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Sifting argumentation theories for the interpreting scholar's sake

EMANUELE BRAMBILLA
Università di Trieste
emanuele.brambilla@phd.units.it

ABSTRACT

The present paper is mainly addressed to interpreting scholars who wish to focus their studies on the argumentative specificities of source texts (STs). Even though the argumentation analysis of STs for interpreting purposes is a barely charted sea, the practice is likely to become increasingly popular, in the light of its hermeneutical and contrastive functions providing invaluable insights into ST pragmatics (Marzocchi, 1998: 8), with significant implications for interpreter training (Marzocchi, 1994: 64; Marzocchi, 1998: 5). The application of argumentation concepts and methods to interpreting research, however, raises serious relevance issues. In this respect, the present paper proposes a sifting of the main argumentation theories so as to prevent researchers concentrating on irrelevant and potentially dispersive methodologies. It is therefore conceived as a theoretical overview, a preliminary non-exhaustive map of the most influential argumentation theories spreading across Europe and the world, aiming at guiding the interpreting scholar into the intricate but fascinating “wood” of argumentation studies.

KEYWORDS

argumentation theories, descriptivity, interpreting research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the publications of *Le Traité de l'argumentation. La nouvelle rhétorique* by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) and *The Uses of Argument* by Toulmin (1958), there has been a remarkable spate of interest in argumentation, initially building on classical rhetoric and subsequently venturing into autonomous paths. In fifty years, argumentation theory has grown to such an extent that it has now become an “international phenomenon” (van Eemeren et al., 1996: ix), a well-established and thriving area of study offering invaluable theoretical and methodological insights to neighbouring disciplines like philosophy, logic, linguistics, discourse analysis, rhetoric, speech communication, education, psychology, sociology, political science and law (van Eemeren et al., 1996: ix). Despite the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character of argumentation theory, however, its strides have been almost completely overlooked by interpreting studies. This is partly due to the fact that interpreting research was a fairly young and largely unexplored discipline, but now that it has finally come of age (Garzone & Viezzi, 2002: 2), the time seems ripe for assessing the scope for a prospective “merger”.

The idea of integrating interpreting research with argumentation theory is not arbitrary, but is rooted in objective motivations that have been thoroughly expounded by Marzocchi in his seminal studies (1994, 1997, 1998) calling for a systematic mainstreaming of argumentation theory into *Interpretation Research and Theory* (IRT). His groundwork can be summarised as follows.

– First, going beyond the definitional controversy revolving around the term *argumentation*¹ and only focusing on interpreting implications, argumentation is “a mode of discourse that is so often the input of an interpreting process” (Marzocchi, 1997: 182). In other words, interpreters are often called upon to interpret “argumentative situations” (Plantin, 2005: 53), i.e. communicative events whose purpose is the discursive “solution” of a conflict between different standpoints regarding one specific question. In this respect, the study of argumentation in IRT merely appears as a theoretical framework for analysing a specific mode of discourse that is frequently adopted by source language (SL) speakers (Marzocchi, 1997: 182).

– Second, when the predominant focus of a communicative situation is on the discursive attempt to resolve a difference of opinion, the quality of the interpreter’s performance is assessed on the basis of his/her ability to convey the argumentative purpose of the ST, “possibly to the detriment of other kinds of

1 Argumentation is an ambiguous notion (Marzocchi, 1997: 179). The definitions of the term *argumentation* are as numerous and diverse as the perspectives adopted by argumentation scholars. As space constraints and the need for clarity prevent the definitional tangle from being appropriately unravelled, probably the easiest and most effective way of understanding argumentation is in opposition to demonstration (Reboul, 1991: 100): unlike the latter, the former addresses an audience, is expressed through natural language, its premises are plausible, its progression depends on the speaker, its conclusions are always contestable.

equivalence or of received ideas concerning fidelity” (Marzocchi, 1997: 183). Which implies that interpreters’ quest for equivalence of the communicative effect (Viezzi, 1999: 147; Palazzi, 2007: 263) compels them to the recognition and reproduction of the argumentative techniques adopted by SL speakers (Marzocchi, 1994: 65). This is why research on ST argumentation is highly promising: considering interpreters’ chronic difficulty in “*seeing* the context” (Garzone, 2000: 71) and reproducing the intentionality and intensity of STs (Palazzi, 2007: 263), the systematic study of ST argumentation is likely to yield findings raising text expectations in the interpreters’ minds during the training and/or preparation phases, thereby easing the inferential and translation processes during the interpretation. In this respect, argumentation analysis is a chiefly training-oriented research practice (Marzocchi, 1994: 64; Marzocchi, 1998: 5), focusing primarily on text analysis in the attempt to promote content anticipation and enhance the *argumentative competence* of interpreter trainees (Marzocchi, 1998: 43). Argumentative competence in interpreting can be defined as the ability to grasp SL speakers’ arguments and produce a logical and “argumentatively faithful” interpreted text; it can be considered part of the broader pragma-linguistic competence (Palazzi, 2007: 257) or “textual and discursive competence” (Garzone, 2000: 73) that is a prerequisite of the interpreting profession, a skill interpreter trainees need to develop from the inception of their learning process.

– Third, irrespective of the research focus, the potential of the argumentative approach to interpreting lies in the identification of patterns (Marzocchi, 1997: 181), providing information on recurrent lexico-syntagmatic choices determining the pragmatic force and argumentative orientation of a given discourse. Therefore, the study of political argumentation is particularly suitable, in the light of its predictable (Zarefsky, 2009: 115) and recurrent character (Reisigl, 2010: 243).²

– Fourth, the application of argumentation theory to interpreting research raises serious relevance issues (Marzocchi, 1998: 3). Basically, in argumentation studies there are two approaches, the normative or formal and the descriptive or content-related. While the former aims at defining rules for effective argumentation and investigates the most effective ways to argue in a rational, sound way, the latter investigates “how discourse is used” and mainly relates to discourse analysis practices (Marzocchi, 1997: 181). Given that interpreters are not required to argue in a specific way, as their task is to reproduce the argumentation of others, interpreting research can only benefit from studies looking for descriptivity rather than normativity (Crevatin, 1998: xv-xvi). More specifically, interest in argumentation in interpreting research is directed towards the findings of applied studies (Crevatin, 1998: ix), focusing on the discursive practices of “professional” arguers in the attempt to draw meaningful data for interpreter training. In other

2 Incidentally, Marzocchi’s pilot argumentation analysis for interpreting purposes is the analysis of the *Troonrede*, the “Speech from the Throne” delivered by the Queen of the Netherlands in 1990.

words, the rejection of the formal approach is the prerequisite of ST argumentation analysis in IRT (Marzocchi, 1994: 70; Marzocchi, 1998: 43).

The theoretical underpinnings laid down by Marzocchi have served as a rationale for an ongoing PhD project venturing into the analysis of political argumentation regarding the current economic crisis in a corpus of American, British and French STs.³ The project taps into the hermeneutical and contrastive functions of argumentation analysis (Marzocchi, 1998: 8) to study and compare STs, while simultaneously assessing the prospective benefits of enhanced language-specific, argumentation-driven interpreter preparation.

As all argumentation analysis, since its inception the project has been faced with the wide variety of research possibilities offered by the study of argumentation (Marzocchi, 1998: 4; van Eemeren, 2001). In line with Marzocchi's analysis of the *Troonrede* (Marzocchi, 1998: 73), the study focuses on the detection and description of *argument schemes*⁴ for specific reasons: such a study does not concern the formal structure of arguments, but their general content (Gerritsen, 2001: 72); it provides textual and contextual information (van Eemeren, 2001: 20), thereby catering for the descriptive and content-related need of interpreting research. Moreover, the study of argument schemes is particularly promising in a multilingual perspective, because it is a contrastive analysis, in that "the choice of argument schemes is context-specific and culturally bound" (Marzocchi, 1997: 182).

The present paper is deeply rooted in the project, as it is meant to provide a theoretical overview of the major argumentation theories. Its aim is to dispel the inevitable methodological "confusion" (Crevatin, 1998: xv) engendered by the study of argumentation, performing the careful theoretical selection that is a prerequisite of argumentation analysis in interpreting studies. It is therefore conceived as a theoretical map, guiding the interpreting scholar into the intricate "wood" of argumentation studies.

- 3 The reference corpus, named ARGO, is composed of three hundred and thirteen speeches delivered by Barack Obama, David Cameron, Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande.
- 4 The term, "probably first used by Perelman" (Garssen, 2001: 81) refers to forms of argument or structures of inference that capture stereotypical patterns of human reasoning (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008: 1). Argument schemes are "the most useful and widely used tool so far developed in argumentation theory" (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008: 1). Unlike *argumentation structures*, which are determined by the way in which arguments are arranged within the text, *argument schemes* concern the nature of the relations between the arguments and the standpoints to be defended or confuted (Marzocchi, 1998: 39). Formally defined as abstract frameworks that express the way in which the transfer of acceptability from the premise to the standpoint takes place (Hitchcock & Wagemans, 2011: 185), argument schemes correspond to logical reasoning patterns and, in modern approaches to argumentation, broadly correspond to the classical concept of *topos* (Garssen, 2001: 82). Though not always expressed explicitly, they can always be made explicit as conditional or causal paraphrases such as "if x, then y" or "y, because x" (Reisigl, 2012: 3), thereby enabling a discursive and non-formalised descriptive account of the argumentative features of the speech analysed (Marzocchi, 1998: 73).

2. THE REALM OF ARGUMENTATION THEORIES

In the present section, the main argumentation theories are briefly presented and sifted, meaning that their relevance to interpreting is assessed based on the yardstick of descriptivity. The following theoretical overview has nevertheless no claims to be exhaustive, especially considering that new argumentation theories and revisions of old ones are continually mushrooming in university departments, and are often confined within language barriers. However, all the major trends are taken into account. Since Marzocchi already proposed a literature review (1998), the following sections will only summarise his main findings; priority will be given to recent theories, with the aim of supplementing his remarks.

2.1. THE NEW RHETORIC

Whether adopting a chronological categorisation or starting from the most influential framework, any review of argumentation theories cannot help but begin with *La nouvelle Rhétorique*, because the study of arguments in the modern age was launched by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's seminal work. The New Rhetoric marks a decisive shift from classical theories in that "topoi⁵ are not seen as general formal or universal principles [...] but as dependent on culture and society" (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008: 300). The treatise comprises a typology of argumentation schemes that can be used to make standpoints more acceptable (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 105), together with some real-life examples. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's theory is generally not considered normative, but it contains a normative dimension in that it "provides a survey of possible techniques of argumentation" (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 106). It is more concerned with "les schèmes de pensée qui sous-tendent l'argumentation" (Amossy, 2000: 8) rather than with linguistic analyses of argumentative discourse.

Debate over the descriptive or normative nature of the New Rhetoric seems pointless, however, as "rather than a normative argumentation theory, the new rhetoric is a descriptive catalog of types of argumentation that can be successful in practice" (Lunsford, Wilson & Eberly, 2009: 114). In this sense, it can be considered a first attempt at describing argumentation techniques, having no claims to be either descriptive or normative and, consequently, lacking a fully-fledged methodology for discourse analysis.

5 The ambiguous terminology of argumentation studies (Crevatin, 1998: xv) is partly determined by the alternation of the terms *argument scheme* and *topos*. As some theories do not actually clarify the difference, the definition provided by Reisingl & Wodak (2009: 110), building on Kienpointner (1992: 194), will be taken into account here: "topoi can be described as parts of argumentation which belong to the required premises. They [...] connect the argument(s) with the conclusion, the claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument(s) to the conclusion".

2.2. TOULMIN

Despite having rapidly become one of the most influential books among argumentation scholars, Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* does not actually put forward a theory of argumentation, as it is rather a work on logic (Marzocchi, 1998: 33) and a philosophical treatise. The success of *The Uses of Argument* in the field of argumentation is in fact ascribable to Toulmin's "model of argument", a schematic model for the analysis of argumentation, that has subsequently been adopted and adapted by a variety of scholars for conducting their targeted argumentation inquiries.

However insightful, the model is fairly technical and formal, requiring systematic schematisation of the propositional content, with evident problems regarding the presentation of results for interpreting purposes (Marzocchi, 1998: 73). It is thus unsuitable, also considering that, after all, an argument can be faithfully reproduced by the interpreter without being mentally "broken" into its explicit and implicit components. Even though the formal and rationality-driven nature of Toulmin's work clashes with the need for descriptivity of interpreting studies (Marzocchi, 1998: 34), useful theoretical insights might nevertheless be drawn (Crevatin, 1998: xv).

2.3. PRAGMA-DIALECTICS

Pragma-dialectics is probably the most influential argumentation theory. Developed by Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst at the University of Amsterdam since the 1980s, the theory builds on the assumption that argumentation is "basically aimed at resolving a difference of opinion about the acceptability of a standpoint" (van Eemeren, 2010: 1). Pragma-dialectics, significantly influencing any study of argumentation and attracting scholars from every corner of the world, draws mainly on normative pragmatics (van Eemeren, 2010: 4) and formal dialectics, in the attempt to provide a comprehensive framework enabling normative and descriptive studies alike. A thorough description of the Pragma-dialectical principles and the studies carried out within its theoretical framework is unwieldy an issue for a research paper. The present section will now limit itself to a brief outlining of the "pros" and "cons" of Pragma-dialectics for interpreting purposes.

First of all, it has the unquestionable merit of highlighting the pragmatic and social character of argumentation (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 5), thereby enabling comprehensive analyses. Moreover, the notion of *strategic manoeuvring* (van Eemeren, 2010: 93) has proved an insightful and intuitive framework opening the floodgates to multidisciplinary studies, among which the analysis of political argumentation plays a major role. In this respect, David Zarefsky's studies on political speeches (2009) provide an invaluable source of theoretical and meth-

odological insights for the interpreter scholar as well.⁶ Other insightful works include Govier and Jansen's (2011) analysis of *anecdotal arguments* in political communication, showing the way for comprehensive analyses taking all modes of discourse into account.

However, despite its overarching nature, the theory turns out to propose an excessively ideal model for text analysis (Crevatin, 1998: xi), entailing highly formalised argument reconstruction. Moreover, despite its overtly normative and descriptive approach, Pragma-Dialectics seems to be primarily concerned with perpetual discursive theorising having a "therapeutic" and normative aim (Crevatin, 1998: ix), which marginalises empirical analyses.

2.4. DOUGLAS WALTON

A very influential contemporary development is Walton's approach to argumentation, hinging primarily on formal logic (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 243). It is a philosophical, theoretical (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 242) and formal system that is "rather difficult to characterize briefly" (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 236). Despite its openly formalistic character, however, it deserves attention in interpreting settings, as it offers insightful theoretical hints on the nature of arguments and especially a matchless compendium of argument schemes (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008). However exhaustive, though, this listing of schemes is backed by no specific methodology for argument detection and no substantial text analyses. The schemes provided thus only offer useful theoretical groundwork for interpreting purposes, and have therefore to be thoroughly studied before being applied to specific discourse analyses.

2.5. THE FRANCOPHONE "LANDSCAPE"

Despite its overarching and interdisciplinary nature, argumentation theory is decidedly monolingual, showing a stark preference for English, which is of course also a consequence of the advent of English as the lingua franca of the academia. After the first publications in Dutch, Pragma-dialecticians became aware of the prospective linguistic internment of the discipline and turned to English, rapidly gaining a reputation in the field. The same did not happen in France, where the thorough and wide study of argumentation has always found it difficult to cross borders. In general, the Francophone contribution to the study of argumentation can be said to be philosophical, theoretical and definitional, mainly aiming at framing argumentation studies in relation to the study of rhetoric.

6 The relevance of the notion of *strategic manoeuvring* to interpreting is addressed in a forthcoming paper to be published in the proceedings of the 8th Conference on Argumentation organised by the International Society for the Study of Argumentation (ISSA).

The study of argumentation in France did not start before the mid 1970s, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *New Rhetoric* did not arouse immediate interest and failed to stimulate further research in the field (Plantin, 2007: 284). It was the works of Anscombe and Ducrot and Grize that re-introduced the concept of argumentation into the field of human sciences (Plantin, 2007: 285).

Anscombe and Ducrot (1983) developed the semantic-pragmatic theory of argumentation (Crevatin, 1998: xii), challenging the "classical" rhetorical approach by putting forward a "weak or loose [...] and extensive" (Amossy, 2005: 87-88) definition of argumentation, which is considered inherent in human language rather than discourse-specific. Anscombe and Ducrot thus developed a theory of argumentative meaning rather than an argumentation theory (Crevatin, 1998: xii); moreover, their works mainly focus on the argumentative "role" of connectives, thus having limited applicability to interpreting-oriented analyses.

Despite rejecting the formal approach to argumentation, Grize (1982) developed a theory of natural logic rather than a theory on argumentation, and, like those of Anscombe and Ducrot, his studies are primarily concerned with the philosophical theorisation of the study of argumentative discourse rather than with specific text analyses.

The works of the Belgian scholar Michel Meyer (1982, 1986), instead, adopt a marked normative and instructional approach (Marzocchi, 1998: 26), placing themselves within the theoretical boundaries of the philosophy of language as well.

Plantin's research has a more pronounced interdisciplinary and pedagogical character (Crevatin 1998: xiii); in this sense, it shifts towards normativity and, like the former studies, has a marked theoretical dimension. As witnessed by his attempts to dispel the definitional confusion revolving around the term argumentation in different languages (Crevatin, 1998: xiii, Plantin, 2007: 278), Plantin's main interest appears to lie in framing the study of argumentation, with particular reference to the differences between French- and English-writing scholars. In this respect, his approach is particularly relevant to interpreting researchers starting to study argumentation, since it provides clear and exhaustive theoretical explanations. Incidentally, Plantin's *Dictionnaire de l'argumentation* will be published by the end of 2014, and is likely to prove an invaluable tool for interpreting researchers as well.

Unlike other French scholars, Plantin also opposes the "post-modern drift" or "flight from theory" (Plantin, 2007: 289-291) undergone by the study of argumentation, which increasingly appears to be moving away from its rhetorical foundation. Building on the assumption that "arguing is a rhetorical activity" (2007: 289), Plantin complains that too few studies venture into the genuine revival of rhetoric, with the only exception of Reboul, whose *Introduction à la rhétorique* (1991) propagated the study of rhetoric in France. Indeed, like Plantin, Reboul is an instrumental source for understanding *what* argumentation is about, *why* and *how* it occurs. However, despite their extreme clarity, which often seems to outdo

English-written literature, too few hints on how to carry out specific analyses can be gleaned from their works.

The same holds true for Charaudeau (2005), whose thorough theorising of the contextual variables of political speeches and the strategies of persuasion adopted by politicians limits the scope for analyses focusing on argument detection. Generally, since Perelman, the study of argument schemes has indeed withered in Francophone scholarly settings.

Similar remarks apply to the more recent works of Amossy (2005, 2009). Even though they reveal a certain willingness to mainstream French research into the “global”, “English” study of argumentation by also relying on Pragmadiagnostics, they nevertheless betray a typical French predilection for the theoretical framing of the study of argumentation. In other words, despite their attempt to move away from the philosophical foundation of the Francophone approach, no genuine extensive discourse analyses are carried out; however, like Plantin, Reboul and Charaudeau, Amossy (2000) provides invaluable theoretical sources which interpreting scholars are advised to consult at the beginning of their study of argumentation.

2.6. MANFRED KIENPOINTNER

Among recent studies on argumentation, the work of the Austrian Manfred Kienpointner is undoubtedly one of the most prominent ones. Following in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's footsteps, Kienpointner (1992) contributed to the analysis of argumentation at the micro-level in offering a comprehensive typology of argument schemes (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 348). He also proposed (1996: 75) a simplified version of Toulmin's model, thereby also concentrating on theoretical and formal issues in the study of argumentation. In this respect, his overarching approach links the formal (normative) and content-related (descriptive) aspects of argumentation. His studies range across a variety of subjects, including theoretical issues (1993), fallacies (2009), figurative analogy in political argumentation (Garssen & Kienpointner, 2011) and racist manipulation in right-wing populism (2005). The success of Kienpointner's approach has been partially hampered by the fact that most of his papers and monographs, especially the less recent ones, are only published in German. However, the author is increasingly adopting English and moving towards descriptive analyses, showing a marked interest in streamlining the theoretical features of the content-related study of argumentation. Kienpointner recently presented his latest work on the argument schemes of Louise Michel's political rhetoric at the 8th ISSA Conference for the study of argumentation; the analysis, inserted in a broader research on freedom speeches, is a chiefly descriptive account of the schemes adopted by the French heroine. In this respect, Kienpointner's contribution is likely to become increasingly insightful for interpreting purposes.

2.7. FAIRCLOUGH & FAIRCLOUGH

Over the last few years, Fairclough and Fairclough have developed a branch of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with a more pronounced focus on argumentation. Their studies mainly address political communication and their theory revolves around the concept of *practical argumentation*, intended as “means-end” argumentation (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 4). In their recent work *Political Discourse Analysis: A Method for Advanced Students* (2012), the authors put forward an original proposal for the structure of practical arguments (2012: 45) and lay down specific guidelines for discourse analysis before presenting the findings of their research on the discursive political response to the economic crisis in Great Britain.

However insightful and descriptive, the method appears to rely heavily on Toulmin’s formal and logical reconstruction of arguments, which inevitably involves a reduction of the actual linguistic implementation of the argument to a schematic logical standard form, “requiring more often than not the reordering of elements in the text, the addition of implicit elements, or many other transformations” (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 323). In other words, insistence on argument reconstruction, albeit descriptive, reduces the method’s potential applicability to interpreting research, basically owing to the lack of an intuitive methodology for content-related presentation of results.

Moreover, the stress on practical argumentation does not do justice to the heterogeneity of arguments that can be found in political communication; despite the authors’ claim that “we are not suggesting that political discourse contains only practical arguments” (2012: 1), only a few other schemes are taken into account (2012: 128), such as the *argument from authority* (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958: 411) and the *argument from negative consequences* (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008: 332). However, a number of insights can be drawn especially regarding political communication. For instance, the focus on values as premises of argumentation (2012: 177) helps better frame the speeches prior to the analysis.

2.8. THE DISCOURSE-HISTORICAL APPROACH

Besides Fairclough & Fairclough’s theory, the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is the other branch of CDA with a strong focus on argumentation. It was developed by Reisigl and Wodak, two German-speaking scholars who, among others, have the merit of building their research mainly on Kopperschmidt and Kienpointner’s works (whose contributions are hardly known by the English readership) and then developing and mainstreaming them into the more visible field of English-written scholarly papers and monographs.

The DHA connects formal, functional and content-related aspects of argumentation in an integrative framework, but is particularly interested in the

analysis of the content of argumentation schemes (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: 75), because “a content-related analysis of topoi says more about the specific character of discourses [...] than a purely functional or formal analysis” (Reisigl, 2012: 4). Indeed, unlike most of the previously presented frameworks, DHA contributions are more concerned with practice than theorising, meaning that priority is given to targeted discourse analyses, which are backed by exhaustive methodological suggestions, also concerning the definition of an intuitive framework for the presentation of analytical findings. Apart from the distinction between sound and fallacious argumentation, which is not particularly relevant to interpreters’ needs, the DHA is therefore one of the most relevant approaches. Among its merits there is undoubtedly the “relativisation” of the omnipresence of argumentation, in that arguments, in line with Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, are systematically situated in context and deemed to be topic-related, given that argumentation does not happen in a vacuum but is first and foremost a social activity. In this respect, the DHA builds on Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca’s contribution, enriching it with further content-related argument schemes (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009: 114).

Reisigl and Wodak’s studies on the rhetoric of racism and antisemitism in Austria (2001) and on discourse on climate change (2009), whose tables for result presentation are displayed and thoroughly expounded (2009: 102-109), provide interpreting scholars with evidence of how argumentation analysis of “a specific discourse and related texts” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009: 93) is instrumental in identifying patterns and recurrences in speakers’ choice of schemes.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The study of the most influential argumentation theories, led under the auspices of the seminal methodological guidelines laid out by Marzocchi (1994, 1997, 1998), provides specific indications regarding the suitable contributions to interpreting research on political STs. The findings are briefly summarised in Table 1, showing the descriptive and/or normative focuses of the main theories. The plus symbol (+) indicates that there is a decisive focus on the above yardstick, while the minus symbol (-) indicates that there is no emphasis. The plus/minus symbol (+/-) shows that the respective focus is limited. Consecutive symbols (++) appear to indicate marked descriptive or normative stances.

ARGUMENTATION THEORIES		NORMATIVITY	DESCRIPTIVITY
Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca		+/-	+/-
Toulmin		+	-
Pragma-Dialectics		++	+
Walton		+	-
The Francophone “landscape”			
	Anscombre & Ducrot	+	-
	Grize	+	-
	Meyer	+	-
	Plantin	+/-	+/-
	Reboul	+/-	+/-
	Charaudeau	+/-	+/-
	Amossy	-	+/-
Kienpointner		+	+
Fairclough & Fairclough		+/-	+
Discourse-Historical Approach		-	++

TABLE 1. Relevance of argumentation theories to interpreting research based on the yardsticks of normativity and descriptivity

The main contributions all provide instrumental theoretical frameworks for understanding the complex notion of argumentation and its manifold interdisciplinary applications. Yet, as to the interpreting scholar’s practical aim to conduct discourse analyses for interpreting purposes, Pragma-dialectics, the Fairclough & Fairclough Approach and the DHA (hinging on Kienpointner) are the only theories showing a marked bent towards descriptivity. All the theories have been taken into account in this PhD study, but only descriptive frameworks (especially the DHA and, with certain reservations, the Fairclough & Fairclough Approach and Pragma-dialectics) have proved instrumental in analysing political STs and drawing useful hints for their prospective interpretation. For instance, while the Pragma-dialectical framework has been essential in the analysis of strategic manoeuvring and anecdotal arguments, the DHA has offered a pre-established account of argument schemes to be found in political communication and a suitable methodology for detecting the ones that are specifically bound to the *broader context* of economic discourse and the various *narrow contexts* in which the corpus speeches were delivered.⁷

The findings of the PhD analysis will be laid down in the thesis, in which more detailed insights into the various theories will be provided too, as the pre-

7 The *broader context* is the socio-political and historical context of the juncture and country in which the communicative event takes place, while the *narrow context* is the communicative setting or context of situation (Wodak, 2007: 206).

sent theoretical overview has been “compacted” to fit the length of the paper. Moreover, this overview has no claim to be exhaustive, as it is not and will never be concluded; since the field of argumentation is rapidly expanding, a constant updating is necessary for interpreting research to keep up with recent trends in order to define and streamline the most suitable methodology for ST argumentation analysis. A promising line of research could lie in the progressive mainstreaming of argumentation analysis into interpreting scholarly spheres, possibly resulting in both synchronic and diachronic surveys on political (and other forms of) argumentation. The systematic study of STs could therefore yield increasingly substantial findings to be harnessed in interpreter training so as gradually to enhance the argumentative competence of interpreter trainees by providing them with the “pragmatic compass” (Viaggio, 2002) all interpreters need to be equipped with. Only by adopting a well-defined, chiefly descriptive methodology will this be done. This was the rationale lying behind the present paper: dispelling the methodological fog and assessing the compatibility of the two disciplines, in the spirit of preventing interpreting researchers from losing their bearings in the intricate wood of argumentation studies.

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