chelaru-Murăruș's paper explores, from a rhetorical and pragma-stylistic perspective, some speeches delivered in the Romanian Parliament by Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the President of the nationalistic party Greater Romania (*România Mare*). Corneliu Vadim Tudor's speeches fully illustrate the main features of the nationalistic political discourse. They are cliché-based, pathos-oriented and emphatic. The speaker's strong subjectivity is reflected in his narcissism, and sometimes in his histrionic behaviour, as well as in a highly conflictive attitude towards his adversaries, manifested in his preference for an aggressive language, including insults, threats, abusive *ad hominem* fallacious arguments, etc.

Elena Albu's paper is situated in the linguistic sub-field of cognitive pragmatics. Based on the theoretical and methodological tools provided by the Relevance Theory, the author analyses the contribution of a particular negative structure: [not (x) but (x')], in configuring the politicians' self-image. Her corpus of data includes both parliamentary and TV political debates, as she intends to check the way the debate form acts upon the strategies used in the discursive actualization of the above-mentioned negative pattern. These strategies either highlight certain aspects of the politician's self, or define his image as opposed to that of his adversaries.

The last section of the volume includes some contributions of the Romanian researchers involved in the project *Tradition and modernity in the Romanian parliamentary discourse*. The main objective of that project was to highlight the complex phenomenon underlying the construing and evolution of the Romanian parliamentary discourse as an institutional discourse genre, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century and until the Second World War.

Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu analyses the way the concept of democracy was understood in the Romanian Parliament, in the second half of the nineteenth century, based on the speeches of four outstanding MPs. In an interdisciplinary approach, combining elements from linguistic semantics and discourse analysis, the author examines the uses of the concept at the system level and at the discourse level. In the final part, an outline of the temporal evolution of the concept is presented.

Andra Vasilescu's paper investigates the projection of self in the MPs' discourse, starting from 1866 and until 1923. In the author's opinion, parliamentary identity is construed at the intersection of four types of hierarchically ranked identities: national, institutional, professional and personal, national identity occupying the first position within this

hierarchy. The analysis of the parliamentary speeches from the considered period of time reveals a number of features defining MPs' identity, some of them still manifest in our times. Using the arguments provided by the texts, the author considers as relevant for the MPs' identity the fact that they present themselves as builders of a modern institution, representatives and teachers of the people, missionaries of the national ideal, members of the cultural elite, exponents of group morality, emotionally committed citizens and witty speakers.

Ariadna Ștefănescu examines the accomplished fact (AF) as a strategy adopted by the Romanian political class in the process of constructing and consolidating a modern state in the second half of the nineteenth century. She has in view two particular cases: the establishment of a constitutional monarchic system under the reign of a foreign prince Charles (Carol) I, and the minting of the national currency. In the author's opinion, the AF policy has a component connected with action: *modus procedendi*, and a component connected with deliberation: *modus deliberandi*. The analysis is focused on the way several factors, such as communicative practices, legitimacy and time work together, in order to bridge the gap between the two aforementioned components.

Examining *de dicto* evaluation in the parliamentary discourse of the early twentieth century, *Oana Uță Bărbulescu* and *Melania Roibu* come to the conclusion that, unlike nowadays, interwar MPs prefer irony at the expense of direct attacks.

Irony is staged by the strategic use of praise, which provides a securing space for both the speaker (who announces his intention to diminish the damage caused to the other by the use of over-politeness, in order to protect his own image) and the opponent (who has to respond in a non-aggressive way, in order to avoid jeopardizing his image).

The rhetorical means designed to set up praise as a strategy of irony rely on elements located at various language levels, ranging from the careful selection of evaluative terms to construing discursive isotopies and over-politeness. The argumentative techniques, on the other hand, involve the creation of some complex causal relations (remained implicit, most of the times), as well as the appeal to two arguments turned into fallacies: the argument from verbal classification and the argument based on ethos.

Quotations, as argumentative means used in the parliamentary discourse, are analysed by *Mihaela-Viorica Constantinescu*, from a pragma-rhetorical perspective. Her corpus covers the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. She notices the difference in the functioning of argumentation according to whether it presupposes quoting foreign sources or internal sources. If the

first set of sources is used as arguments of authority, the second set is given this role only when it comes to official documents (laws, conventions). Quoting an opponent, be him a fellow MP or a journalist supporting a different party, usually involves polemics and counter-argumentation. The possible manipulation of sources, sometimes turned into misquotations, can result in the derailment to fallacies, especially the *straw man* and the *ad hominem* (*circumstantial* or *tu, quoque*) ones and, consequently, trigger an intensification of the conflicts.

Silviu Hariton's paper investigates the legislative debates in the Romanian Parliament concerning the pensions granted by the state to its civil servants in modern Romania. The author aims at examining the parliamentary procedures used in debating and adopting these specific laws. Four turning moments in the history of public pensions in modern Romania are taken into account: 1868, 1889-1890, 1902 and 1925. They are relevant to the evolution of modern bureaucracy, as well as to the articulation of the defining features of the welfare state before the Second World War.

5. Final Remarks

To sum up, this volume is meant to offer a multifaceted image of the parliamentary discourse, involving both content and structural aspects, which have been approached from a great variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. Our intention is to provide suggestions rather than models of analysis or final results, as research is based on limited corpora of data, selected in accordance with their relevance to a certain topic.

As compared to other volumes with the same general object, this volume innovates in two main directions: first of all, by taking into consideration the temporal dimension, which allows to observe not only some constants and variables of the parliamentary discourse, but also the relevance of certain situational and contextual parameters to the discourse organization. The other innovative direction regards a rather thorough approach of parliament as a community of practice, which creates new possibilities for understanding its activity.

It is our belief that the contributions gathered in this volume represent a practical demonstration of the benefits of interdisciplinarity for all the specialists sharing a certain field of investigation.

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PART I

SOME CONCEPTS IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

