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PRAGMATICS THROUGH ARGUMENTATIVE PRESS ARTICLES
From theory to practice

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Abstract – The paper reports on a thirty-hour teaching module of English at the University of Udine in the second year of the degree course in Lingue e Letterature Straniere. The main goal was to raise the students' awareness of how discourse and pragmatics provide tools useful to the discovery in an argumentative press article of the writer's strategies to persuade the addressee and the role of the addressee in shaping language and content choices. The paper illustrates the methodology that was followed. It is divided into two sections. The first one contains a presentation of academic research related to the main themes covered in the course, from the layout of argumentation (Toulmin 2003, p. 87) to the arguer's "strategic maneuvering" (van Eemeren 2010, p. 41) to persuade the "audience" (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19). The second section describes the syllabus of the module to facilitate the comprehension of concepts from discourse and pragmatics. An overview of five workshops from the ten that characterized the module is included. A synthesis of a mini-lecture, aimed at connecting the students' analysis of the articles to the academic research, concludes the presentation of each workshop.

Keywords: argumentation; speech act; macrospeech act; audience; manoeuvering.

1. Introduction

The present paper aims to show that, while enhancing foreign language reading skills, the strengthening of the students' critical attitude towards the persuasive function of language in argumentation through some media can be pursued. As Thompson (2009) states, analysing a text "is concerned with helping readers to develop their ability to understand and evaluate reasoning" (p. 1). […] "for example, when someone presents us with a piece of evidence of which we were unaware, we need to be able to judge how it affects our argument" (p. 2). This clearly means analysing how an argumentative "illocutionary act" (Searle 1969, pp. 54-71), performed through language and topic choices, can produce an effect on the addressee.

The present article reports on a teaching experience of English as a foreign language, in the second year of the degree course in Lingue e Letterature Straniere at the University of Udine. The work deals with a thirty-hour module (from now on called Module 2) on the analysis of argumentative magazine and newspaper articles, following a ten-hour module (from now on called Module 1) on the analysis of conversations from literary texts (Di Nisio 2016). In both cases pragmatics is the central focus, with discourse analysis as the starting point. The paper gives an account of how these students were guided in Module 2 in applying concepts from pragmatics to argumentative press articles, through an awareness-raising approach to the arguer's strategies to produce a persuasive effect on the reader.

The first section of the paper gives a literature overview of the theory behind the aims of Module 2: from Toulmin's argumentation (Toulmin 2003) through the idea of an

invisible but existing "audience" (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969) to language "strategic maneuvering" (van Eemeren 2010) on the reader. The main concepts from the theory formed the basis of the two components that structured Module 2, workshops and mini-lectures, which are illustrated in the second section of the present paper together with aims and evaluation criteria.

2. A literature overview of the theory

2.1. Argumentation patterns

Reflection on argumentation started with Greek philosophers in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C., whose interest originated from the need to develop the ability to be convincing in public argumentation. Aristotle was the first philosopher to organise the outcomes into sound theory. In his *Rhetoric* (2010, pp. 6-11) he defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion". He reasoned on the concepts of "inductive" and "deductive" syllogisms: in the former case, from a number of statements, which constitute the premises, a conclusion is inferred, whereas in the latter case, the progress of the argument follows the opposite path, starting from the conclusion and ending with the premises. According to Aristotle, there are three types of persuasive means, "ethos, pathos and logos": the first refers to those arguments that are intended to facilitate the addressee's trust on the speaker, the second is connected to those means that are employed to cause emotions and the last is related to the rational verbal expression of the arguments themselves.

After centuries, in the 1950s new interest in argumentation theory was awakened in linguistics by Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* (1958) and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *The New Rhetoric* (1969). The former had a rhetorical approach, rather than a dialogical one, since its author considered only the structure of the writer/speaker's reasoning, whereas Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca had a dialogical approach, focusing on the language and argument choices made by the writer/speaker in order to persuade the addressee, while meeting his or her needs.

The meaning of Toulmin's "argument" (2003), as an "assertion" whose "merits depend on the merits of the argument […]" (p. 11), includes a structure characterised by various "phases marking the progress of the argument from the initial statement of an unsettled problem to the final presentation of a conclusion" (p. 87). When outlining the "Lay-out of Arguments" (pp. 87-100), the first distinction he underlines is between "claim" (p. 90), the speaker/writer's opinion, and "data" (p. 90), on which an opinion is founded: an argument without evidence has no validity. However, an argument may not be entirely convincing if the "data" (p. 90) are not connected to the "claim" (p. 90): to satisfy this requirement, a "warrant" (p. 91) is needed to explain the link between "claim" and "data", clarifying the whole argumentation. A "warrant" varies in degrees of force: it may reveal a definite or a tentative conclusion, usually accompanied by expressions carrying the meaning of uncertainty, marked by "modal qualifiers" (p. 93), including verbs like must, can, may, or adverbs such as "necessarily", "probably" or "presumably" (p. 93). Finally, "backing" (pp. 95-96) can be a phase in argumentation that strengthens the force of a conclusion, thus providing the whole reasoning with more authority.

2.2. The "audience" in written argumentation

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (*The New Rhetoric* 1969) explained in what way their idea of rhetoric was "new" and therefore different from ancient rhetoric (pp. 6-14): the "audience" (pp. 5-8, 19) is not just a crowd in a public square, since it can be present or absent, and also physically identifiable or ideal. Besides, it is not a passive entity, but an actor that leads the speaker/writer to adjust his or her message to the addressee's needs, as an indispensable condition to succeed in persuading them; the process of adjustment consists in choosing suitable language elements; the addressee is "universal" (pp. 31-35) when the addresser speaks to anybody who can understand arguments. Considering the repercussions that this perspective has on language, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca state that in argumentation, truth is less important than the views of the envisaged addressee (pp. 23-24).

The scholars devote the second part of their work (pp. 63-183) to the investigation of the speaker's preparation of essential components of his or her argumentation: the inclusion of premises, the selection and adaptation of data, their presentation and the form of discourse. While structuring the argumentation, an arguer can try to obtain the addressee's agreement through the "verbal magic" (p. 117) he/she is capable of. A successful process conveys a feeling of "presence" (pp. 115-120), through which the data mentioned to give evidence to the claim are perceived as real. The result is a psychological effect that encourages "adherence" (pp. 163-167) to the claim and its conclusion in the "audience" (pp. 5-6, 104-105).

In order to encourage the reader's acceptance of their arguments, on two occasions Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca strategically include a narrative text. The first story underlines the need for an arguer to be concerned with his or her manner of argumentation in order to persuade the reader to accept it. The authors quote Bruner (1942, p. 62), who, comparing authors of scientific reports to hosts speaking to their guests, tells a short story to criticise those who believe that facts should automatically arouse the reader's interest, no matter how the message is delivered:

> They slouch into a chair, staring glumly at their shoes, and abruptly announce, to themselves or not, we never know, 'It has been shown by such and such ... that the female of the white rat responds negatively to electric shock'.
> 'All right, sir,' I say. 'So what? Tell me first why I should care; then I will listen'. (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 17-18)

The story focuses on the need for the arguer to be concerned about the addressee's interests, worries and wishes, as well as language style. When these aspects are ignored, the consequence is that the writer's message fails to reach the reader.

The second narrative, a Chinese story, is included by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca to illustrate another fundamental aspect of the manner of argumentation, the idea of "presence" (p. 116): "A king sees an ox on its way to sacrifice. He is moved to pity for it and orders that a sheep be used in its place. He confesses he did so because he could see the ox, but not the sheep". The authors underline the fact that, in order to be effective, the arguer must have an influence on the addressee's "sensibility" (p. 116). This can be possible if elements of which he or she cares are mentioned as if they were really visible.

While explaining why the arguer must involve the addressee in the process of argumentation, through their own manner of argumentation, the two researchers (p. 142) show that they care about their readers when using the narrative strategy: a story embedded in argumentation may facilitate the comprehension and acceptance of the claim;

it may express it in a memorable way; it may make the readers smile, encouraging them to continue reading; finally, it may activate the memory of a personal experience and promote the identification with the writer. The strength of a display of data does not simply produce a feeling, but it gives "a certain orientation", it builds "certain schemes of interpretation" and a significant "framework"; in short, it foregrounds the "hearer's consciousness". In other words it produces a "communion" (pp. 163-167) between the arguer and the addressee.

In the light of their claims, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca explicitly refuse the separation of form and substance in argumentation. Depending on the type of addressee the argumentation is directed to, the arguer selects the language that is likely to make the whole persuasive process effective. A wide range of cases is given, of which the following are examples:

- A "word-family" (pp. 150-151) expresses words that are related to each other on purpose with an "argumentative role".
- The interrogative form may become "a rather hypocritical way of communicating certain beliefs" (p. 159).
- The use of "one" instead of "I" has the effect of transforming "the subjective […] into the normal" (p. 161).
- Coordination and subordination reveal "the hierarchy of the admitted values" (pp. 156-158).

The *New Rhetoric* also examines various types of rhetorical figures (pp. 167-179) an arguer can use with the intent of influencing the addressee. To give an example, an "Oratorial definition" (pp. 172-173) is a figure whose function is "not to give the meaning of a word, but to bring to the fore certain aspects of the facts which might otherwise remain in the background of our consciousness" (p. 172). The same function can be exercised by "periphrasis" (pp. 173-174), "anticipation" (p. 174) "correction" (p. 174), "amplification" (pp. 175-174), "synonym" (p. 176), "allusion" (p. 177) and "quotation"(pp. 177-178). In order to be effective, these tropes must not be perceived by the addressee as simply ornamental. They must go beyond the level of argumentation producing the following effects: "presence" (pp. 116-120) of what is important in the argumentation; "adherence" of the addressee to the arguer's values, from which "the adherence of the audience" is obtained (pp. 163-167).

Besides the language features already mentioned, in order to stimulate the "adherence" (pp. 163-167) of the reader to the argumentation, the arguer identifies various "techniques" (pp. 185-508), organised by the researchers into "association" and "dissociation" schemes. Among the "association schemes" (pp. 190-191) there are the "quasi-logical" arguments (pp. 193-260), which are "similar to the formal reasoning of logic or mathematics" (p. 193), since they are based on comparable data to indicate "contradiction" (pp. 195-197), "identity" (pp. 210-218), "probabilities" (pp. 255-260) and more relations, such as the cause-and-effect relation (pp. 263-266) or the end-and-means relation (pp. 273-278).

"Dissociation" (pp. 411-459) expresses the distinction between appearance — an entity that is considered illusory or inadequate — and reality, which is taken as true. Among the language signals for such a dissociation, the authors include expressions like "apparent/ly" and "real/ly" (p. 436), as well as the definite article "the"(p. 437), which can play the same role, since it may indicate the true entity. "Dissociation" (pp. 411-459) is also seen in types of language meant to qualify or disqualify the process of arguing, such as "rhetorical" (p. 450), "artificial" (p. 451) and formal. According to the authors all forms of "dissociation" may hide the arguer's attempt of deception.

In most of their work Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyreca examine single language elements in argumentation and leave their analysis as a whole to the final section (pp. 460-474). In fact, the success of argumentation is given by the "interaction" (p. 460) of the various language components with each other.

2.3. Argumentation, speech act and macrospeech act

The link between discourse and pragmatics was highlighted by Austin and Searle. Austin's investigation into the philosophy of language led him to a reflection on the view of language as action, as the title of his book, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), suggests. He also "distinguished the locutionary act (and within it the phonetic, the phatic, and the rhetic acts) which has a meaning; the illocutionary act which has a certain force in saying something; the perlocutionary act which is the achieving of certain effects by saying something" (p. 120). Searle (1969) developed the concept of "speech act" (16-42), the "structure of illocutionary acts" (pp. 54-71) and a classification of "speech acts" (1976, 1-23). Later van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1983, p. 26) connected Austin's "act of speech" (1962, p. 20) and Searle's "speech act" (1969, pp. 3-24) to the analysis of argumentative discussions.

Unlike Searle and Austin, however, they threw light on the "interactional aspects" of "speech acts" (Eemeren, Grootendorst 1983, p. 23), even in the case when they are uttered by a single person, who writes or speaks as if the addressee were present: those who perform an action through an utterance do not wish simply to know that it has been understood by the addressee, but "they hope to elicit from their listeners a particular response (verbal or otherwise)." In order to obtain this response, the arguer must express the message with such a persuasive strength that it must "bring about the *perlocutionary* ('interactional') effect of accepting" (p. 36).

Therefore, if arguers intend to succeed, they must adjust their speeches to the identity of the reader/listener, the specific "community" of "language users" (Eemeren, Grootendorst 1983, p. 68), so that an agreement is reached. This adaptation can be carried out at all levels in the argumentation: the overall structure, including steps of an argumentative pattern and the selection of arguments; the language, which can comprise formal and/or informal language with repercussions on the choice of vocabulary, grammar and syntax. From this point of view, the addressee implicitly expresses a form of power on the arguer, who has to structure his or her moves accordingly. This effort is called "strategic maneuvering" (p. 41), of which van Eemeren identifies three types: "aspects of topical choice" (pp. 93-107), "aspects of audience demand" (pp. 108-118) and "aspects of presentational choice" (pp. 118-127).

The first type refers to the selection that the arguer strategically makes from a range of argumentative moves at his or her disposal: they are the "causal", the "symptomatic' and the "comparison' arguments that he or she "finds fitting" his or her discourse. The second type, "aspects of audience demand" (pp. 113-118), regards the arguments that the arguer uses strategically: because they are part of the readers' frame of reference, they can facilitate the acceptance of the whole argumentation. Van Eemeren mentions Bakhtin's (1986) "co-authored" (Eemeren 2010, p. 114) arguments and "hidden dialogicality" (p. 115), implying an invisible involvement of the reader, who suggests the direction of the argumentation. The third type, the "aspects of presentational choice" (pp. 118-127), is about the arguer's selection from an available "linguistic repertoire". It is the expression that is chosen strategically: language – figures of speech as well as ordinary grammar, syntax and vocabulary – is never "neutral" (p. 120), because it has been chosen to make the process of persuading more powerful.

Van Dijk's contribution is of the utmost importance in relation to the concept of performing actions through language in a press article. He states that "a number of speech acts of certain language users in the same situation may be taken as a unit" (1980, p. 181), which he calls "macrospeech act" (pp. 184-195). Some examples from an article are title, subtitle, heading, thematical sentence, concluding summary and paraphrasing (p.100).

The "macrostructure" is investigated by van Dijk (1980, pp. 184-195) from a linguistic and a cognitive point of view. He demonstrates that an effective communicative act derives from a combination of "a pragmatic theory of language with grammar" (pp. 103-104): connectives manifest the relation between various language acts in a text; pronouns, demonstratives and definite article show "underlying macrostructures" (104); verbs, nouns and adjectives form a semantic texture with previous utterances in the text.

3. The teaching experience

3.1. Aims

At the University of Udine the institutional educational objectives for all foreign languages in the second year of the degree course in Lingue e Letterature Straniere include, among other objectives, the following: to be aware of the complexity of formal and informal registers in text types; to identify and understand aspects of discourse and pragmatics in a given text. In the English syllabus, Module 1 introduced discourse and pragmatics through conversations in literary texts, Module 2 focused on the argumentative text, in the form that is usually embedded in newspaper and magazine articles. More specifically, it pursued the mail goal of developing the students' awareness of the existence of the following aspects in an argumentation:

- In an argumentative press article the target reader exists, even if it is not physically present.
- Characteristics of the reader can be perceived and described on the basis of the journalist's language choices and arguments.
- The interaction of language elements in an argumentative text is likely to produce an effect on the reader.
- In order to be more convincing, the writer of a press article tries to meet the reader's requirements.

The above overarching goal of the module was then turned into objectives, necessary to design a syllabus aiming at a gradual development of the skills involved. What follows is a list of the most important objectives relevant to discourse, showing the interwoven nature of the language elements of a text, and those relevant to pragmatics, indicating the writer's intentions to produce an influence on the reader:

- Identifying informal and formal utterances and interpreting them as "speech acts" (Searle 1969, pp. 3-24; Yule 1996, p. 47).
- Tracing the overall structure of the argumentation according to Toulmin (2003, p. 87): from the "claim" through a range of supporting "data" to the "warrant".
- Recognising narratives, including autobiographical elements, embedded in the argumentation together with their "illocutionary force" (Searle 1969, pp. 3-24; Yule 1996, p. 48).

- Distinguishing "speech acts" (Searle 1969, pp. 3-24; Yule 1996, p. 47) in one-sentence utterances from "macrospeech acts" (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195) in the more complex steps of the argumentation.
- Understanding the reader's "cooperation" (Grice 1975, p. 45; Yule 1996, p. 37) when activating his/her "schemata" (Yule 1996, pp. 85-87) in the effort to "implicate" (Grice 1975, p. 43) or "assume" (Yule 1996, p. 35) meaning from the data in the argumentation.
- Describing the identity of the "audience" (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19) to persuade - including aspects such as age, social roles, interests, beliefs and education - with reference to the "schemata" (Yule 1996, pp. 85-87) and the language in the article.
- Identifying the writer's "strategic maneuvering" (Eemerem 2010, pp. 39-43) to influence the reader.

Module 2 was organised into ten workshops, each with a concluding mini-lecture, related to the analysis of press articles from the perspectives of discourse and pragmatics. The fact that the students had already followed Module 1 on conversation analysis (Di Nisio 2016) facilitated the work, since teacher and students could rely on pre-existing knowledge and skills: the students had already worked on various aspects of discourse in informal language; they had already dealt with some of the main pragmatic concepts through Yule's *Pragmatics* (1996): "speech act" (p. 47), "illocutionary force" (p. 48), "perlocutionary effect" (pp. 48-49), "schema" (pp. 85-87), "cooperation principal" (p. 37) and "implicature" (p. 35). But the change from a conversational text to the new type of text threw new light on the analysis: unlike a dialogic text, a press article is not organised into clear moves between the arguer and the interlocutor, which makes the identification of "speech acts" (pp. 85-87) challenging; the arguer's hidden intentions must be traced only through the verbal elements, since the non-verbal ones are missing; the reader's identity is not disclosed by the writer, but must be found in his or her choices of form and content; finally, a clear context of argumentation, which usually helps the addressee to understand the message, is not given.

The section in Module 2 that was completely new to the students regarded the structure of an argumentative article with some implications: the idea of an argumentative process in a press article involved the concept of the invisible presence of the addressee; the need to persuade determined a hidden interaction between the writer and the invisible reader, since it is the latter that implicitly indicates how to make an argument efficacious and it is the former that responds appropriately.

The analysis of formal language had to be added to the work in order to enable the students to fully understand different types of register. Widdowson's *Discourse Analysis* (2007) was a useful reference book throughout the activities.

3.2. The procedure

Workshop tasks always preceded a mini-lecture on the theory underlying them, giving rise to an inductive approach to learning. This choice originated from the belief that a learner has to be engaged in a gradual observation of how language works, starting from a hands-on stage and ending with theory. In the last step the results of the workshops would be explained, connected and organised. Thus, the activities operated as "Advance Organizers" (Ausubel 1960, pp. 267-272) of the theory, since they facilitated comprehension and retention of the abstract concepts that followed. As Ausubel

maintains, learning becomes “meaningful” (p. 267) thanks to the fact that the new input is immediately anchored to existing knowledge, rather than being left unconnected.

In order to facilitate active participation, as well as information sharing throughout the workshops, tasks were always carried out in groups. A plenary session would follow, in which each group had to give an account of the results, which were checked and integrated.

Two books were used for reference: *Discourse Analysis* by Widdowson (2007), according to which “The study of discourse […] is a general inquiry into how people make meaning, and make *out* meaning, in texts” (p. XV) and *Pragmatics* by Yule (1996), which is about “the investigation of invisible meaning” in a text (p. 3). They were both left to the students for autonomous consultation during the workshops and recalled during the mini-lectures on specific topics to signpost the progress of the module. Additional materials were supplied to integrate the two books with files containing explanations and examples of argumentation patterns (Toulmin 2003, p. 87), “macrospeech act” (van Dijk, pp. 184-195), “audience” (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19) and “strategic maneuvering” (Eemeren 2010, pp. 39-43).

The final test consisted in the written analysis of a press article in the light of the previous sessions. It was intended to assess the students’ skills to establish a connection between the various aspects of discourse and pragmatics that had been dealt with: formal and informal utterances and their role as “speech acts” (Searle 1969, pp. 3-24; Yule 1996, p. 47), the overall structure of the argumentative text and the role of the main steps as “macrospeech acts” (van Dijk, pp. 184-195), the representation of the addressee through discourse elements and “schemata” (Yule 1996, pp. 85-87), and finally an overall view of the writer’s “strategic maneuvering” (Eemeren 2010, pp. 39-43) to persuade the addressee.

The evaluation criteria were arranged according to the following levels:

- Excellent: the analysis of the press article shows that the student can identify the “discourse” (Widdowson 2007) network through a wide range of features of colloquial and formal language and the three steps of argumentation (Toulmin 2003, p. 87); in the light of the results, he or she can identify various “speech acts” (p. 47) and “macrospeech acts” (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195), interpreting them as the writer’s “strategic maneuvering” (Eemeren 2010, pp. 39-43) on the reader; the student can describe the possible identity of the “audience” (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19) on the basis of the previous results and some examples of “schemata” (Yule 1996, pp. 85-87) the reader is supposed to share with the writer, indicating for each schema the possible “implicature” (p. 35); finally, in connection with the concept of ‘implicature', the student can indicate the need for the reader to “cooperate” with the reader to make communication effective (p. 37).
- Good: the analysis of the press article shows that the student can indicate and connect various elements of “discourse” (Widdowson 2007), can trace the three steps of argumentation (Toulmin 2003); in the light of the results, he or she can identify some “speech acts” (Yule 1996, pp. 47-50) and “macrospeech acts” (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195), can interpret them as the writer’s “strategic maneuvering” (Eemeren 2010, pp. 39-43) on the reader; finally, the student can describe the identity of the target “audience” (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19) on the basis of the previous analysis and at least one example of a shared “schema” (Yule 1996, p. 85-87) with its “implicature” (p. 35).
- Fair: the analysis of the press article shows that the student can indicate some elements of “discourse” (Widdowson 2007), including one or two steps of argumentation (Toulmin 2003); in the light of the results he or she can identify some

"speech acts" (Yule 1996, pp. 47-50) or some "macrospeech acts" (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195) and interpret the writer's "strategic maneuvering" (Eemeren 2010, pp. 39-43) on the reader; finally, the student can mention a few aspects of the target "audience" (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19) on the basis of previous discourse features.

- Pass: the analysis of the press article shows that the student can indicate few "discourse" (Widdowson 2007) elements or can identify few "speech acts" (Yule 1996, pp. 47-50) and briefly mention a possible interpretation of their influence on the reader; finally the student can approach the concept of "audience" (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19) on the basis of the previous results.
- Fail: the student can mention some concepts from "discourse" (Widdowson 2007) and/or "pragmatics" (Widdowson 2007), but does not give evidence with reference to the press article; alternatively, the student can identify language features in the article, but cannot develop the analysis any further.

After a positive result of the test, the process of assessment ended with the student's oral interview, which was meant to integrate or correct the written analysis, as well as to relate it to the underlying theory.

3.2.1. The workshops

The five workshops that follow have been selected from the ten workshops that characterized Module 2 to show how the final teaching goals were pursued. The press articles mentioned in the presentation of the activities are identified through numbers from the following list:

1. *A hot drink cools you faster than a cold one – myth or reality?* Alex Hutchinson, "Special to The Globe and Mail", 12 August, 2012.
2. *Boredom is good for you*, Jude Steward, "The Atlantic", June, 2017.
3. *Booze clues: why do we drink the way we do?*, Kat Austen, "New Scientist", August, 2013.
4. *The ultimate guide to stacking the dishwasher*, MacGregor Campbell, "New Scientist", 19/26 December, 2015.
5. *Time to halt our massive waste of food – here's how*, Andy Coghlan, "New Scientist", 14 January, 2013.
6. *Shut up and sip*, Brian Palmer, "Slate", 26 June, 2015.
7. *The best music for productivity? Silence*, Olga Khazan, "The Atlantic", 8 December, 2016.
8. *Nature plus Nurture*, "The Economist", 7 March, 2015.
9. *Screen addiction*, Jane E. Brody, "The New York Times", 6 July, 2015.
10. *Do get mad: the upside of anger*, Emma Young, "New Scientist", 9 February, 2013.

All the articles share some main features: they deal with humanitarian, environmental and educational issues; they are structured according to the main steps of an argumentative pattern; the language is always a combination of colloquial and formal language; at times an autobiographical narrative is used to support the writer's opinion. For practical reasons sometimes they were reduced in length, but the coherence of the overall structure was maintained.

The five workshops are named according to their central focus as follows:

1. "Speech act" (Yule 1996, pp. 47-50): from conversational texts (Module 1) to article headlines.
2. More on "speech act" (pp. 47-50): from headlines to a colloquial section of an article.
3. Argumentation pattern in an article: evidence as a "Macrospeech act" (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195).
4. The writer's "strategic maneuvering" (Eemeren 2010, pp. 39-43): how to produce "communion" (p. 143) of the reader with the writer in argumentation.
5. The "audience" (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19): identity through shared "schemata" (Yule 1996, p. 85-87) and language choice.

In *Workshop 1* the main objective was to transfer the concept of "speech act" (Yule 1996, pp. 47-50) from conversational texts (Module 1) to press articles. At this early stage only the headlines of the ten articles were used, thanks to their self-contained nature. The students were asked to answer the following question in groups: "Examine the article headlines in the list: what reactions on the readership may the journalists have planned to provoke?". The following answers were collected in a plenary session after group discussion: headlines 1., 2., 3., 7. and 10. may provoke surprise because of a statement that goes against common beliefs; headlines 4. and 5. may develop expectations for a definite solution to a familiar issue, but also cause surprise at the choice of the topic; headlines 6 and 8 may produce entertainment, while arousing curiosity about the issue; headline 9 may cause anxiety because of the worrying issue it refers to.

The students were then guided in the analysis of the language in the headlines to account for the effects they had mentioned: in headlines 1., 2., 3., 7. and 10 the reaction of surprise is caused by the unusual juxtaposition of words like "hot" and "cold", "music" and "silence", "Booze" and "clues", "boredom" and "good", "do get" and "mad", finally "upside" and "anger"; in headlines 4. and 5. the surprise is provoked by the contrast between "ultimate guide" and "stacking the dishwasher", the former preparing for an update of instructions of the utmost importance, the latter working as an anticlimax, with its familiar function, together with "here's how"and its concreteness; headline 6. sounds entertaining, since it is expressed in an unexpected extremely colloquial verb, "shut up", which sounds rude, owing to both the vocabulary and the imperative form; headline 8. is a clever combination of two different words, whose pronunciation is similar; with regard to headline 9., the word "addiction" is a source of anxiety since it belongs to the semantic field of drug consumption.

A mini-lecture followed. After an overview of utterances from the previous analysis of conversational texts (Module 1), a parallel was established between a dialogical utterance and a statement in an article: just as a speaker tends to do in a conversational exchange, a journalist tries to have an effect on the reader, using the headline as an effective device to catch and orient the reader's attention. From this perspective a headline can be seen as a "speech act" with its "illocutionary force" and "perlocutionary effect" (Yule 1996, pp. 48-50). The analysis of the headline language was meant to highlight the interdependence of discourse and pragmatics.

In *Workshop 2* the activities refer to the first article in the list shown above, regarding the argument according to which a hot drink in the summer is more refreshing than a cold one. The students were asked to apply the concept of "speech act" (pp. 47-50) to a section characterized by colloquial language:

> It's one of the great urban myths of summertime – that drinking a cup of piping hot tea will kickstart your sweat glands and ultimately cool you down more than an ice-cold drink.

Or is it?

In a plenary session, after some discussion, the students agreed upon the fact that through the statement the writer tries to surprise the reader – just as he does through the headline – going against expectations and widespread behaviour. With the question that follows after a pause, he seems to challenge the reader again to accept the previous statement. As a result the question sounds like another statement.

After this session the students were asked to consider the language in the same quotation more closely: contracted forms of the verb to be, colloquial phrases, like "piping hot tea", "kickstart", "cool you down", and an elliptical question, features of spoken rather than written language. Finally, they were guided to draw a conclusion regarding the additional effect that the choice of language might produce on the reader: the writer conveys the impression of being physically present, willing to interact with the reader and to establish a peer-to-peer relationship, in spite of the unbalanced roles.

In the mini-lecture that followed, Austin's idea of *How to do things with words* (1962) was recalled and applied to the two segments of the quotation, each with its own "illocutionary force" (Yule 1996, p. 48) mentioned before. To conclude, the quotation as a whole was taken into account also as a single act, thanks to the overall oral register that is meant to produce the same effect.

In *Workshop 3* the activities on the same article pursued the following goals: identifying the main pattern of an argumentative article according to Toulmin's "claim", "data" and "warrant" (2003, p. 87); recognising features of formal language and its "illocutionary force" (Yule 1996, p. 48); moving from the familiar concept of "speech act" from Yule (1996, pp. 47-50) to the new notion of van Dijk's "macrospeech act" (1980, pp. 184-195).

The students were asked to go back to the previous article and locate the following points: the journalist's main opinion (he/she agrees with the cooling benefits of a hot drink, rather than a cold one); the proofs submitted to support his opinion (detailed scientific research studies); the conclusion including the initial opinion developed in the light of the research studies.

The second task of the workshop required the students to focus on the formal vocabulary used in the section about the experiment at the University of Ottawa's Thermal Ergonomics Laboratory. Numerous words, of which the following are only examples, were collected: "volunteers", "perform", "deployed", "thermometers", "inserted", "esophagus" and "estimate". Then, the students' attention was drawn to the possible effect that the description of the experiment could produce on the reader thanks to its simplicity and clarity.

In the mini-lecture that followed, Toulmin's concept of argumentation was introduced, focusing on the three main steps of "claim", "data" and "warrant" (2003, p. 85), which, as planned to facilitate comprehension, replaced the previous ordinary words of *opinion*, *proof* and *conclusion*. The presentation allowed a shift from "speech act" (Yule 1996, pp. 47-50) to "macrospeech act" (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195) with reference to the "illocutionary force" (Yule 1996, p. 48) of a step in an argumentative text. A persuasive action on the reader was detected combining the new notion of "data" (Toulmin 2003, p. 90) in the argumentation, the use of the formal language of research and the presentation of the experiment. This way of writing was seen as an attempt to encourage the reader who appreciates reliable scientific source to accept the "warrent" in the argumentation of the article. The whole section, therefore, was called "macrospeech act" (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195), consisting not only of one sentence, but of a set of

utterances with its unitary "illocutionary force" and "perlocutionary effect" (Yule 1996, pp. 48-50).

Workshop 4 made use of article n. 3. This article is about the effects of alcohol depending on a variety of factors, not just on quantity. The new objective of the workshop was to expand the analysis of colloquial language to discover how it can communicate to the reader a sense of "communion" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 163-167). The students were asked to identify colloquial features in the first section of the article, in which the writer's family Christmas celebration is recalled with details on the grandfather opening a bottle of wine and his young grandson imitating the noise of the cork. The evocation triggers the journalist's questions on the effects of drinking on the participants. Then the students were guided to group these features according to their grammar functions: person deixis through "you", "yours" and "we"; present simple for autobiographic data; elliptical questions, like "What if", "Chances are", "What about beer?" "Cider?" and "Time we distilled"; use of an "and" linker at the beginning of a sentence; lexis such as "grandad", "fed up", "bubbly", "kids", "hooked on", "plugged in/into", "tuned out" and "picks them up"; figurative use of some expressions such as assonance, like "fed up", "feisty" and "festive", a simile in "our banter is as bubbly as the contents of our glasses", metaphors in "Time we distilled some facts" and "an elephant in the bottle", finally onomatopoeic sounds, like "Pop", "squeezes" and "cracking".

Subsequently, they were encouraged to find a possible reason why the writer expresses her reasoning about the issue in a very colloquial way. After a group discussion, the students underlined the writer's friendly attitude towards the reader, who could easily feel involved by the repetitive person deixis, "we" and "you", the use of so many direct questions to the readers and the contact phrase "Don't even ask". Very likely the passage, a "macrospeech act" (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195), would produce in the reader the "perlocutionary effect" (Yule 1996, pp. 48-49) of identification with the arguer in a festive celebration on Christmas day.

Finally, the students were asked to consider the role of the last utterance in the article, "Cheers!", which comes after a lengthy report on research studies and the writer's conclusion: it is a "speech act" (1996, pp. 47-50) through which the arguer reestablishes a friendly relationship with the reader, after all the worrying alcohol-related data mentioned before. As a consequence, the persuasive intention of the argumentation is reinforced.

The mini-lecture that followed connected the previous analysis to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's statement according to which "The goal of all argumentation […] is to create or increase the adherence of minds to the theses presented for their assent." (1969, p. 45): through expressions that evoke autobiographic festive moments, the reader's closeness to the writer's world and self-identification with her are induced.

The presentation also included an explanation of van Eemeren's "strategic maneuvering" (2010, pp. 39-43) on the reader through language devices. The linguist uses the phrase "presentational choices" (pp. 118-127), which was mentioned to the students accompanying it with the following quotation: "When maneuvering strategically, speakers or writers are not just trying to make the argumentative moves that suit […]" the addressee "well and agree with audience demand, but they also make an effort to present their moves in a specific way […] systematically attuned to achieving the strategic purposes they are aiming for." (pp. 118-11).

Therefore, if argumentative and language choices are made to meet the reader's requests, a silent exchange between the writer and the reader must take place: the latter transmits indirect signals of his or her wishes, the former listens and adjusts his or her previous plan accordingly. The article may produce an involvement that goes beyond the

mere comprehension of the journalist's reasoning, reaching the level of consensus on the arguments.

Workshop 5, which referred to article n. 9, was about the risks of children's heavy exposure to electronic devices. The work was centred mainly on the identity of the reader, as it is shown through both the language and shared "schemata" (Yule 1996, p. 85-87) in the text.

First of all, the students were invited to focus on the autobiographical section, in which the writer talks about her grandchildren's worrying use of video-games in the car to and from school and their grandfather's complaint about the lack of communication that this causes. Once again, colloquial language was analysed through the direct quotation of their grandfather's disappointment and everyday lexis, such as "picks them up".

The question that followed aimed to sketch a first picture of the reader of the article in the light of the previous elements. In order to have a deep understanding of the argumentation and sympathize with the writer, he or she needs to share her auto-biographical experience: having young children around, like parents; having high expectations about their cognitive and social developments; having somebody who looks after them while at work; being concerned about their psychological safety because of their use of electronic tablets.

Then attention was drawn to some negatively connoted language that can be connected to the type of reader: "alarming", "tragic effect", "clinical disorder", "rehabilitation centers", "confined", "draconian therapy", "addiction", "significant negative effect", "violence", "suffer", "epidemic", "destined to suffer" and "pure substitute". It is the lexis that can have easy appeal to an anxious reader through the gloomiest perspective: his/her children may become involved in screen watching to the extent that they spend the day "often without breaks to eat, sleep or even use the bathroom."

To add cultural and educational details to the previous description of the envisaged reader, a new question was asked about his or her interests, interests which could be inferred from the people and the institutions mentioned in the text: "PBS", "Dimitri A. Christakis of the Seattle Children's Research" and "Dr. Steiner-Adair". To answer the question, the students needed to do some internet searching: as is mentioned in www.seattlechildrens.org/medical-staff/dimitri-a-christakis/, "Dimitri A. Christakis of the Seattle Children's Research Institute" is the Director of the Center for Child Health, Behaviour and Development of the Seattle Research Institute; in catherinesteineradair.com/about-2/, "Dr. Steiner-Adair" is "an internationally acclaimed clinical psychologist, school consultant and award winning author". Thus the students were able to imply that the reader must be a well-educated person, who selects quality TV channels, who watches documentaries and other educational programmes, and who reads outstanding contributions about the issues related to his or her concern.

In the mini-lecture that followed, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's idea of "audience" (1969, pp. 5-8, 19), the target reader, was introduced to the students, together with the concept of "schema" (Yule 1996, p. 85-87), which is the interlocutors' shared knowledge, while the idea of "implicature" (pp. 35-36) was drawn on from Module 1. Just as the students were able to profit from their pre-existing knowledge of a video-game called "Candy Crush", in order to find the article beneficial, the ideal reader must be familiar with the documentaries and academic authorities mentioned in the article. Besides, to make sense of the argumentation in the article, he or she is expected to "cooperate" (Grice 1975, p. 43) with the writer by inferring the additional meaning that the writer is attaching to the data in terms of respectability and trustworthiness.

The choice of the specific evidence to support her arguments reflects the writer's intention to involve a certain type of "audience" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 5-8, 19) both emotionally and intellectually. It is to meet this addressee's needs that specific research institutions are mentioned, that outstanding doctors' views are quoted, that a scheduled TV documentary is announced, and finally that a combination of research and family language is achieved. It is the communication (Eemeren 2010, p. 27) between writer and reader that has suggested arguments and language and has turned them into "macrospeech acts" (van Dijk 1980, pp. 184-195), in which the reader's "perlocutionary effect" (Yule 1996, pp. 48) matches the writer's "illocutionary force" (p. 49) with its attempt of persuasion about the alarming "screen addiction" and, ultimately, develops loyalty to the magazine.

4. Conclusion

The present paper offers an overview of a teaching experience (Module 2) on discourse and pragmatics based on the analysis of press articles. It followed Module 1 on the same language approach applied to conversational texts from literature (Di Nisio 2006). In Module 1 the main goal was "to highlight the potential role of pragmatics in foreign language learning, to reduce misunderstanding between native and non-native speakers and to increase the students' awareness of language as a form of cultural action" (Di Nisio 2016, p. 177). In Module 2 the focus was placed on the journalist's strategies to perform a persuasive action on the target reader by means of language choices, the structure of the whole argumentation and the presence of the writer's and addressee's shared knowledge, textual factors that derive from a hidden dialogue between writer and reader that makes the persuasive process possible.

Since the core concept in pragmatics is the view of language as a form of action on the reader/listener, the analysis of press articles was intended as an effective way to disclose the representation of the addressee — age, social roles, habits, personal interests and level of education — at the basis of the writer's communication strategies: a circular path of writing from his or her initial "claim" (Toulmin 2003, p. 85) to the reader's emotional and rational needs, back to the writer's strategies to give strength to his or her persuading action. The workshops guided the students to look at an argumentative article as the mirror of the writer's "strategic maneuvering" (Eemeren 2010, pp. 39-43) to produce an effect on the reader through "speech act" (Searle 1969, pp. 3-24) utterances and "macrospeech act" (van Dijk 1980, pp. 27, 177) argumentative sequences.

The module was structured around workshops and mini-lectures following an inductive learning process from hands-on activities on text analysis carried out in groups, to plenary sessions to share and improve the results and, finally, to mini-lectures to link them to a theoretical framework. Toulmin's description of the main pattern of argumentation (2003, p. 87) became a landmark in the identification of the main steps in the development of the writer's reasoning. Van Dijk's approach to pragmatics through the analysis of an article supplied the students with useful insights to move from the concept of "speech act" to that of "macrospeech act" (1980, pp. 27, 177), suitable to recognize the potential presence of "force" and "effect" (Searle 1969, p. 62; Yule 1996, pp. 48-49) in the steps of argumentation. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's research (1969) on argumentative text helped the students shift from the structure of the argumentation to the writer's action on the audience by means of language "techniques" (pp. 185, 201). Van Eemeren (2010) replaced the idea of "a one-way monologue" from the writer to the reader with an "interactional act complex" (p. 27) in the flow of communication between the

parties, which affects various aspects of argumentation, like the language and the development of reasoning.

The module has paved the way to possible developments of work on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Van Dijk (2000, pp. 45-53) states that all aspects of communication could be analysed to detect an ideological stand: "topics" (pp. 45-46), "level of description" (p. 46), "implications and presuppositions" (pp. 46-47), "modality" (pp. 51-52), "vagueness" (p. 52) and "figures of style" (p. 58), to mention a few. Another possible development within the field of argumentation could deal with other aspects of persuasive argumentation such as "fallacy" (Eemeren 2010, pp. 190-203), van Dijk's "breaches of argumentation rules and principles" (2000, p. 71): they take place when the arguers express an "irrelevant argument" (p. 58) or "play on people's emotions" (p. 58), or claim that an argument is valid "because everybody thinks so, or because some authority says so" (p. 71), or use overgeneralization and "false analogies" (p. 58). These are only examples of topics that could become a continuation of a pedagogic activity which is aimed, ultimately, at raising students' awareness on the use of arguments, helping them become critical citizens.

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