Discrepant argumentation strategies:
A study of an interview with Andrzej Lepper

Anna Kuzio (School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

This paper aims to analyze the discrepancies in the argumentation strategies used by a politician. The combination of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (cf. Wodak 1989, cf. Fairclough 1989) and the pragma-dialectical model of argumentation (cf. Eemeren et al. 2002, cf. Snoeck 2002) are to be employed to analyze an interview with Andrzej Lepper.

Attention is given to fallacious messages that were perceived as reasonable and acceptable. Lepper presented a variety of implicit and explicit premises as part of a little auto-biographical narrative in which he appeared to make claims about himself and the society.

He manages to get away with various forms of obstructing critical discussion, among which the most evident is the way in which he ended up denying his own original viewpoint

The arguments that are constructed by Lepper according to the following pattern:

(1) people's problems

(2) Lepper's perception of the problems, and

(3) people's normative ideals (their wants, needs, aims).

In terms of this model, the claim that people ought to vote for Lepper is supported by

(a) (implicit and explicit) circumstantial premises referring to people's needs

(b) circumstantial premises specifying Lepper's ability to satisfy these needs (he is 'one-of-them'),

(c) implicit and explicit premises which claim that, if a candidate is able to fulfill these needs, people ought to vote for him

(d) normative premises specifying the goal in view of which such a claim is made.

Lepper's example indicates that one can come across as an authentic personality - a man speaking from the heart in an unprepared way, who is not trying to assume a personality or style that does not come naturally to him. He can also appear as a man who is honest enough to have doubts about himself and to 'confess' them in a public context.

The choices in terms of mixing genre and style contributed to the overall success of Lepper's (self-)legitimation strategies. Particularly, Lepper's choice to frame the argument as a conversation with himself, to draw on narratives of personal experience and on the colloquial register, together with his spontaneous and improvised manner of talking, created a highly expressive type of political discourse, which was obviously converted by the audience into moral qualities of honesty, sincerity, and authenticity.

References:

Eemeren, Frans H. van – Rob Grootendorst – A. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans. 2002. *Argumentation: Analysis, evaluation, presentation.* Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fairclough, Norman. 1989. Language and Power. London: Longman.

Snoeck Henkemans, A. Francisca. 1992. Analysing complex argumentation: The reconstruction of multiple and coordinatively compound argumentation in a critical discussion. Amsterdam: SicSat.

Wodak, Ruth. 1989. Language Power and Ideology: Studies in Political Discourse. London: Benjamins Publishing Company.