

COMMUNICATION AS POLITICAL DISCOURSE: PERSUASIVE MECHANISMS AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The present paper analyses communication as a political discourse. This might be said to have been carefully chosen, thus deducing the association of ideas that the receptor is likely to operate, respectively the two categories of public to whom they are addressed. The language of discourses make use of the images that words evoke and which are based on stereotypes the audience has assimilated along the time, while the word itself is carefully sought in order to emphasize the message. A common expression of a trivial truth "the power of words" seems to be a truism. Words are endowed with the attribute of expressing both sides, good and bad, but they might prove to be a real element in constructing relations or might destroy the role of language by annihilating its power. Therefore, both facets should be taken into consideration and studied in such a manner that the audience to be aware of the effects they exert.

Keywords: *communicational act, message, political language, manipulation.*

UNDERTAKING OF RHETORIC IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Communication policy appears itself as an expression of social modernity that has reached the attention as the development of the democratic system would transform politics into a public area. It appears as a strategic activity requiring different skills and different types of resources, a field that crosses various ways to persuade the electorate/voters.

First of all, the communication is assumed an identity. The act of communication has always as purposefulness the expression of that identity. Thus, you communicate in order to have the willed identity within the communication situation in which you find yourself.

In any situation of communication, each "actor" interprets a role meant to provide the ultimate control of the situation, i.e., the ability to make known his/her role. At some point, each

issues statements placing him/herself in different ways, and the speaker is playing with the interlocutor's identity, reserving him/her various places.

Communication is seen as a complex process in which the information and the message are less important than the central issue, which is to know whom you're talking. So you can communicate if only to place yourself and to be recognized in this position or how communicative action relates to social existence. The act of communication is always an attempt to influence the other. To the extent that any exchange of communication and especially the political one stakes bears and to the extent that it represents the joint construction of a reality, this exchange is attempted as an alienation of one from the other and / or vice versa, namely the attempt to impose a possible world that would provide one or the other the control over the stakes.¹

The act of communication seems first to have effects. It seeks to persuade the other to believe, think or act. Communication means the man who shapes himself, open to the other by word, sign, by the relational approach. This purpose of influence is emphasized when it is noted that all the utterances of a language assigns and makes sense of the fact that they attribute, to the extent of handling the interlocutor, a specific type of conclusion. Influence is a human resource and skill as it is to motivate the other, i.e. to make him/her able to think or act in the desired direction.

Political discourse is not simply a political fiction. Any type of communication involves a degradation of "brute facts" where political discourse the term of media covers both the discourse proper movement and media construction. If in the first stage the political

discourse was based as “truth” based on ideological criteria, in the era of coverage, politicians benefit from a whole scenic and technological device that produces “true images”.

A speech is considered to be political when assessing the situation in the public interest. What distinguishes the political discourse from other types is primarily its conventionality: as “original” as circumstances that trigger this type of discourse might be, it is immediately “normalized” by a corresponding review of the institution and the rank representing the body. Any political speech operates on a conventional argument justifying, on the one hand, the role of the institution and, on the other hand, the public image of the person who represents the institution. More than any type of discourse, the political one allegedly communicates the “correct” version of several facts as well as the maximum involvement of the author in regard to the truthfulness of the content.²

The speech is the use of a language as well as of other communication resources in a given situation: language, vocabulary, addressing conventions, communication channels, and the identity of the interlocutor. All these, collected, converge to the idea that political speech can be treated as a project of social interaction.

Producing a speech, the resources that are in this situation are used, first language, so the action must be directed to the audience and therefore to the situation. With each use of the categories of language and different social rules, effects take place, creating therefore an event.

Thematic and relational analysis, which will support the political discourse analysis, identifies the “discursive practices” of the political actor, which helps to decrypt the political subjectivity, political discourse intentionality, “enunciation behaviors” and the inducement strategies.³

If initially the speech analysis was seen as a linguistic demonstration, today it covers a framework of interpretation from a psychological, social and cognitive perspective.

It is not clear enough if political discourse itself had once appeared together with the assertion of rhetoric or with the invention of the policy itself, although the problem is by far, ironically, a feature of whoever *Homo sapiens sapiens*. And if a *homo faber* would speak to us

about the first possibility, then a *homo politicus* would strictly comply with his ego, finding it in the second.

What must a speech do? If it aims to persuade everyone, it’s definitely a failure. If it proposes to be the most beautiful language ever spoken, it will be miserably as effectiveness. And if it does not propose anything, it is even possibly to get it right: “I have to talk to them – they do not think like me – they think the opposite of me – I’ll need to pretend in such a way that I am thinking just like them.”

It is not necessary that this to be the exact sequence of the involved reasoning, but its constituent elements cannot be others. Motivation is rarely an easily and special payments required to keep speeches – when it happens, the speaker is a special case, with the chance to succeed anyway.

Otherwise, the objective of the improvised speaker is to retain public attention by concealing his own interest for the general condition’s sake or an adoptive tactic at the moment, according to the different reactions of the auditorium. Therefore, the most difficult speech and therefore subject of most studies are “the ones without audience”, where advantage of the apparent relaxation is surpassed by the absence of the whole feed-back, a crucial element involved in regulating paratextual levels. In this sense, there are some possible evidences of handling, as well as other subliminal. For example, for the radio speech, the rhetorical questions, invocations and exclamations are redundant because they are actually addressed to “no one” as long as at some point it can not be determined a clear enemy and these methods have been especially designed face-to-face confrontations. Instead, “Churchill’s tactics” is more profitable as it resides in using the same text, of many slogan elements – obviously original, – being added a stream of phrases that remain in the memory associated with that name he spoke.

Another useful tactic, especially in limited situations is that of the “gentleman” – namely, to provide the moral ascendancy of a potential enemy, possibly of to the one who already defeated, first in order to keep up fight, by realignment arguments so that they accepted the loss of a battle, but not of the war, then, to subtly

change the position of admirers side displaying the opponent so that to lose much of their support if they attacks on the same subject in front of whom he seems to have won.

In the election campaigns, language takes the form of *political discourse and slogans*, each of them aiming at gaining a bigger part of the electorate, so a fairly large percentage of the vote is due to the oratorical qualities of the candidate and to the method of achieving the discourse. What interests to a political discourse is not just the content, but to a larger extent the shape that wraps the ideas.

The psychology of the listener. It's a talent to listen to somebody – the talent of the ones who listen more than talking is greater. The old-aged habit of choice is based on the apparently findings merit. Of all the peacocks, a peahen obvious always chooses the most beautiful tail, regardless the true quality of genetic ties that she cannot verify them anyway. This ritual was treacherously transferred to the political life. The *tail of the peacock is the speech/discourse, no matter how many and colorful fireworks would a candidate attach to his campaign.*

The only effects that detach the general public of these rules are the *habituation effect* and the *effect of rebelliousness* which we will treat separately because they show the greatest finesse participation of the modern social structure of even her training.

The first effect is particularly evident manifested to the elderly audience, but the rule has nothing to do with this criterion. The more a person is under consideration by several arguments in a certain area – inevitably they will repeat – this tends to give them less importance and to correctly and rigidly retain the last sequence which, at one point, drew his attention in a positive way. It is clear here the importance of originality in a speech with some opportunities.

The effect of *rebelliousness* has fatally a higher proportion to young people and, although it has no negative consequences (this translates into refusing to vote), sometimes straighten in large heads against everything that still preserves an outdated fragrance, however it will not be too often a positive trend “for” something – by definition, it is a current “against” something.

The psychology of the “possessive adjective”. A special category of modern political discourse – in a democracy – is the “re-election”. It obviously refers to that category of characters from political arena, where the battle is to keep and not to win, not rare among the notions of “my government” or “our ministry”, as opposed to “your Senators” and “your motions.”

Taking the advantage of several achievements and the disadvantage of more publicized failures, as always, a “real” potential is to be opted for when it build both the speech and the target audience, between praise or take it over again. For example, if the politician is in front of some neutral people, he can afford a slight risk of self praise like “look what I made for the others” – which is not very ethical of him, but it has often happened that this point to be negative, but as soon as there is a trigger (doubt, charge) the praise leads to a disastrous chain reaction.

Totalitarian state. The most authentic political discourse is that one from a totalitarian state. In any relatively democratic state, the discourse is often replaced or overshadowed by polemic. He remains the “tail of the peacock”, but through the effect of habituation *there is not an absolute discriminator.* In the totalitarian state, the idea has not a short-term effect; therefore, losing its elective nature, the speech/discourse becomes propaganda. The aim of the speaker is not to reveal, but to cover, and to motivate the audience or to close the eyes – and to accept a more difficult task. Text is addressed to everyone, and, moreover, it is considered a failure when a single listener was not fully convinced, somehow, or even “made careful.” Obviously, a speech, in this configuration, you must have a lot of enthusiasm to pacify the rebels, making them naturally followers and heroes of the “doctrine” but little enough of the “doctrine” so as not to disturb the pacifists that have a threshold of tolerance for things that are reconciled, but they do not agree with it.

Speech is the best way to manipulate people when they are convinced from the start and without hesitation you do not believe a word of what you're saying. *“If you happened to have believed the truth and that the only purpose of the speech is there to present it in an elegant manner, then either you're an orator or you are lost”* .

Communication is a direct and effective strategy for *social influence* of the political behavior of individuals, through the direct impact it has on *attitudes and beliefs*.

William J. Mc. Guire considers that the persuasive impact of communication gets through the conscious level of the individual four processes: *attention, understanding, acceptance, retention* and, ultimately, the effect is observed in the individual political behavior.

Speech production is controlled, selected and organized, but the freedoms of political discourse make sometimes the rationalization of persuasion extremely difficult through "declarative behaviors." Conceptual analysis or the thematic analysis is a method of selecting a concept and the analysis involves quantifying and analyzing the presence of that concept. Such analysis operates on two methods:

- a) the analysis of the frequency reduces to identify the frequency with which a word, theme or topic returns the text, speech;
- b) the analysis of the trends aims to highlight the positive, negative, or neutral attitude of the transmitter to the idea, social fact or event; this method of analysis is the critical expression of frequencies analysis, i.e., identifies the themes, each theme being classified after the positive, negative or neutral position.

The relational analysis is known by two names: occurrence analysis and contingency analysis. The methods of relational analysis illustrate the association structures of concepts in a text.

The analysis of the evaluative assertion considers four assumptions:

- a. any text contains some speech;
- b. the evaluative discourse is the set of attitudinal objects and relations between them;
- c. attitudinal object belongs to the real world and it can be seen as such;
- d. any sentence of a text can be reduced to one or more key sentences.

The co-occurrence analysis focuses on the semantic relations between contexts and seeks to extract the relations between the elements of the text message. The method of occurrences detects the decoupling of elements, manifested by abnormal absence of certain elements in the same context. Non / association of two or more formal

ideas expresses the association or dissociation of some ideas in the speaker's mind. In all cases, the political actor cannot totally control the associations or exclusions and, therefore, he can forge the meaning of correlations.

Contingency analysis can be useful to set light on more personality structures, latent, individual, collective concerns, stereotypes, social representations or ideologies of the speakers. Within the relational analysis there are three distinct techniques:

- a. The analysis of the affective influences explicit aims at assessing emotional concepts that appear in the text;
- b. the analysis of proximity refers to the correlation of the explicit concepts in a text, thus in this approach, the text is a string of words that is analyzed on the basis of groups of related or inter-related concepts;
- c. the cognitive schematization tries to surprise the overall meaning of the analyzed text, thus the individual's mental structures are configured according to how it organizes its information and makes sorts of inferences regarding social facts. The method identifies mental models that reflect the individual perceptions of social facts.

For example, the objective of discussion of the political candidate on a radio or television channel is to determine within the listener a voting behavior. Even if the receiver is careful to the communication, the persuasive impact is small if he does not to understand the arguments of the source because they are too complex (failure of understanding) or if they do not accept the conclusions of the candidate (failure status). We assume that the audience was convinced, so he accepted the electoral message, but if the attitude change is not sustainable and profound, the people change their induced opinion just before the elections day.

The received information involves a process of cognitive processing, the critical analysis of the message, the linking of the past experience of the individual, concerning the candidate, the arguments contained in the message. Indirect way to process information in the persuasive message follows a heuristic process, that of the source credibility.

The candidate's message can be accepted even in the absence of logical reasons if the individual gains credibility and presents attractiveness. By the trust given by the voters and also by their skills, the candidate is invested with credibility. The post efficiency is greater the higher the level of education, social status, intelligence and professional competence of the candidate attributes will increase. And given its due appreciation, the message is considered that it holds pertinent and true information.

Another required competence is *sincerity* that can be placed in evidence because: it communicates what it knows; it is not displaying the results of the communicative approach; it lacks the intention of persuasion; it defends an opposite position to its own interest.

Depending on the information it has about the candidate, before listening to the persuasive message (previous opinions, expertise, the features of the nature) associated with speech situation at the time (lack of sincerity) the voter will build a representation of the candidate from whom he expects a certain political behavior. The effectiveness depends on the political message confirming whether or not these expectations.

When the candidate is attractive (appearance, personality, charisma, behavior) the changing attitudes is determined to the source identification processes based on feelings, because the opinion is determined by feelings.

Changing the political behavior if it is not integrated into the system of values and beliefs of the voter, being dependent by the duration of the emotional connection established between the candidate and the voter, may be revoked at any time. Direct contacts or through the media make grow the attractiveness and durability of the connection.

People are influenced by their peers, having similar attitudes and behaviors. But they are also influenced by those with different behaviors the extent to which they do not have them and they would like to have them (the complementarity generating attractiveness).

What convinces the voter of the good intentions is even *the image that it projects, the more dynamic, the more convincing*. It communicates energy, enthusiasm, authority by his proper look

as well as the style and higher speed of the discourse. *The dynamism of the speech will lead the audience to accept it as credible.*

The message becomes more persuasive if associates to the receiver with *positive emotions*. It is possible to become effective if associates with negative emotions by inducing fear. If in the case of the information about real experiences and strategies of avoidance to emotional arguments associated with accurate, complete instructions about the avoidance of the difficult situation are added, this will get to a change in the desired individual behaviors by inducing fear. How different must be the message by the voters' opinions in order to convince?

A very credible source was determined to change opinions even if they present different positions by those of the receiver.

The receiver emotionally involved in some type of message cannot be changed in his/her behavior even by a credible source.

Bringing only pros, the author defends his/her a speech by supporting it, eliminating the situations of contradiction.

Bringing both pros and cons the speech will defend itself by refutation.

In 1962, Papageorgis claimed the defense by speech refutation, avoiding the "*paper tiger effect*." The discourse in which only pros-attitudes are brought to the voter only apparently reinforces or restores only the receiver's attitude because it does not protect the individual to side displaying a speech later attack with counter arguments that the first source avoided them and obviously to which the receiver will change its attitude.

The quality of the message is also very important, generated by the novelty and the validity of the source opinions (the new elements of the speech not to be repeated too often to avoid this way saturating the receiver and thus to give a plausible nature to the message). The message that supports the receiver's attitudes determines cognitive responses in favor of the candidate. When the audience is subjected to a counter-attitudinal message and it is positively suggested the position that it should sustained attracts an increase in the resistance to persuasion and the trend of keeping the original behavior.

The informed audience by the message, that the attitudes of the attractive and credible

candidate are others than his own, will develop a cognitive imbalance that generates psychiatric pressures inconsistent with his beliefs.

The more quality of the arguments contained in the message generates more favorable (positive) ideas in the audience, the more the persuasion effect increases and the attitudinal and behavioral exchanges will be higher. Moreover, you can also get the "evil" look of persuasion: propaganda.

MYTHS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

In his work *Myths and political mythologies*, Raoul Girardet identifies *four fundamental myths*: "that any political speech in any geographic and historical region may provide for that existence has a great mobilizing power of myth, not exempted from a political reality of fractures: the product of the social reality and producer of it."

The confused policy settings over the last two centuries of the European history have been accompanied by an amazing effervescence of mythology: the denunciation of an evil conspiracy tending to subject peoples to the obscure and perverse domination forces; the image of a lost golden age, whose happiness we must find or of a saving Revolution that would allow the humanity to enter the final phase of its history and would forever ensure the reign of justice; the call to the savior master, restorer of the order or maker of a large collective variety.

Claude Levi-Strauss senses that the elements that build the story are grouped in identical series and they are divided into permanent associations. The myth of the Savior of the providential leader always occurs to the associated symbols of the purification: the hero who saves, frees and crushes the evil. He is always associated to the light – the gold, the sun rising in the sky – the brightness of the eyes – and of the vertical hold – sword, scepter, secular tree, the mountain. Also, the pattern of the evil conspiracy will always be put in relation with the idea of dirt – is assimilated to the repulsive animals, it crawls, it sneaks, it spreads poison.

Conspiracy. The mythology of the plot centers on the frightening image of the Organization. The feature of the commander is its secret. The

accomplices are bound by vow of silence and a terrible punishment will strike if they betray. An undeniable and almost exclusively specialty of the political discourse specific to crisis of any kind is diversion. The mechanism is easy to play, but putting it into enforcement training involves many factors. It builds a comprehensive speech, aggressive and incriminating against someone; this speech (belonging to the rule of do-not-know-who) is picked up and amplified by almost all media, leading to pros and cons trends.

Savior. R. Girardet believes that the emphasis is on the character's mediocrity and his/her destiny – he/she is mediocre by birthplace, by the social environment to which he/she belongs, mediocre by his/her private life. R.G. Schwartzberg says that in this case "*simplicity is not just deliberate, it becomes ostentatious.*" The crowds are so motivated even obliged to identify with it. The mechanism for identifying an individual destiny with the collective destiny is the principle that dominates the political discourse of the Savior. He has authority. Max Weber identifies three types of authority and legitimacy. Traditional authority is based on usage usually like that of the lord or hereditary monarch. Legal-rational authority based on institutions, on the status is that of a modern state governor. We do not submit to the person, but to the function invested through the Constitution. Finally, there exists a charismatic authority of the Savior, of the Prophet and even of the demagogue. There is a time of waiting and one of the calling – a time in which the image of a Savior builds and spreads – then a time of presence of the Savior, while remembering that in the end, his figure projected in the past will change according to the "whims" of memory, with its selective mechanisms, with its countries and exaggerated its settings. It seems paradoxically, but many dictators, political extremists, by supporting the well thought of personality cult took the image of the Savior. For us the myth of the Savior was implemented pending the Americans at least in the '56. After 1960 it took an ironic aspect, of counter myth. The trauma of this mythology survives today, in the overvaluation or undervaluation of the West, superimposed on a regional myth, born with the modern states: that of the European timing. The

Savior can also take the image of protector: his job was to smooth things over, and to install confidence and threatened to defeat the evil settings.

Golden age. It represents the maintaining of a life rhythm, privacy protection of a closed social group, jointly, strictly hierarchical. There are visions of a present and of a past defined by what it was or what it is considered to be. At intervals (more or less accurately) for four years – during the election campaigns – the invocation of the interwar period returns to the political discourse, a sort of “good old times” of cultural openness, of civilization, of democracy, of civic responsibility.

Unity. It is widely known the saying that “What is divided tends to unify”. The true essence of man confuses with incessant effort to impose the unique and orderly will. We can thus speak of the existence of a Unity (NATO, EU) towards some are aspiring, convinced of its benefits, while others are holding aside, their strong individuality allowing this. Based on these two trends, there are, of course, two types of political discourse: one centered on the need for unity argument, another emphasizing the disadvantages of adhering to these bodies.

CONCLUSIONS

Claiming we have exhausted all aspects of political discourse we conclude by stating that the political discourse is perhaps *the most extensive measurement of intellectual forces, a more or less elegant ballet of truth and lie, persuasion and manipulation, of revealing and concealment that continues to seduce and fascinate.*

Words can build or damage the contact between people, it can destroy and annihilate the confidence in language. Both sides should be

studied so that the audience be relatively aware to these effects, and this is justified by the analysis of the studied aspects.

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