# ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE PRAGMATICS

**Mihaela MOCANU, Researcher PhD**
**Interdisciplinary Research Department – Socio-Humanities Field**
**„Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi, Romania**
**mocanu.mihaela@uaic.ro**

**ABSTRACT:** DEFINED AS THE MEETING SPACE OF POLITICAL DISCOURSES BELONGING TO THE THREE MAIN ACTORS WHO HAVE THE LEGITIMATE RIGHT TO EXPRESS THEIR PUBLIC OPINION ON POLITICS – POLITICIANS, JOURNALISTS AND THE PUBLIC OPINION (THROUGH POLLS), POLITICAL COMMUNICATION REFLECTS THE IMAGE OF THE BALANCE OF FORCES AND THE SYMBOLIC EXCHANGES ON THE POLITICAL STAGE. THE PRAGMATIC APPROACH OF THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE, SEEN AS A SPECIFIC MEANS OF POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION, PROVES ITS EFFICIENCY THROUGH THE CONTINUOUS EFFORT OF EXPLAINING DISCURSIVE MECHANISMS, WHICH GIVE MEANING AND MOTIVATION TO POLITICAL ACTIONS. INTERESTED IN THE WAY IN WHICH THE DISCOURSE AUTHORS ADAPT THEIR DISCOURSE TO THE COMMUNICATION SITUATION AND THE INTERLOCUTORS' PROFILE, PRAGMATICS COMPLEMENTS THE SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE, STRESSING OUT THE SIGNIFICANCE CO-PRODUCTION PHENOMENON.

**KEYWORDS:** POLITICAL DISCOURSE, SEMIOTICS, PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS.

## 1. The pragmatic approach

Incriminating structuralism for the the fact that it evades the situation of the speaking subject and it separates language from the utterance context, pragmatics proposes a reflexive return towards the relationships between verbal signs and their users, within the communication process. The pragmatic approach brings to the attention of language researchers various aspects such as: the active character of the languages, its fundamental reflexivity (language refers to the world, displaying its own enunciative activity); the interactive nature of the language (*to say something* signifies, first and foremost, *to say something for somebody else*); the role of the context in the interpretation of statements, the normative dimension of the discursive manifestation (each discursive act is governed by rules ensuring its efficiency).

While semantics studies the correlations between forms and meanings, as part of the language system, pragmatics focuses on the processes generating meanings in context. Starting from the premise that political discourse is not limited to communicating information, but "it creates for the listener a controlled cognitive environment, in which every interpretation is manipulated" [1], pragmatics aims at describing discursive mechanisms, from the perspective of their relationship with the participants in the act of communication. Besides describing political

realities the political issuer aims at acting upon his receiver, in order to determine him/her to think and act in a certain direction. Centred around the study of significance in context, pragmatics aims at analysing what the language says, as well as what is understated, together with the means of manipulation used in the discursive manifestations as well as the effects generated by them. Since the political discourse mediates the speaker's perspective upon the world, being governed by an immanent intentionality, the pragmatic approach focuses on the way in which the political speaker uses the language and his/her capacity to signify more than it is said and thus influence the receiver's political attitude.

Our study is based on the postulate according to which political discourse is not a mere ornament of political behaviour, a gratuitous discourse coverage for political acts, but it represents an integral part of the political dimension, due to the symbolic values it triggers and the capacity to translate political messages transmitted through other significant channels (*music, dressing style, signs, institutions*, etc.). Discursive manifestations are essential for politics as far as political representations, by means of which individuals and groups are both recognized and differentiated, are mainly built with the help of verbal signs. On the other hand, numerous political acts are essentially acts of discourse, that is to say acts fulfilled by means of discourse and which can only be performed in this manner. Examples in this respect are provided by the resignation of a politician or the opening of parliament sessions, both cases illustrating the *performance acts* condition [2].

Giving great importance to the public opinion, contemporary media exercises an ever increasing pressure upon political actors who have to ensure permanent discursive coverage for the acts they perform. In this context, the relationships between the speakers and the receivers suffer significant mutations: the passive role of the receiver is annihilated, the discursive practice is significantly marked and it forces the speaker to adapt his/her means of expression to the expectancies of the receiving public. The dynamics of the relationships between the subjects of political communication is permanently modified, under the impact of the new political realities of the epoch and the ever greater importance of the media.

Within political communication, the political stake is much more than a parameter of semiosis, representing the active principle of communicative interaction games. While for Grice communicative interaction is based upon the cooperation principle expressed through the four conversational maxims, aimed at ensuring a code of good communication behaviour [3], for Alain Trognon and Janine Larrue, the communication act supposes a double mechanism: of cooperation and competition [4]. The principle of competition is based on mutually accepting and recognizing of the stake triggering the communication act, on the intention to impose one's own perspective, one's own sense, respectively. The intentionality factor seems to be decisive in building discursive manifestations in the political sphere. In political communication no word is gratuitous, no phrase is formulated just for the sake of it, everything is actually the result of deliberate behaviour. From this perspective each Communications contract is developed based on a principle of influence, activated by a stake and supported by cooperation and competitiveness mechanisms. A pragmatic approach of political language reveals, from this specific viewpoint, three fundamental aspects:

    a) The issuer of a political discourse is seen from a triple perspective: s/he speaks on behalf of a group, expressing a discourse in which the group can recognize itself; s/he addresses an audience s/he wants to get on his/her side by making the audience adhere

to the ideas s/he expresses; s/he is the bearer of expression legitimacy: s/he has the quality and the status to express a political discourse and this aspect is recognized and accepted by the audience.

b) The receivers, in turn, are bearers of representations and active knowledge. From this perspective it is mandatory for the speaker to be well aware of the representations universe and the audience's attitude towards the subjects under debate and to adapt their discourse according to the expectations of the audience. Moreover, the speaker must know and analyse the adversaries' discourses, and should be able to evaluate their impact upon the audience.

c) The media forces politicians to have discursive coverage, ensuring a higher visibility for political acts and events. At the same time, it remains faithful to editing policies and other economic matters.

d) Communications is a contract as long it carries a stake, it is governed by the principle of influence and it obeys certain rules of the game. Each communication situation is based on a specific communication contract, to which interlocutors must comply.

## 2. The speech acts theory

According to John Langshaw Austin [5], the way in which users use signs can be pragmatically described on three levels: using the linguistic sign, or, more exactly, uttering a phrase in a certain given context, the communicator (the politician or the journalist discussing a political subject) says something (that has a certain meaning) – the locutionary dimension; s/he does something by saying what s/he says – the illocutionary dimension; and s/he determines, by doing what s/he does, a certain behaviour of his/her interlocutor – the perlocutionary dimension. In the case of political communication the perlocutionary dimension is most important, since every discursive manifestation aims at inoculating certain ideas and triggering special attitude from the interlocutors.

Starting from the premise that language is, above all, action, as far as the speaker wants, with every utterance, to bring a change to the world and/or the interlocutor's consciousness, Austin casts away the illusion of descriptiveness, characteristic to classical philosophy according to which, starting from Descartes, language is first and foremost a representation of thinking. J. L. Austin contests the importance of the affirmative phrase, as conceived by the representationist conception and starts from the premises that natural languages are organized around a functional distinction between two types of statements: declaratory statements (ascertainments), which describe a state of things, and performative utterances, which allow the fulfilment of a certain type of action. Thus, a statement such as *The Liberal Party promotes the market economy values* can be included in the first category of statements, while a statement such as *I promise you that I will increase social support* illustrates the performative utterances category. The statements belonging to the first category can be judged as true or false, while statements belonging to the second category can be neither true nor false, but can be felicitous or infelicitous, as Austin puts it [6].

The philosopher stresses the fact that speech acts involve obeying certain conditions: *linguistic* (certain statements must be used in the disadvantage of others), *sociological* (political speakers should be invested with authority or with a status that is compatible with the place, time, and communication situation), *psychological* (the state of mind of the speakers should

comply with the type of promise they make). The violation of any of these conditions will challenge the success of the speech act, since the performative quality of political language is not an inner lexical property, but a potential dimension, in close connection with the conditions in which the discourse is uttered. Language practice proves that it deals with various degrees of performance, since the same act of speech can be performed in several ways.

Austin's disciple, J.R. Searle proposes a reformulation of the speech acts theory [7]. Identifying the speech act with a dual entity having a propositional content, a propositional force which might be explained by a illocutionary force marker, Searle classifies the main illocutionary forces in five categories:

a) *assertive* (to assert, to state, etc.): they are characterized by the correspondence of the statement with a state of the world; within political language, assertive statements are modelled by the political speaker's ideology;

b) *directive* (to order, to advise, etc.): aim at changing the interlocutor's behaviour;

c) *commissive* (to promise, to swear): follow the correspondence of the world to the words. Electoral campaigns represent a fertile field for the proliferation of this type of statements;

d) *expressive* (to thank, to congratulate, etc.);

e) *declarative* (to open a meeting, to declare, etc.): institute a state of things, describing it at the same time.

John R. Searle distinguishes the linguistic constraints that govern the performance of a statement from the paralinguistic constraints the speakers generally obey. According to the philosopher, the adequacy of a statement depends on how the subjects submit to a series of institutional rules which confer the communication intention a collective (or public) value. The violation of these rules generates the failure of the communication act and in the case of political language it leads to the loss of legitimacy of both the speaker and his/her political acts.

One of the fundamental traits of the discursive manifestations in the field of politics is the polyphonic character, the political language representing the palimpsest of the previous statements of the same speaker, as well the statements of the adversaries. One of the prototypical forms of manifestation of the political language, the debate, emphasises its inter-discourse nature: political language restates, interprets, analyses, and even innovates the contents of other statements, previously uttered on the political stage. In the political press it reshapes and interprets politicians' and other journalists' discourses, being constituted in meta-language, whose object is other people's discourses. Having a favourite position within political communication and representing a space of mediation between the political stage and the electorate, media favours the circulation and contamination of the discursive manifestations in the political field, with a major impact upon the audience. With the development and dissemination of modern media technology, the weight is progressively transferred from the political area towards the media area. These days, more than ever, media conditions political success and electoral campaigns sustained by newspapers and televisions fully argue in favour of this aspect. The media is becoming a distinct political act in itself: "this new confrontation arena, without being completely substituted to the classical forms of political activity (…) adds to it, being often regarded as a mandatory frontier" [8].

### 3. Context and contextualization in political discourse analysis

The notion of *context* is at the same time mandatory and problematic, since the multiple meanings of the concept, referring to the statute of the participants in the communication act, immediate spatial and temporal aspects as well as global, more extended aspects, generate its utility in extremely various fields, without prior delimitations of the significant. Frequently defined as the science of the context, pragmatics distinguishes between different types of context, or, in other words, between different levels of context structuring:

a) *circumstantial context* – corresponds to the immediate physical environment of the speaker (place, time, the nature of communication); also termed factual, existential or referential context, it includes the interlocutors' identity, physical circumstances – place and time of discourse, everything that could be included in the study of indexicality, which constitutes the object of pragmatics.

b) *situational or paradigmatic context* – coincides with the cultural environment in which communication takes place and defines its validity criteria (in this respect, a statement that is considered adequate in a certain culture can be infelicitous in another);

c) *interactional context* – characterizes the forms of discourse and the sign systems accompanying them (dialogues, facial expressions, gestures, etc.), being composed by the acts of language regarded in an inter-discursive sequence, governed by specific rules;

d) *epistemic context* – covers all beliefs and values shared by the participants in the act of communication. The presuppositional context includes all the presuppositions of the interlocutors, their expectations and intentions, which shape the emission and reception of verbal messages.

Starting from the above taxonomy we can simplify the whole matter by speaking about a restrained context that includes the immediate data of the communication situation and an extended context that includes presuppositions, beliefs, values, attitudes, etc. Regarded from the contextual data perspective, political discourse acquires a particular profile, while its analysis imposes a series of cognitive operations which consists in the interrogation of:

- The immediate context of the enunciation, allowing the extraction of pertinent information that lead to adequate interpretations;
- A broader context (which includes previous statements) as long as the immediate context is not sufficient;
- An even broader context, including general knowledge and the environment.

Political discourse contextualization and its analysis with regard to the situational parameters of political communication prevent the analysis from being subject to excessive interpretations or distortions of the significant. Each discursive manifestation needs to be investigated from the perspective of the cultural, historical and social horizons generating it. The passage from the political speaker's communicative intention to his/her informative intention is achieved by means of an interpretative process, based on inferential mechanisms of hypothesis construction and confirmation, which start from contextual data in order to reach conclusions. In the vision of Sperber and Wilson, a statement is first of all interpreted by a peripheral linguistic system (covering the fields of phonology, syntax and semantics) which provide the meaning of the phrase, *its logical shape*, its central system [9]. The logical shape of the statement represent a

structured series of concepts accompanied in the interlocutor's *long term memory* by various information, grouped under various entries: *the logical entry* – includes information related to the logical relationships between concepts; *the encyclopaedic entry* – includes all information related to the objects corresponding to the significant, allowing for the determination of its extension; *the lexical entry* – subsumes all correspondents of the concept in the natural language. Starting from the concepts circumscribing the logical shape, information referring to the context is partially delimited. Along these elements, the context also comprises: information extracted from the interpretation of previous statements and perceptual information that constitute the object of *medium term memory*, which preserves for a limited period of time information that has already represented the object of recent interpretations. The theory of pertinence postulates a third type of memory, namely *the short term memory* or *the working memory* which serves at grouping the information necessary for the interpretation of the existing data. According to Anne Reboul and Jacques Moeschler, „context corresponds mainly to the information within the short-term memory at a given moment" [10]. The selection of operable information is based on the principle of pertinence according to which any statements has within itself the guarantee of its own optimal pertinence, while the efforts to interpret a statement depend mainly on the accessibility of the information included in the context.

### 4. Conversational implicatures – a space of oblique expression

Between the years 1957 and 1969, P. Grice establishes the directions of a new complementary semantic and pragmatic theory, based on the hypothesis of the intentional character of communication [11]. Starting from the premise that to signify something for somebody supposes the instauration of an intentional relationship, Grice divides the field of the unnatural signification, conceived as a particularity of the verbal or non-verbal language behaviours, in two categories: the field of significance induced by a direct index (for instance, a small percentage in elections is the equivalent of a failure); the field of significance induced with the help of an explicit index which allows another person to infer the intention we wish to communicate (thus, a small percentage obtained en elections leads to the observation *politician without perspectives*).

Grice's reflexions regarding the conditions for a successful communication act as well as the conditions for its possibility aim at defining an ethics of communication, subjacent to the dynamics of verbal exchanges. One of Grice's conclusions is that, besides the sum of statements that allow for the construction of signification according to linguistic conventions we should also consider a signification plan obtained by means of semantic mechanisms related to the context. In both situations the receiver develops a semantic analysis based on a sort of interference: in the first case he performs conventional implications, while in the second case he performs conversational implications. For Grice, communication is only possible on condition that the protagonists adhere to the principle of cooperation, which consists in mastering and applying four essential rules [12]:

    a) *The maxim of quantity* – regulates the volume of information provided by each participant to the verbal exchange and establishes the following: each protagonist's contribution must include as much information as it is necessary; each contribution should not include more information than it is necessary. In the case of political language we frequently witness the violation of this maxim, both due to the lack of

informative contents and the proliferation of linguistic clichés, in close connection with the ideology shared by the issuer.

*b)* *The maxim of quality* – recommends that the speakers say only what they believe to be true and do not say that for which they lack adequate evidence. The politician is less interested in the adequacy to reality, his/her discourse serving for the reconstruction of reality and the denigration of the political adversaries.

*c)* *The maxim of relevance* – according to which each intervention of a verbal exchange should be correlated with the others and should be connected with the subject of the discussion. In the case of political communication the issuers are often tempted to drift away from the subject, especially when it is not in their advantage.

*d)* *The maxim of manner* – refers to the manner in which the interlocutors build their verbal interventions, their degree of clarity, the logical structure of the phrases, the avoidance of ambiguity and obscurity of expression, which might affect reception.

Political language analysis emphasizes obvious violations of the conversational maxims, motivated, on the one hand, by the ideological appurtenance of the speaker and on the other hand by the political communication finalities. The maxims of quantity and quality are constantly eluded since the discursive manifestations in the political field do not necessarily aim at presenting the truth or transmitting information regarding the political reality.

Corresponding in the current language to suggestion or insinuation, the implicatures described by H. P. Grice can be conversational or discursive and conventional or lexical [13]. Conversational or discursive implicatures function in context and directly depend on the referential, factual context having a determined informational finality, while conventional or lexical implicatures are supported by the lexis and the meanings conventionally attached to words (they differ from semantic presuppositions in that they do not contribute to the truthfulness condition of statements).

More than in the case of other types of language, in the construction of political language significance, an important part is played by *conversational implicatures*, or, in other words, by the unuttered sentences in between the lines. Starting from the relationship between the expression of a linguistic structure, its sense and the sense provided by the speaker or its implications, Grice underlines the fact that the significance of a linguistic structure is made of *what it is said* (the explicit) as well as of *what it is implied* (the implicit). According to the philosopher, that which transmits an assertion within the context can be delimited in two types of content: that which is said, representing the logical context, the minimum necessary for specifying the true conditions of the statement, and that which is left, representing what it is implicitly transmitted, i.e. implicatures. Grice defines the class of implicatures with a negation as being "what is transmitted minus what it is said" [14] and distinguishes between two main types of implicatures: *conventional implicatures,* determined by certain lexical items or by the occurrence of certain linguistic constructions; *conversational implicatures* originating in the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner that speakers should obey. „The conventional implicatures of an assertion are arbitrarily stipulated, while the conversational implicatures can be 're-established' through a process of thought" [15].

In close connection with Grice's theory, Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni distinguishes between two types of contents – explicit and implicit, the latter including *presuppositions* and *understatement.* Besides conversational implicatures, understatements also cover: allusions,

insinuations, tropes, connotations, acts of indirect language and others. The allusion defines "statements that implicitly refer to one or more particular facts known by certain protagonists of the verbal exchange and only by them or especially by them, which motivates a certain complicity between them (pacifist or aggressive)" [16].

Insinuations are meant to disqualify the interlocutor or a third person, since the speaker seldom insinuates with regard to him/herself. Characteristic to the connotative language, understatement makes use of various tropes, among which the metonymy, the synecdoche, the metaphor, the litotes, irony and hyperbole. The discursive acts do not generally allow for strict delimitations between the denotative and the connotative, since they are "rather suggested than asserted" [17]. Intensely exploiting implicit contents, the political discourse constantly appeals to indirect communication forms in order to avoid taboo subjects and also in order to protect the speaker's image.

### 5. Dramatization – an essential dimension of the political discourse

A genuine mise-en-scène, political communication involves actors and specific props, a pre-established directing, aiming at maximum efficiency for the final objectives. Extending the concept of dramatization to the entire social life sphere, Erving Goffman appreciates that the partners of a verbal interaction are caught in a sort of daily theatre, their daily life being nothing than a permanent mise-en-scène, in an equilibrium determined by relationships between unstable forces [18]. From this perspective, each individual is constantly preoccupied in defining his identity in order to be recognized as a legitimate member of the society, while the norms determining behaviours are continuously updated, resulting thus in a continuous interactive reconstruction of the social order: "When the individual introduces himself in front of the others, his performance tends to incorporate and exemplify the official accredited values of the society more than his behaviour as a whole does" [19], asserts Erving Goffman.

The theatrical metaphor is relevant for the specificity of political communication which, by appealing to the theatrical show props (actors, characters, masks, stage, backstage, scenery, audience) reflects the construction of political legitimacy, the manner in which political actors relate to the political referential, the political group they belong to and the audience they address. The management of impressions, the politician's acting expressiveness, the directing mechanisms, the commitment to certain discursive roles are elements that justify the vicinity of political communication with the theatrical show. The political show is an interactive one, because the politician-actor aims at promoting particular images of the self and, in this respect, s/he manages the discursive manifestations in accordance with the effects expected at the reception. The political issuer tends to hide or minimize the activities, facts or motives that are incompatible with the self image that s/he promotes. From this perspective, the role of the political discourse is to mystify any pejorative aspects and to emphasize the elements that favour the legitimacy in the political sphere.

### 6. Argumentation and argumentative connectors

Aiming at "directing or detouring the receiver towards a certain conclusion" [20], argumentation is an inner component of the political discourse. According to its pragmatic character, political discourse is defined as a complex of rhetorical strategies aimed at influencing the attitude of the target audience. According to Oswald Ducrot, the argumentative value of a

statement "does not represent a consequence of the information transmitted through it, as the sentence can contain various expressions or morphemes which, besides their informative content, help in rendering an argumentative orientation to the utterance, sending the receiver in one direction or the other" [21].

Defined as "logics in action, logics used in situations I which an individual relates to other people in order to convince them" [22], argumentation aims at "a vast organisation targeted at persuading the interlocutor regarding its true or false nature" [23]. The role of argumentation is to offer reasons supporting a thesis; the argumentative approach is based on the speaker's adopting an attitude, an argumentative role: agreement, confirmation, adhesion; justification, evidence; concession; rectification; objection; disagreement, contradiction, criticism, accusation, reproach; thesis, conclusion [24].

As far as the relation between information and argumentation is concerned, Sorin Stati asserts that information is subordinated to argumentation and the claim to describe reality actually conceals the claim of superiority towards the other's opinions [25]. In the case of political language, besides the truthfulness of the utterances, the speaker is interested in changing the interlocutor's behaviour. Aiming at inducing certain ideas, attitudes and particular values to the target audience, the political discourse is, by its very nature, a discourse with a certain finality, aiming at "modifying the interlocutor's epistemic universe" [26]. From this perspective, political discourse analysis operates with concepts such as: *argumentative strategy, argumentative efficiency, force of arguments* and the like, suggesting its accentuated pragmatic component.

Depending on the level at which it is articulated, one might distinguish between: *global discursive-argumentative strategies* (such as explanation, description or narration) and *punctual discursive-argumentative strategies* (such as rhetorical questions, negation and argumentative metaphor).

a) *Rhetorical question* – the argumentative values immanent to the question are intensely exploited within the political discourse, the issuer considering, in these situations, that the answer is an understatement.

b) *Polemic negation* – represents an argumentative strategy based on contradicting another statement and has a dialogic, replicative and polyphonic character.

c) *Argumentative metaphor* – represents a type of argumentative strategy that no longer has an ornamental role, but becomes significant and cognitive. The metaphor is defined by a transfer of sense and a transaction between heterogeneous contexts.

d) *Amplification* – is another rhetoric procedure consisting in ellaborate assertion. Amplification includes procedures such as: repetition, anaphor, epiphora and accumulation.

e) *Repetition* – of a sound, of a word, of a structure, marks the insistence upon a certain idea and confers remarkable euphonic values.

f) *Anaphor* – consists in the use of a pronoun which has the same referent as a previous term. From a rhetoric perspective, the anaphor defines the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences. The anaphoric relationship is based on the principle of semantic equivalence.

g) *Epiphora* – rhetoric procedure consisting in the repetition of the same word or phrase at the end of successive sentences.

h) *Accumulation* – rhetoric procedure connecting structures that display partial semantic and syntactic resemblances.

The argumentative connector represents "a morpheme (*conjunction, adverb, adverbial phrase*) that articulates two statements belonging to a unique argumentative strategy" [27]. Connectors are classified according to several criteria:

1. According to the discursive insertion, connectors are of two types: argument introduction connectors (*otherwise, even, but*) and conclusion introduction connectors (*so, however*).
2. According to orientation: co-oriented connectors (*otherwise, even*) and anti-oriented connectors (*but, however*).
3. According to the functions they indicate: connectors introducing the macro-argument (*to say it more clearly, the reasoning goes as follows, we are going to demonstrate why*); connectors that introduce an argument or a given fact (justifying: *because, due to the fact that, actually, in fact, given the fact that, because of the fact that*); conclusive: *so, thus*; generalizing; modal; guarantor; of relativity; of reassurance; alternative (*I don't think that, it doesn't seem to me that, I'm not convinced by the argument that*) [28].

The argumentative connectors signal, at the surface structure level, the argumentative roles assumed by the speakers: agreement, confirmation, adhesion (*well put, you are right, exactly, very well, naturally, true, normally, perfect*, etc.); rectification – or reformulation: *that is to say, such as*; rejection: *on the contrary*.

## 7. Discursive competences and euphemism

A key element in the pragmatic analysis of the language is represented by the discursive competences of the interlocutors. As far as the general communication competence is concerned, it includes three dimensions: the referential dimension (of the approached field), the situational dimension (of the discursive norms and typology), and a textual dimension (micro and macrotextual). The communication competence is the result of the interaction between the linguistic, socio-cultural, encyclopaedic and generic competences [29]. Linguistic competence refers to the capacity of the speakers of one language to build, recognize and accurately comprehend the phrases of that language, being equally able to interpret ambiguous statements and produce genuine new linguistic construction. The socio-cultural competence refers to the interlocutors' force and status balance playing an important part in the communicative interaction. Following the three axes – symmetry/asymmetry, distance/proximity, convergence/divergence, the relationships between the participants in the political communication act have very distinct configurations.

Defined as a lexical procedure which consists in attenuating the expression of an idea by means of substitution or periphrase, euphemisms are based on various reasons: avoiding trivial expressions; omitting insulting expressions which could be interpreted as such by the receivers; dealing with religious taboos, often with an onomastic value. As a discursive procedure, the euphemism is based on a verbal interdiction aimed at protecting the audience's sensitivity. The politicians' appetence for euphemisms can be explained, on the one hand, by the tendency to embellish political acts and calm the public opinion and, on the other hand, by the desire to neutralize pejorative meanings and to avoid connotatively charged expressions.

The massive use of euphemisms within the political discourse represents one of its most criticized traits due to the distortion of the relationship with the truth. The conscious replacement

of certain linguistic expression carrying negative connotations with others which are neutral or positive aims, on the one hand, at avoiding certain negative effects upon the receiving audience and on the other hand at protecting the self image promoted by the speaker. If in the common language the use of euphemisms is appreciated and even encouraged, the political euphemism is currently interpreted as a form of hypocrisy, as a mystification of the political referential whenever the latter could affect the legitimacy of the speaker's political position. From the perspective of the finalities targeted by discursive manifestations, the speaker is forced to rigorously select all linguistic expressions, so that they do not attract any negative attitudes of the receiving audience. The histrionic character of the euphemism in the political discourse is also emphasized by Rodica Zafiu who asserts that "in most cases euphemisms are not false, they are rather incomplete in their explicit information, while the implicit information is usually recognized by the receiver without much difficulty" [30].

**Conclusions**

The specificity of political communication is generated by the interlocutors' status, since they are placed on asymmetrical positions: on the one hand, politicians and the government, who appeal to language in order to legitimize the power they have, and on the other hand the citizens, the electorate, who must be convinced, seduced, determined to think and act in a certain direction. In this respect, political communication is often reduced to electoral communication and political marketing, being defined through particular persuasion strategies, depending on the political issuer's finalities. The literature of the past decades has extended the significance sphere of political communication, including aspects such as: the relationship between mediatisation, politics and globalisation; the relationships between media and new media, respectively and the democratic system; the impact of political journalism upon the public opinion; the mystifying potential of the media, etc. A space of interdisciplinarity, political communication analysis cannot be limited to distinguishing the communication techniques and strategies, to the so-called political marketing which turns politicians and political doctrines into merchandise. They must be corroborated with the description of the coordinates involved in the political communication situation and the effects generated by the relationships between them at the level of the message.

Inherent to the political action, communication is characterized by a permanent reconfiguration at the level of contents, strategies, effects, from the perspective of the mutations registered by the generating contexts and the semiotic stakes in the social plan.

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