DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: SOME CONCEPTUAL REMARKS ON PRAGMATICS AND RHETORIC

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Abstract:
This paper focuses on discourse analysis, particularly persuasive discourse, using pragmatics and rhetoric in a combined way, called by Pragma-Rhetoric. It can be said that this is a cognitive approach to both pragmatics and rhetoric. Pragmatics is essentially Gricean, Rhetoric comes from a reading of Aristotle's Rhetoric, extending his notion of discourse to meso- and micro-discourses. Two kinds of intentions have to be considered: first, communicative intention, and, then, persuasive intention. The fulfilment of those intentions is achieved by a successful persuasive-communicative action. The psychological, philosophical and logical aspects derived from the pragma-rhetorical perspective are crucial in view of its applications in several practical domains.

Introduction

This article begin with a recognition to a philosopher of action, language and communication, Marcelo Dascal, a Leibnizian who particularly interested in semantics and pragmatics, who has contributed so much to the development of philosophy in the last 30 years. The aim of this paper is to show a pragmatic and rhetorical view in discourse analysis, combining both disciplines in order to explain the intentional phenomena that occur in most communicative uses of language, namely, the communicative intention and the intention of persuading.[1] This clearly implies a theoretical choice in the field of pragmatics as far as pragmatics is not conceived in a merely semiotic way (not to say, in an impossible "semiologic" way), but in an intentional way following the path open by Austin and, particularly, by Grice. This also implies a new view on the ancient rhetoric, a choice in favour of

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[1] The combination of pragmatics and rhetoric has been suggested by some scholars, including Dascal himself, but it is quite difficult to "marry" such an ancient discipline as rhetoric with such a new discipline as pragmatics, if we do not put both in the same "register level", i.e. in the level of intentionality. Read, Dascal, M. and A. G. Gross (1999), *The Marriage Of Pragmatics And Rhetoric. Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32 (2).

a neo-Aristotelian rhetoric, where, in the well-known triangle *ethos-logos-pathos,* the elaboration and realisation of discourse is especially analysed in terms of what is inside the *taxis (dispositio),* that is to say, the order of discourse, and not so much in terms of what is inside the elocution. In fact, this is a choice in favour of a rhetoric linked to dialectics[2] and not so linked to poetics (or the current literature theory), introducing the idea of the intention of persuading by the discourse maker.

The first section of the paper consists in a few remarks about the different approaches taken in discourse analysis in general, from sociology to ethnomethodological conversation analysis, in order to situate the perspective combining pragmatics and rhetoric. The second section is devoted to the way of understanding communicative intention in Gricean pragmatics. The third one focuses on a neo-Aristotelian rhetoric that can be merged with pragmatics in a theory called *pragma-rhetoric,* which is the topic of the fourth section. We end with a few concluding remarks.

Forms of discourse analysis

The most important conceptual problem of discourse analysis is the delimitation of the very idea of discourse. Depending on the different theoretical views adopted for that analysis, discourse is conceptualized in quite different ways. For some scholars what is important in discourse is just its structure, for others its functionality, for many others its social role, and for some others its communicative features in terms of context, cultural interaction, and so on.[3] For a long time linguistics forgot the analysis of discourse, even in semantics and pragmatics. Semantics was mainly lexical and sometimes sentential, in the modern post-Fregean sense. Pragmatics, before the analysis of indexicality, was the 'waste-basket' of linguistics,[4] and it seems that general references to context were enough for calling pragmatics to any language theory.

Our main reason for not being interested in sociological approaches to discourse analysis is that the standard sociology of discourse takes it, at the same time, as an indicator of social practices, basically of social order/disorder, and as a factor of the construction of social reality. This approach can be seen in so different authors as Goffman,[5] Bourdieu,[6] or Berger and Luckmann.[7] What is lacking in this approach is a socio-psychological conception of the discourse-maker, more

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[2] See, Aristotle, Rhetoric, on very beginning of his book

[3] Schiffrin, D. (1994), *Approaches to discourse.* Oxford: Blackwell

[4] Bar-Hillel, Y. (1971), Out of the Pragmatics Waste-Basket, *Linguistic Inquiry* 2, P., 401-407

[5] Goffman, E. (1981), *Forms of talk.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

[6] Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Questions de Sociologie.* Paris: Minuit

[7] Berger, P. and Th. Luckmann (1966), *The Social Construction of Reality.* New York: Doubleday.

precisely, a cognitive conception of the individuals involved in a discourse, alternatively taking the roles of speaker and audience. The sociological analysis of discourse can contribute to taxonomy of different social groups, and then to an explanation of the interactions among those groups in terms of their contribution to discourse production and reproduction, but it forgets all cognitive aspects (psychological and linguistic) of discourse making and understanding. Foucault's philosophical approach to discourse, especially focused on the relationships between discourse and power (the order of discourse is given by the discourse of order), is not very far from sociological approaches and lacks those same aspects.[8]

It happens quite the same with some anthropologists, ethnographers of communication, and ethno methodologists. Their analysis of discourse has to do with a more general cultural analysis and the defense of specific cultural identities and worldviews. These approaches go from ethnography to ethno linguistics through some major trends in anthropology. What is remarkable here is that they collect a huge number of empirical data (discourses), but at the end, there is no theoretical analysis –explanation- of them, because meaning in communication is always something negotiated in the framework of the structure and norms of the group.[9]

The critique can be particularly extended to the cultural analysis approach of the Palo Alto School in what is called "cultural pragmatics" (Bateson, Watzlawick and Hall), given the fact that methodologically they take the global cultural system as the departure point for studying communicative acts by individuals. This is why they give an extraordinary relevance to the analysis of different kinds and levels of context. Situating there the study of general interaction, considered as an open system where, particularly, communication takes place. Taking into account the effects of interaction on the individuals, they distinguish between digital communication and analogical communication, and they focus on what they call "pragmatic paradoxes" as the way of reaching the core of their theory on cultural pragmatics.[10]

In contrast with these approaches, we take into account the development of pragmatics from Austin and Grice on. That means that the pragmatic approach we take for discourse analysis is an intentional one and not a behaviorist one, as it is the case of the semiotic pragmatics done in Morris'

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[8] Foucault, M. (1966), *Les Mots et les Choses.* Paris: Gallimard

[9] See, Garfinkel, H. (1967), *Studies in Ethnomethodology.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, read, Sacks, H. (1992), *Lectures on Conversation.* Oxford: Blackwell, see also, Sacks, H., E. A. Schegloff and G. Jefferson (1974), *A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation*, *Language* 50, P., 696-735.

[10] Watzlawick, P., J. Helmick Beavin, and D. Jackson Don (1972), *Une Logique de la Communication.* Paris: Seuil

framework.[11]

Pragmatics: Intentions in communication

Since the work by Austin and Grice, linguistic pragmatics has been mainly focused on the communicative use of language conceived as intentional human action. The study of the agent's beliefs, desires and, particularly, intentions is crucial for understanding what she has done. Naturally, then, the analysis of beliefs, desires, and, particularly, intentions is at the center of pragmatic studies. Grice's study on meaning intentions opened a long debate on the exact definition of the now so-called communicative intentions. Most approaches construct intention as a primitive mental state, i.e., non-definable in terms of other mental states such as beliefs and desires [12]. Communicative intentions share, of course, the characteristics of intentions in general, for instance:

a. They are the mental causes of actions, that is, they are what together with some bodily movements constitute an action, as distinct from a mere event.

b. They have conditions of consistency. You can desire p and desire not-p at the same time, but you cannot intend p and intend not-p at the same time.

c. Their object is presupposed to be attainable by the agent. You can desire to go to the moon this afternoon, but you cannot intend to go to the moon this afternoon (unless you are a multimillionaire who has made an arrangement with some spatial agency).

d. Their object represents their conditions of satisfaction. Communicative intentions have also some features of their own:

e. They are usually intentions-in-action and not prior intentions (see Searle 1983 for the distinction)[13].

f. They are social, in the Weberian sense of social action, i.e. they are always oriented towards some other agent –the addressee.

g. They are overt, that is, they are to be recognized by the addressee.

h. Their satisfaction consists precisely in that recognition by the addressee.

The last three characteristics are already pointed out in the first version of M-intentions of Grice[14] and their exact formulation seems to constitute the reason for the main critiques and subsequent reformulations by Grice himself :

""*U* meant something by uttering

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[11] Morris, C. (1938), Foundations of the theory of signs. In O. Neurath, R. Carnap and C. Morris (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science I,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, P., 77-138. Reprinted in C. Morris (1971), *Writings on the General Theory of Signs,* The Hague: Mouton

[12] Grice, H. P. (1957), Meaning, *Philosophical Review* 66, 377-388. Reprinted in H. P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, P., 213-223.

[13] Searle, J. (1983), *Intentionality: An essay in the Philosophy of Mind.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[14] Ibid, 1957/1989. P., 220,, ""*A* meant something by *x*" is (roughly) equivalent to "*A* intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention"".

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x" is true if, for some audience *A*, *U* uttered *x* intending:

(1)   *A* to produce a particular response *r*

(2)   *A* to think (recognize) that *U* intends (1)

(3)   *A* to fulfill (1) on the basis of his fulfillment of (2)."[15]

First, communicative intentions are intentions to produce some response on the part of the addressee. The issue has been to define what such a response should exactly be. It seems that what the speaker usually intends by her communicative action is to change the mental states of the addressee. But what change should it be for the communicative intention to be successful? The intention of the speaker when she says, for instance, 'It is raining' could be to induce the addressee to believe that it is raining or, maybe, to believe that the speaker believes that it is raining. But is any of these beliefs on the part of the addressee necessary for the communicative action to be successful *qua* communicative action? The most common answer has been negative. Perlocutionary aspects of that sort have been excluded from the content of communicative intentions. It seems that the addressee's only *new* mental state needed is his recognition of the speaker's communicative intention; his understanding of the speaker's

utterance. This is what has been called 'illocutionary uptake':[16]

The exact formulation of this overt nature of communicative intentions has been a subject of hot debate, some arguing for a reflexive (self-referential) definition, others for a potentially infinite but practically finite number of clauses in the definition, with conceptual, logical or psychological arguments. What seems to be a matter of consensus is that every covert or even neutral (with respect to its intended recognition by the addressee) aspect of the speaker's intention is left out of the definition of communicative intentions. One way of summing this up is, finally, to say that the fulfillment of communicative intentions consists precisely in being recognized by the addressee.

Much of the work in current Pragmatics views linguistic understanding as the process of recognition of the speaker's communicative intentions. The addressee relies on linguistic and extralinguistic information for reaching

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[15]Grice, H. P. (1969), Utterer's Meaning and Intentions, *Philosophical Review* 78, p. 92. Reprinted in H. P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 86-116.

[16]"In the case of illocutionary acts we succeed in doing what we are trying to do by getting our audience to recognize what we are trying to do. But the 'effect' on the hearer is not a belief or a response; it consists simply in the hearer understanding the utterance of the speaker." Searle, J. (1969), *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 47; Read also, "The understanding of the force of an utterance in all cases involves recognizing what may be called broadly an audience-directed intention and recognizing it as wholly overt, as intended to be recognized." Strawson, P. F. (1964), *Intention and Convention in Speech Acts. Philosophical Review* 73, p. 439-60.

that recognition. The ulterior perlocutionary effects on the audience, intended or not intended by the speaker, are usually ignored by pragmatic studies. This is where rhetoric can make its contribution. Persuasive as well as convincing and other kinds of perlocutionary intentions seem to constitute the basis of rhetorical studies of linguistic use.

Rhetoric: A new vision of an old art

One of the worst things that happened to rhetoric was its inclusion as a part of literature theory and practice, thus forgetting its original status in the works, for example, of Isocrates and Aristotle. Isocrates' *Against the Sophists,* which in fact is the opening declaration of his School of Rhetoric, is a good precedent of Book I of Aristotle's

Rhetoric. It is clear that Aristotle lacks a definition of rhetoric and that the beginning of Book I is an attempt to situate it in relation with dialectics:

> "It is further evident that it belongs to Rhetoric to discover the real and apparent means of persuasion, just as it belongs to Dialectic to discover the real and apparent syllogism… Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever. This is the function of no other of the arts, each of which is able to instruct and persuade in its own special subject; thus, medicine deals with health and sickness, geometry with the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic with number, and similarly with all the other arts and sciences."[17]

It has been a very common view to emphasize the relevance of *pathos* in classical rhetoric, contrary to the insistence by Aristotle on all the three components "*ethos, logos, pathos,*" and particularly on *logos.* Remember Aristotle's words in the sense that the best rhetorician is that who is expert in syllogisms. It is noteworthy that in the composition of a discourse Aristotle gives an especial importance to the *taxis*, that is, to the configuration and ordering of the elements of the discourse. Book III of his *Rhetoric* is not simply a book on style. It is also a book on the parts of speech, which means a book on the internal ordering of discourse.

It is crucial for our purpose to take this idea of ordering, not only for the macro-discourses of the three rhetorical kinds of discourse (deliberative, forensic, epideictic) taken into account by the Greek tradition, but also for the micro- and meso-discourses, in which we are interested when analysing everyday communication. This is particularly applicable to argumentative discourses, where the aim of persuading takes the form of that of convincing by ways of argumentation. In fact, its is very well-known that even in the case of proofs (in mathematics and logic) the order giving the structure of a demonstration can change without altering the result, making easier or more difficult the

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[17]Ibid, Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I, p. 1355b15 & 25-30.

understanding of the proof of a theorem. *A fortiori* with everyday argumentations. This idea was noted, among others, by Apostel [18], when he presented an assertion logic for a theory of argumentation following Rescher's way [19], and spoke about "internal democracy" in Greek geometry, and, by extension, in any axiomatics.

One of the most interesting recent approaches in argumentation theory is "pragma-dialectics", which was open by van Eemeren and Grootendorst, inspired by the Aristotelian dialectics and rhetoric, linking speech act theory with the dialectical theory of "critical rationalists" [20]. The analysis of argumentative discourse, taken as "verbal, social and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by advancing a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint", is done by the study of the points of view, unexpressed premises, argument schemes, argumentation structures and, particularly, fallacies. Arguments are interpreted and reconstructed in that way, in order to get a clear view of the process of argumentation. In our viewpoint, what

is lacking in that approach is a cognitive vision of argumentation, and it must be said that, at the same time, they take a biased perspective on rhetoric, as far as they view rhetoric basically as a *pathos*-oriented rhetoric, minimizing the importance of the *ethos* and especially of the *logos,* and, consequently, that they do not take rhetoric into consideration. At the end, the output is that pragmatics collapses into semantics.

Rhetoric is obviously not only important for argumentation theorists, but for the production, analysis and evaluation of any kind of persuasive discourse. The study of audiences by the new rhetorics takes an especial importance today, because of the new kinds of audiences derived from new forms and modes of communication, in a time where information technologies applied to communication systems are evolving fast. Particular interest deserves the study of complex (media) audiences and very diffuse ones. It has to be noted that the interest of rhetoric for audiences is not a sociological one. Rhetoric is interested in the way of shaping audiences by means of the realization of discourses.

To return to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* means to take into account the role played by the *logos* (and the *ethos*) jointly with the *pathos*. The *ethos* and the *pathos* are constructed by the discourse itself, they are not external to it, on the contrary, they are shaped in terms of the evolution

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[18]Apostel, L. (1971), *Assertion Logic and a Theory of Argumentation. Philosophy and Rhetoric* 4, p. 92-110

[19] Rescher, N. (1968), *Topics in Philosophical Logic.* Dordrecht: Reidel

[20] Eemeren, F.H. van, and R. Grootendorst (1984), *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions.* Dordrecht: Foris.

of the discourse. This is the main reason for giving so much importance to the *logos,* as Aristotle did.[21] Consequently, this is also the main reason for emphasising the relevance of the structure of discourse as it is fixed in the *taxis* phase of its composition.[22]This old idea was renewed by Enlightenment rhetorical theorists such as Campbell[23] and Whately,[24] and more recently by Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyte.[25] From another side, people interested in argumentative communication studies gave also a particular importance to the *logos* of that kind of discourse, and that lead to an abundant literature in "informal logic"[26].

The basis of Pragma-Rhetoric

In our own pragma-rhetoric approach, the rhetoric aspect is essentially devoted to a study of order, i.e. to the planning of discourse, which means the production of the structure of

discourse in a dynamic perspective, given the fact that real discourse is what is finally performed as discourse with all the moves made in the process. What is important to point out is that the determination of that dynamic order responds to the intention of persuading by the discourse-maker. Pragma-rhetoric is not isolated from logic, on the contrary, it takes logic at the very ground in discourse construction, but the crucial notion of the intention to persuade links rhetoric with pragmatics in a global intentional architecture of individuals, distinguishing and combining at the same time communicative intention and persuasive intention. It is very clear that these two intentions are in different levels. We need first the fulfillment of communicative intention, in order to make possible then the fulfillment of persuasive intention (particularly, the intention to convince in argumentative discourse). Both in monological discourse and in dialogical (or multilogical) discourse –in what we are more interested- the unit of analysis is a unique speech act, where by means of the satisfaction of the communicative intention one can get the satisfaction of a persuasive intention (we are speaking, of course, of persuasive communication).

What is the content of persuasive intentions? We are basically speaking about a very stable kind of intention, persistent through all the process of elaboration and performance of a

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[21]See, Conley, Th. M. (1990), *Rhetoric in the European Tradition.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

[22]Read, Reboul, O. (1991), *Introduction à la rhétorique.* Paris: P.U.F

[23]Campbell, G. (1776), *The Philosophy of Rhetoric.* Re-edited in 1936, Southern Illinois University Press.

[24]Read, Whately, R. (1828), *Elements of Rhetoric.* Reprinted in 1857 in London: Parker & son

[25]Perelman, Ch. and L. Olbrecht-Tyteca (1958), *Traité de l'argumentation. La nouvelle rhétorique.* Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles.

[26] Walton, D.N. (1989), *Informal Logic.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

discourse, oriented to a particular type of behavior on the part of the hearers (as communicative intentions, persuasive intentions lead to a particular kind of individual social actions), namely, their persuasion in terms of the acceptance of beliefs and goals expressed by the speaker (or, at least, a significant reduction in the distance between the mental states manifested by the speaker and those of the hearers, naturally intending to lead hearers to action).[27]

It is evident that in our pragma-rhetorical approach to the analysis of persuasive discourse we are putting in place, so to speak, a *cognitive* rhetoric, where basic intentional components have to be considered in relationship with emotive components and any other psychological aspect of speakers and hearers, changing alternatively their roles in the production of discourses. It is noteworthy that, unlike communicative intention, persuasive intention in general is not an overt intention. It can be an overt intention as in the case of the intention to convince (by arguments) or as in particular kinds of persuasive intentions in especial discourse contexts. But it clearly can also be a covert intention: think, for example, about a situation where the speaker intends to persuade the hearers hiding the real persuasive intention behind her discourse behavior, because this is just the way of getting her goal in that particular situation. In any case, it is worth saying that persuasive intention leads the speaker to the determination of the structure of discourse in the *taxis* phase. No doubt, when we speak about the structure of discourse, we are speaking in a broader sense than Aristotle did, when he studied the division of the parts of speech in Book III of his *Rhetoric,* taking into account precisely our broader notion of discourse, applicable, as we noted above, to micro- and meso-discourses.

One of the consequences of this cognitive approach to rhetoric in our pragma-rhetorical view is that we can aim at a psychological (and socio-psychological) and philosophical (philosophy of language, mind and action) combined study of the intentions involved in persuasive communication. A next step can probably be reached if we are interested in the formalization of those intentions. Some proposals have been made for communicative intention and we are trying to do some new ones for persuasive intention. Having in mind

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[27]"Lastly, persuasion is produced by the speech itself, when we establish the true or apparently true from the means of persuasion applicable to each individual subject. Now, since proofs are affected by these means, it is evident that, to be able to grasp them, a man must be capable of logical reasoning, of studying characters and the virtues, and thirdly the emotions –the nature and character of each, its origin, and the manner in which it is produced. Thus it appears that Rhetoric is as it were an offshoot of Dialectic and of the science of Ethics, which may be reasonably called Politics." (*Rhetoric* I, p. 1356a-15-30); see Ibid, Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: Book I.

the idea of applying them to the elaboration of communication schemes (in natural language processing and in systems of agency), to the production and analysis of discourse by automatic means, to argumentation theory, to discourse polemology (discussions, disputes) in the way open by Dascal's psychopragmatics.

Last remarks

Let us make a few concluding remarks. First, proposing a pragma-rhetorical analysis of persuasive discourse, in terms of the study of two especial intentions, situated in different intentional levels: communicative intentions first, and then persuasive intentions. Second, we claim that a new reading of the Aristotelian rhetoric is crucial for that purpose, because of the importance given by Aristotle to the *logos,* in connection with the *ethos* and the *pathos.* Of course, a new reading is required if we enlarge the notion of discourse from the classical Greek tradition to current everyday discourses in extensively information-technology based communications. Third, the pragmatic component of our approach is essentially the one developed after Grice's foundation of pragmatics. Fourth, the psychological, philosophical and logical aspects of our pragma-rhetorical study of persuasive communication have to be seriously and urgently developed, given their applicability in very different and crucial domains.

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