

## **MANAGEMENT OF POLITICAL IDENTITIES WITHIN THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE**

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*Abstract: The study is focused on the construction of political identities within the parliamentary debate and it is designed on the following theoretical axes:*

- *Social frameworks of the parliamentary debates*
- *Confrontational and dialogical perspective of the parliamentary speech*
- *Management of the parliamentary identities*

*The paper approaches the political communication concept, which is defined by Habermas as “the debate of problems, stakes and ideas with public character”, and built as “the game of relationships power, whose resources and stakes are symbolic, informational, juridical or human material means” and it is analyzed from the perspective of strategic interaction. Through the parliamentary interaction there are created political identities by language.*

*The parliamentary debate is a social fact established upon a dialogical, intersubjective relationship.*

*In accordance with the constructivist theory, as it is the case of ideologies, the social identities are distributed forms of social cognition, which are jointly dominated by different types of social communities and reproduced through speech and interaction.*

*In connection with political ideologies, the political identities represent a specific type of social identity. They have specific characteristics according to their political function. They are ideological and they supposed to belong to political groups or to the opposition of others political groups. They are defined by power, control, decision and competition for resources and associated with different concepts regarding the world.*

*The political identities depend on the other debate participants’ identities and they can be negotiated within the political interaction.*

*The research upon the functioning of parliamentary speech can address two analytical perspectives: pragmatolinguistic perspective and the rhetorical perspective (Ilie, 2010).*

*For analyzing the style of parliamentary speech, the style of institutional roles and of the participants’ identities within the parliamentary interaction it is necessary to adopt a combined pragma-rhetorical vision.*

*The construction of parliamentary identity can be explained by the positioning theory (Daves and Harre, 1990). There are two types of positioning: interactive positioning, when a person’s speech can position another person and the reflexive positioning, when an own positioning is expressed.*

*During the parliamentary debate, the members of the Parliament interact one with each other through mutual positioning – they position themselves and they are positioned by the interlocutors.*

**Key words:** *democratic speech, identity, interaction, positioning*

### **1. Dialogic and confrontational perspective of the parliamentary discourse**

To integrate Parliamentary Discourse in a theoretic communication model, we shall take into account the interactionist mode and the dialogic model of communication.

Political communication is presented as an interaction and a strategic action.

We shall adopt the concept of Political Communication, defined as “debating of public problems, stakes and ideas ” (Habermas, 1978), being structured as the “game of power relations whose resources and stakes are symbolic, informational, legal or even human material means” (Gerstle). Political Communication may be analyzed in the perspective of strategic interaction.

The dialogic model of Political Communication is based on the idea that the legitimacy consists in the consent obtained by DISCUSSION (Gerstle, 2002). By means of the speech, people may establish common points between the contradictory opinions and may deliberate, that is they may reach a decision thanks to an argued discussion. Public space results from the discussion of citizens who create the liberty by attending public problems.

The theoretical concept of argumentation is used to analyze various manifestations of the critical discussion on various practices and communicative contexts. Communicative practices showing in various institutionalized contexts include strategic maneuvers depending on the institutional pre-conditions predominating on those communicative practices. (Van Eemeren, 2010).

The conventionalization of a public debate or a of a parliamentary debate in the field of political communication is instrumental in the performance of the institutional purpose of keeping a democratic culture.

Dialogues are sufficient games, as themselves, regulated by the purpose of dialog and by certain specific norms necessary for reaching that goal (Lorenzen, 1978).

The dialog is defined as a joint activity, conventionalized and which has certain objectives between two parts (the simplest case) where verbal messages or the so-called speaking acts embody a movement is a verbal exchange similar to a game (Walton, 1998 ).

Each dialog is an argumentation model and differentiates from the other one by the following elements: the purpose of the dialog, the purposes of the participants and the benefits thereof.

Dialogues may be considered conversational contexts of argumentation (Walton & Krable, 1995). The contexts of communication are mixed dialogues, since speaking events are composed, most of times, of several types of dialogues: persuasive dialog (or critical discussion), the negotiation-type dialog, documenting dialog, deliberation dialog, the dialog for information research, eristic dialog.

In the case of a parliamentary speech, the institution purpose is confronting the government with the views of the representatives chosen by the people on political and financial plans, according to the own institutional conventions of managing a general debated representing the parliamentary tradition, whose format is shaped in parliamentary procedures.

Parliamentary speech is a subspecies of political speech. It is recorded in the constructivist and dialogic model of Political Communication, where the construction may be deemed according to the significance. A social interaction takes place, contributing to a common world, by joint action, making possible the manifestation of public space. Parliamentary speech is a social fact grounded on a dialogist relationship, inter-subjective. The dialogist form of verbal communication implies a rotation and a rapid change of actions and reactions of individuals who are interacting. Oral speech is a dialectic of the event and the significance. The dialectic of dialogue makes reference to two concepts: the one of dialogic

competence (the skill to open yourself to other and to his world) as a condition of possibility of dialog, and to the one of dialogical performance, given by the effective updating and individualization of dialogic competence.

In the dialogic space takes place either a competitive game – each one tries to guide the debate towards its own goal, without having ever obtained the agreement or at least having asked about the presuppositions of each other, which excludes any understanding between the actors and where each opponent assesses the verbal conduct of the Other and, at the same time, tries to hide its intentions and interests – either a cooperative game, where the interlocutors tacitly agree to the objective proposed and the presuppositions of the exchange. Dialogic sequences form an inter-text governed by logic semantic and pragmatic rules. Structural rules ordinate the phrases as acts of language in verbal interaction, and strategic rules take into account the finality of phrases and ordinate the movements of dialogic argumentation.

The model of the critical discussion is built based on the analytical considerations regarding the optimum way to solve difference of opinion on merits. The argumentative dimension embodies various aspects depending on the specific institutional demands arising from the objectives of the persons presenting the arguments to achieve the institutional goals of the communicative activity, by focusing on the four steps of critical discussion: the initial situation, the starting point, the argumentative means and the results of the argumentative speech.

In the parliamentary debate we shall find that the participants have various opinions, that they address an immediate audience and that their purpose is, more likely, to convince the audience than the interlocutors. The goal of the parties is to present argumentation to defend their points of view in critical verbal exchanges with their interlocutors, the decision regarding the solving of the difference of opinion belonging to the listener/watcher. The communicative-illocutionary purpose must be accompanied by the interactional purpose – the perlocutionary effect.

Theoretically, the parliamentary debate should solve a difference of opinion defined ideologically, and the participants to the discussion are interested, firstly, to solve the dispute in favor of their own point of view. The principles of reasonability and efficiency are absolutely indispensable in a complex interactional argumentative act.

The concept of strategic maneuvering (Van Eemeren, 2010) performs the balance between the two terms during the entire argumentative speech. The strategic movement refers to winning the best position, through the argumentative circumstances. The pair reasonability – efficiency is doubled by the pair dialectic – rhetoric. The game between reasonability, dialectic, on the one hand and efficiency-rhetoric, on the other hand, represents the object of strategic maneuvering.

## **2. Socials identities / political identities**

To analyze the role and identity play affirming and reaffirming itself in the negotiation between the parliamentary negotiation it is necessary a definition of the notion of identity, as shown in the light of the triangle speech-cognition-society. The theory of the social identity has represented a major preoccupation in the research of the psychology in Europe, during the

last decade, but recently the concept of identity has gained an increased attention from the perspective of speech analysis. (De Fina, Schiffrin, Bamberg, 2006).

The social-cognitive approach of Teun A. van Dijk (1998, 2008, 2009) integrates theoretic concepts from cognitive sciences and social sciences which study the speaking, the text and the context. From the perspective of this approach, social identities as well as the laws and ideologies are distributed forms of social cognition, jointly mastered by various types of social communities and reproduced by speech and interaction. They must be analyzed in cognitive terms as specific types of mental representations, but also in social, politic and cultural terms as properties of the groups and communities producing and controlling social practices, interactions and speeches.

The notion of identity cannot be separated from speaking, from language. According to the constructivist theory, identity is not only something that is built temporary in speaking, but it has a more permanent feature, being a social representation shared by several groups. Political identities, being in relation with political ideologies, are an example of such permanent identities. We shall consider a political identity as a specific type of social identity; for example: the members of the parliament have distinct political identities arising in some of the political activities. Political identities are expressed or performed in speech and thus are socially reproduced.

Van Dijk identifies a series of properties, of the relevant social identities for the concept of political identity:

1. Social identities have, firstly, an irreducible social identity, namely, they are defined by human collectivities of various types, groups, communities, organizations.
2. Social identities belong to certain stable collectivities, relatively permanent.
3. Social identities are shared by the members of a social collectivity and can be related one with the other.
4. Social identities are not natural properties of the collectivities or the nations socially construed, shared, used, confirmed, modified by the members of collectivities.
5. Social identities are a form of distributed social cognition, social representations gained gradually, shared and used by the members of the new community. These are, at the same time, cognitive because they are defined, in peoples' mind, as social because they are shared representations in social interaction by the social groups, communities and organizations.
6. The representations socially shared and which define social identity can be of various types: knowledge, ideologies, attitudes, emotions, norms and values.
7. Community members can be identified cognitively, socially and/or discursively in various types with their social collectivities.
8. Social identities are awarded, usually, by the members of the collectivities or by the members of social groups, for example: racism, xenophobia.
9. Individuals may have various social identities, by identifying themselves with various social groups and, thus, they may develop a complex of social

identities. In this case, identity becomes an interface between social and personal.

10. At any time or situation, complex social identities of the social actors may be hierarchically ordered, meaning that certain identities, are more active or more noticeable than others.
11. Social identities create and control the performance and the organization of social practices of the actors as members of collectivities.
12. As virtual or abstract self representations, social identities are used, expressed or applied in social practices. This is the crucial relation between the social-collective dimension and the personal individual one of the identity.
13. Social identities can be the basis of social representations, social practices and their social relations,, as well as solidarity, cooperation, conflict, cohesion, domination, resistance etc.
14. The speech is one of the fundamental social practices where are being employed the members of the collectivities and which may act to acquire, express, change and reproduce social identities. More social identities are learned by text, speaking and interaction between the members of the community.

The theory of van Dijk claims that social identities are not local ad-hoc constructs, as claimed by the discursivist and interactionist approaches. Identities are previous to social practices. Social actors may act “locally” their social identity if they know who they are, where are they from, truly know their social identity. “Local” constructs are the uses and the applications of social identities, such as the case of the use of the language. The use may be personal, contextual, ad hoc etc. and it may ignore or modify the existent identity or may contribute to the construction of new social identities.

The concept of social identity is in close relationship with the one of social role. Roles are defined as a specific type of social identity. If social identities are relatively stable, the roles are social identities contextually undertaken by social actors in relation with other social actors.

Mental models built by the participants by the speech about the communicative situation, meaning about themselves, their roles, identities and relations, as well as about the current frames – time, place – and about the goals and their knowledge or about change, bear the name of contextual models (Dijk, 2008, 2009) or pragmatic models. Contextual models control various properties of the speech, such as style (promotion, lexis, syntax), acts of speech, significances and other aspects of the speech in action. Contextual models are not only social and inter-subjective because they present social identities, social knowledge, ideologies, norms and values, but they are also subjective and personal. They also include personal experiences, personal dates and events, personal knowledge and own opinions. That is why contextual modules are unique. Only in this regard the uses and the performances of social identities are produces situationally, have unique applications of social identities, ideologies and knowledge. In each communicative situation, each participant builds a mental model of the current communicative situation.

Contextual models control the production of the speech, but also its understanding. The text or the speech are not influenced both by the social objective, by the communicative roles or the identities of the participants, but also by the subjective interpretation and defining of the situation by the participants and the way in which they are represented in their contextual models.

Political identities are social identities in the political field. They have specific features due to their political function. They are ideological and imply belonging to political groups or opposition to other groups or movements is national states; they are defined in the field of power, control, decision and competition for resources; also, they are associated with various conceptions about the world.

Political identities are of various types: either they are professional political identities (eg: parliamentarians or political parties) and relational or positional political identities (eg: members of the opposition, leaders of parties, activists etc.).

Political identities seems to be based on certain categories which organize the current content of the identity (van Dick, 2009):

- Membership of a party of the Parliament or of the social movement. This category of political identity organizes information on what it is being discussed in terms of politics
- Activities/Speech. This category supplies information on actions, activities, practices and which define what does or says, from the political point of view, a member of a political group and which encumbers a certain political position.
- Goals. The information in this category define what we want to communicate form the political point of view.
- Rules and values. The rules and values explain what must and must not be done and what objectives we want to achieve by political practices.
- Ideology. Political identities are defined by crey, which is our organized ideology, depending on the rules and values of our group.
- Group relations. Political identities are defined depending on the relation with another political group. Political ideologies tend to polarized between Us and Them, between friends and foes.
- Power resources. Political groups need not only social identities and material resources but also symbolic power resources. Thus, moral superiority, the current political power, the political support, the financial support or the moral support are power resources. The access to mass media has a fundamental role in reaching peoples' minds.

Political identities and ideologies represent principles for action, speaking and text, but do not determine them. Political speech depends on the constraints of the specific social situation. Current political identities depend on the identities of the other participants and may be negotiated in political interaction.

### **3. Management of parliamentary identities**

Taking into consideration the notion of communication contract, the parliamentary speech can be deemed a specific gender of political speech characterized by the interactions

regulated by rules and regulations between political representatives chosen for deliberation and decision-making, in political and specific institutional framings, such as the Parliament and which show institutionalized communication patterns (Ilie, 2010).

The main objectives of the parliamentary procedures are: negotiation of political solutions, obtaining the agreement and making decisions.

In parliamentary interactions, the structuring and the understanding of the statements is conditioned by what the interlocutors assume and state about other mental representation of the world, depending on the cognitive frames, political engagements, social vision and personal/professional experience. Once engaged in the ritualized debate, the interlocutors use each advantage of the institutional practices to exploit any vulnerability or weakness.

Parliament members may change, ridicule, and bring to discussion the ethos of their opponents, leading to an increase of the intensity of their own pathos.

The confrontational demarche opposes various representations of the reality and aim at the destabilization and restoration of the balance of power. That is why, the parliamentary speech can be seen as a relation of power invested with ideology (Fairclough, 1992), At the same time, the interaction takes place in front of certain audiences whose role can be decisive in the performance and for the end of the interaction. During the process to establish and enforce the relation with the audiences, the members of the Parliament strengthen their own ethos by their own credibility and institutional trust.

The features, the structure and the functioning of the parliamentary speech may be researched from two analytic perspectives: the pragma-linguistic perspective and the rhetoric perspective (Ilie, 202).

From the pragma-linguistic perspective, the parliamentary speech is a specific type of political speech. This perspective identifies:

- the specific ritualized features
- the ritualized interaction strategies
- the engagements of institutional role
- the specific institutional purposes – acquiring positions,
  - persuasion
  - negotiation
  - stating the public agenda

From the rhetoric perspective, parliamentary speech is a deliberatively gender of the political rhetoric, defined as an oratory speech and which is aimed at an audience to whom it asks to make a decision of assessment of the advantages or disadvantages of a future course of action.

In their speech, parliamentarians bring to discussion the ethos of the opponent (political credibility and moral profile), increasing its own ethos in trying to maintain the balance between logos and pathos (reasoning and emotion). A significant particularity of the parliamentary interaction is represented by the fact that the members of the Parliament address, simultaneously, certain multiple audiences (parliamentary plenary, reporters and journalists, visitors, TV representatives, national and international audience). This fact determines the choice of a communicative strategy and a discursive style.

For a more nuanced analysis of the style of parliamentary debates, the institutional roles and the identity of the participants in the parliamentary interaction it is necessary to adopt a combined vision – pragma-rhetoric (Ilie, 2010).

By using this pragma-rhetoric perspective – we can analyze:

- the linguistic manifestations of the interlocutors in the institutional and interpersonal roles,
- their relations with the those to whom they address
- cooperation or conflict objectives of the interlocutors
- dialogic patterns of argumentation of political opponents
- negotiation demarches between interactants
- the knit of acts of speech that is being construed
- argumentative strategies showing interdependence between the rational and emotional judgment patterns .

According to the paradigm, Goffman states that at the basis of the identity co-construction lies a face-to-face process whose interactions happen in an institutional framing and which is attended by various interlocutors. The multiple faces of the identity are located socially and culturally and may be seen and understood only in the interaction process with others. (Goffman, 1959).

Self-representation of the self in a form of institutional dialog implies expectations from the audience or from those to whom the members of the Parliament address and an anticipation of possible reactions. Parliamentarians surprise by presenting certain multiple aspects of their identity in front of the varied audience. Thus, it is created an interdependence, between the intentionality of the speaker and the expectations and reactions of the interlocutors/audiences who, in return, want to influence the speaker's reactions and this fact contributes to the co-construction of the identity.

The construction and co-construction of the parliamentary identity may also be explained by the theory of positioning of Davies and Harre: "Human existence is characterized by a continuum of the personal identity and by a discontinuum of the personal diversity. One and the same person positions differently in the conversation. If we position ourselves in different positions we could say that the same person experiments and displays an aspect of the self which is involved in the continuity of multiplicity of egos"(Davis & Harre, 1990).

Are being distinguished two types of positionings: interactive positioning, when it is being expressed the own positioning (Harre & Van Langenhove, 1999).

During the parliamentary debate, the members of the Parliament interact with others by reciprocal positioning : they position themselves and are being positioned by interlocutors.

Political speech, generally, is based on the relation ethos-pathos-logos. The conflict between individuals arises from their disagreements on values, which expresses their distancing but also possible points of agreement. The game between pathos, ethos and logos in the speech is explained by Meyer (Meyer, 2010) by what he calls "distant negotiation".

To negotiate the distance mean to show the difference and to defend the legitimacy of what we are, therefore the social distance embodied often a priori. To negotiate the distance, which is often more social than physical, means to impose the acceptance of the legitimacy of our point of view of what makes us be beyond where we are and to capitalize what we say.



The speaker integrates the distance as a form of a relationship. It builds an image of the Other, as it construes an image about himself.

The negotiation of the distance, for an agreement between individuals, is expressed by the game of this gap between the projective ethos and the effective ethos, on the one hand, and between the projective pathos and the effective pathos, on the other hand. The agreement is reached when what the speaker wanted to say and what he effectively said mean the same for the audience and when the latter shares the answer according to his effective values, what gives here an identity between the *projective audience and the effective audience*. *The agreement performs the unity between the projective and effective* related to a given question. The disagreement keeps intact the differences between projective and effective, creating distance between individuals.

The negotiation of distance in politics is enforced by a compensating mechanism and, namely by the theatricality of the power, the enactment of the identities – the parliamentary debates room, for example, creates a community, but it also confirms a distance. In this space, are being noticed rhetoric positions in a controversy problem, are being noticed and confronted opponent identities. In fact, it is a place of competition between various variants of reality.

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