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Anna Cros Alavedra

*Argumentation* (en prensa)

### **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to show the argumentative component in the discourse of teachers. This is done on the basis of an analysis of the argumentative strategies used by teachers during the first class of a university course in order to increase their discourse efficiency. The analysis of the corpus studied shows that in such a session teachers use argumentative strategies in order to control the social distance which separates them from students. In doing so, they make a double movement, one of distancing and one of approximation, with the aim of achieving a balance which permits them to consolidate their authority in the eyes of the students and, at the same time, present an accessible and well-disposed image to them.

**KEY WORDS:** academic discourse, argumentation, discourse analysis, lecture, oral language, pragmatics

### **Introduction**

There is currently increasing interest both in the study of teachers' discourse in the classroom and in the interaction produced between teachers and students in academic

situations. For this reason, a large number of applied studies have appeared in the areas of pedagogy, psychology and language teaching dealing with the management and performance strategies which help to increase the didactic efficiency of these interactions and which facilitate the processes of the pupils' self-management of their learning.

The majority of studies on this genre have focussed on the analysis of the resources which can guarantee that the teacher expresses himself clearly and methodically; which favour student participation and which ensure efficient classroom management. There are few studies however which, on the basis of recorded corpora, analyse the argumentative component of teachers' discourse. That is, the strategies which allow the teachers to have an influence on the students' attitudes, beliefs and knowledge; the resources used by teachers in order to catch the students' attention, to motivate them or to establish the social norms which will determine the interaction between the two groups.

Although these strategies may be employed at any time during the academic year, and are invariably accompanied by other "explanatory" strategies aimed at facilitating student understanding and knowledge construction, the discourse of the first class of a given subject tends to be especially argumentative in nature, since the teachers aim to present themselves and their subject matter in a positive light and offer an image which the students will find acceptable. The image which the teachers seek to impart at the outset of the academic year tends to aim for a balance between what some authors (Tannen 1994, for example) refer to as power and solidarity, which is a succinct summary of the complex relationships embodied in class communication processes.

Studies of linguistic politeness show us that the classroom situation involves an asymmetric relationship, in which teachers are positioned above students, due to the authority and power conferred on them by the academic institution; it is then, a situation in which the teachers have power over the students and in which a social distance is generated between the participants. However, at the same time, the genre conventions demand that there be solidarity and empathy between the parties which will offset this imbalance. Therefore, to

ensure the success of their discourse, the teachers must offer an image of themselves and their subject matter which allows a balance between the two poles and they must act to regulate the social distance.

The aim of this article is to show the argumentative side of the teachers' discourse. This is done on the basis of the analysis of the argumentative strategies used by teachers in order to increase their discourse efficiency during the first lecture of a university course. It is assumed that the first session of a course has a number of characteristics which allow it both to be analysed in isolation and to be related to the exordium, the first part of a rhetoric discourse. Indeed, these two discourses are related in that they both aim at obtaining a favourable attitude of mind on the part of the audience. The analysis of the line of argument which is produced in the first class is intended to provide a methodological framework for analysing the argumentation which also appears in the remaining lectures of a course.

First, I will outline my understanding of the concept of argumentative strategy, with reference to some of the concepts and instruments put forward by classical and modern rhetoric, enunciation theories and studies of linguistic politeness. I will then present an interpretation of how argumentation functions in the introductory university lecture by analysing two specific strategies: the authority argument and irony.

## **1. The concept of argumentative strategies**

The term strategy is used to refer to those linguistic and non-linguistic resources used intentionally by a speaker in order to increase communicative efficiency in a given situation. Even though speakers have their own styles, and their strategies may have different effects depending on the addressees, we believe that there are some constants in the use of these strategies, and that they are associated to each discourse genre. Thus, the traits defining the genres<sup>ii</sup>, such as communicative intention and the relationship and type of communicative

contract between the participants etc., favour the use of certain resources which can be considered characteristic of that genre, though not exclusively.

I understand then, that argumentative strategies consist of the use of the procedures which the speaker feels most appropriate to convince the addressee in a given communicative situation. I would differentiate these strategies from those which aim to ensure the viability of the communication (by avoiding the kind of communicative collapse which occurs, for example, due to inadequate mastery of a language) and the coherence and cohesion of the discourse.

The linguistic marks or tracks which the argumentative orientation of the utterances tends to leave, enable us to detect and analyse these strategies in discourse. These linguistic marks are related to the characteristic "dialogism" of argumentation, that is, as stated by Moeschler (1985:47), the fact that an argumentative discourse is invariably established in relation to a counter-discourse which may be real or imaginary. I will account for this dialogism in terms of the proposals put forward in enunciation theory, specifically the concept of enunciation polyphony advanced by Ducrot (1984). According to this theory, statements signal the superposition of various voices, even if there are no grammatical markers indicating them. In this way, even if the enunciation is attributed to a single subject, the speaker, various voices are to be distinguished in the analysis of the communicative act: the speaking subject; the locuteur, linguistic entity whose referent is the speaking subject; the ennonciateurs, who appear in the text even if they may not be attributed precise words and who represent points of view which are not attributed to the locuteur.

The linguistic marks of the utterances permit us to detect the different voices which may appear, attribute them (to the locuteur, an explicitly quoted ennonciateur, a group, etc.) and interpret, through modalisation, the degree of commitment of these various ennonciateurs to their utterances.

Although it is difficult to establish a single, closed inventory of the various types of argumentative strategies<sup>iii</sup>, I believe that we can put forward a double classification which is general in nature: a) according to whether the strategies function as regulators of the interaction, with the aim of maintaining a social balance between the interlocutors so as to ensure agreement and cordial communication; and b) according to whether they function to facilitate a line of reasoning which it is hoped the addressee will accept.

**a)** The first type of strategy may be related with those put forward in studies of Linguistic Politeness, although it is also possible to establish similarities with many of the models offered by rhetoric. They are used in all forms of discourse genres, but especially in what we may refer to as situations of imbalance, that is, interactions where the social distance separating interlocutors is wide. In these cases, the use of positive, negative and hidden politeness strategies which permit a balance between maintenance of the speaker's face and an upward valuing of the addressee's status is common. These strategies are argumentative in the sense that they seek to establish cooperation and agreement among the participants.

Such resources tend to be abundant in teachers' discourse, since it is commonplace for teachers to use strategies of positive politeness, such as, group identification (a plural "we" which includes speaker and addressee, presumption of knowledge, and so on) to reinforce the idea that the interlocutors belong to the same social group. Hidden politeness strategies, such as irony, are also commonly employed, to generate a sense of rapport with the students, and negative politeness strategies are used, for example, "hedging", to play down any perception of imposition.

**b)** Strategies of the second type are related with the propositional content of the discourse and they are articulated through the various types of argument. These resources are then, characteristics of argumentative activity. They set out from credible premises, they are constructed through operations of induction or deduction and they can be classified within the framework of the various types of arguments.<sup>iv</sup>

These resources are also frequent in teachers' discourse, in forms related to the authority argument (the authority citation, references to the teacher's own authority or experience, etc) or to the model argument (showing the benefits of a type of behaviour, for example) or to arguments based on the teacher's power (forcing the students to behave in a certain way: attend class, complete assignments, etc.).

## **2. Argumentation in the scholar discourse**

One part of the effectiveness of teachers' discourse lies in its ability to motivate the students to learn. Therefore, the teachers usually try to capture the students' interest and convince them of the validity of what they are teaching as well as offering an image of themselves which students will find acceptable. This they do by means of a number of argumentative strategies.

Although the desire to be liked and accepted tends to be related with the use of concession and signs of proximity, the genre conventions and norms of the teaching situation, especially the university teaching situation, are such that there is generally a tendency to maintain the social distance between teachers and students in these situations, to the extent that even the students themselves expect the teachers to give signs of competence and authority.

However, it is clear that an excess of authority or authority exercised in an overly imposing manner may lead to rejection by the students of the teacher and the subject being taught. Therefore, there also exists a tendency to reduce the social distance between teachers and students. We may say then, that in order to strike a balance which allows the teacher to maintain his authority without threatening the status of the students while at the same time allowing him to achieve a degree of proximity to the students without threatening his status, teachers make use of two forms of argumentative resources in class: distancing and approximation, which reflect the double classification of argumentative strategies put forward in the previous section.

**Distancing strategies** perform the function of demonstrating the asymmetry existing between teachers and students. They are based on the authority and power vested in the teacher by the academic institution and serve to validate this status. They are then, designed to maintain the social distance between teacher and students. Distancing strategies articulate arguments which the speaker wants the addressee to accept. These strategies operate on ideas (by presenting judgements or opinions that are authoritative), on attitudes and behaviours (presenting models and antimodels) and on performance (indicating how to behave).

**Approximation strategies** are related to the necessity to diminish the social distance between teachers and students in the discourse genre of lectures. This is done in order to encourage a positive attitude of the students to both the subject and the teacher. These resources are usually based on the various forms of agreement suggested by rhetoric, neorhetoric and the disciplines interested in linguistic politeness and are designed to achieve a social balance and cordial relationship between the participants, so as to make it possible to reach agreement, a degree of rapport, a feeling of belonging to the same group.

Unlike distancing strategies, approximation strategies aim at reaching a social balance and a cordial relationship between the participants in order to establish agreement, complicity and the feeling of belonging to the same group. While distancing strategies aim at showing that teachers are competent and that they hence know what is best for students, approximation strategies aim at showing that teachers are approachable, that they appreciate students and that they are ready to help them. They are thus used to minimise potential imposition or disagreement and to offer a positive image of the participants in the communicative act. A balance between these two types of strategy favours the discourse success.

In the next section, I propose to examine the function of two argumentative strategies in a corpus of introductory lectures in a range of university subjects: the authority argument, as

an example of distancing, and irony, the use of which I take to be an approximation strategy<sup>v</sup>.

### **3. Analysis of the argumentative strategies in the first lecture**

#### 3.1. Corpus of analysis

The corpus of analysis of this research comes from videofilms and their subsequent transcriptions of ten first classes of subjects from the first year of a teacher training course in the Faculty of Education in the Autonomous University of Barcelona<sup>vi</sup>. The data was obtained from actual classes in which neither the teachers nor the students knew the objective of the research. The corpus has been supplemented with the results of two surveys, one addressed to the teachers who were filmed and the other to a number of first year students.

#### 3.2. Criteria for the categorisation of strategies

In order to facilitate the analysis of the corpus, we have considered the statements in which the strategies are conveyed to consist of tonal groups defined by a series of traits which may be prosodic (intonation changes, emphasis), linguistic (linguistic formulae which indicate the move from one part of the discourse to another, for instance) or paralinguistic (pauses, paralinguistic sounds of affirmation or doubt, interjections) in nature. Only those resources with a verbal basis were analysed, and they were counted according to the number of times they occur.

The strategies may consist of one or more utterances and the main criterion for their classification was that the categories obtained should be operative and stable. Therefore, a limited number of integrated were established so as to avoid an excess of variables which might pose problems for systemising the analysis: similarly, the linguistic and discourse marks characterising each strategy were also systemised.



The argumentative strategies analysed were classified into two groups, according to whether they tended to diminish the social distance between teachers and students or to maintain or increase such a distance. Distancing strategies tend to articulate lines of reasoning. We have organised them following Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1958) classification of argument types. Approximation strategies tend to act as interaction regulators and we have classified them on the basis of the terminology used in linguistic politeness studies (Brown and Levinson 1987, Haverkate 1994).

The categorisation we suggest is not to be understood as a dichotomy, but rather as a continuum (more or less distant) which shows the tendency to use a given type of strategy in order to create a distancing or approximation effect. The strategies based on the teachers' authority are classified at the point of most distance. Complicity strategies, on the other hand, have been classified at the point of least distance, given that the majority of cases in the transcriptions have this function.

### 3.3. Analysis of the argumentation strategies based on teachers' authority

All the strategies included in this expression articulate arguments which the teacher wants the addressee to accept. They are linguistic strategies which establish logical relations among ideas by means of a deductive process. Such relations allow the speaker to reach a conclusion which appears both necessary and valid.

#### ***The authority argument***

The authority argument consists in making somebody accept a thesis by relating it to its author, who is considered as credible. This argumentative procedure is widely used in argumentative situations and especially in the academic discourse, where it can be understood as evidence of scientific rigor.

By using this argument, speakers are invested with authority. This is so both when they invoke a voice other than theirs and when they refer to their own authority. In the first case, knowing the sources on which their argumentation is based confers the speakers the prestige of knowledge. In the second case, the speaker takes it for granted that the addressee will recognize his prestige. We thus believe that this strategy is generally used in situations where a certain social imbalance between the speaker and the addressee is either present or aimed at. The person formulating the argument tends to adopt the role of an *expert* who addresses a *layperson* and who makes reference to another discourse, which has more argumentative force the further away it is from the knowledge and experience of the addressee (Plantin 1990).

The efficiency of the authority argument is contingent on the audience's acceptance of the voice being invoked. This is why rhetoric recommends providing some evidence justifying the person or group's prestige. Classical rhetoric (Aristotle and Quintilian, for example) looks for the validation of authority in the *loci*, the compartments where the stereotypes of themes and assertions which can be used as premises for constructing arguments are ordered. And especially in the *loci a persona* (lineage, sex, age, education, fortune, studies, what has been said or done before, etc.), which are the foundation of people's prestige and credibility. Thus, in order to prove or strengthen an argument of a case one can invoke the opinion of someone considered to be an authority for their knowledge, their lineage, etc.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958 i 1977) classify the authority argument within the arguments based on the structure of reality and, more specifically, within those expressing a relation of coexistence, i.e. the arguments establishing a relation between realities placed at different levels. One of these realities is presented as the expression or manifestation of the other: the relation between a person and his actions, judgements or works, for instance. According to these authors, the authority being invoked needs to be reinforced with valid evidence, although in some cases such evidence is ratified by making reference to the person quoted as a specialist, by mentioning a title or by public opinion. In other cases speakers do not found their statements exclusively on their own authority. If they have enough prestige, their behaviour can also be used as a model to encourage the audience to follow their example. Similarly, if the speaker appears as an antimodel, he may encourage the audience not to behave like him.

In the first lecture of a course, the authority argument is generally used in order to strengthen the teacher's competence and authority. It is thus a strategy used to maintain or increase the social distance between teachers and students in this discourse genre.

### The authority citation

As Ducrot (1984) points out, the authority argument appears as a quotation and hence it always represents a polyphonic splitting of the speaker's voice. The speaker reproduces, either literally or approximately, a text produced by another author, at a place and time different from the moment of speech. The speaker assumes that the person or institution quoted as proof of authority is also regarded as such by the addressees. In the case of the academic discourse, however, the teacher's authority is usually acknowledged to such an extent that although the people quoted are not known by the student or proof of prestige is not given, they usually fill the function of ratifying the teachers' opinions and increasing their authority.

In the following example, a geography teacher justifies the interest that dealing with the EC in her course may have for teachers. In order to do so, an authority quotation is reproduced in direct speech and is introduced by the verb 'say' (*diu*)<sup>vii</sup>:

1. M: i per això em serveix aquest text// que és d'una professora italiana que es diu donatella talomba// que **en un llibre que té sobre// l'ensenyament// sobre europa i els ensenyants// diu//** la realitat europea// en la seva dimensió comunitària// és un horitzó en concret// que implica la formació de ciutadans // que viuen i viuran// en un context transformat//

M: that's why this text is useful-...// it's from an Italian teacher called donatella talomba// who in her book on:-teaching //on europe and teachers// says- the reality of europe// as related to the EC// is a specific horizon// which involves the education of its citizens// who live and will live// in the future in a different context//

When this strategy is used in the academic discourse, precise reference of the quotation sources (i.e. identity of the person or group whose words are being quoted, year of publication, etc.) is considered to be an expression of scientific rigor. However, in class, as the following example shows, references are often indefinite or general and what validates the quotation is the teacher's personal opinion:

2. P: una altra cosa que: per a mi és important// també en aquesta classe// i us explicaré perquè// és: a:: aconseguir a:en el grup// i quan parlo del grup parlo en aquest cas doncs de vosaltres i de mi// **allò que un psicòleg que jo m'estimo molt diu//** a::h unes// relacions positives i constructives// [f.3.2.]

something else which is important for me// in this class// and I'll explain why// is to achieve in the group// and when I refer to the group in this case I mean you and me// something which a psychologist who I like a lot says// positive and constructive relationships//

We talk about polyphonic authority (Ducrot (1984) establishes a difference between an authority citation and what he terms polyphonic authority) in those cases where the speaker quotes an indefinite voice which does not belong to any given person or institution and with which he or she may or may not identify. Such cases were very common in the corpus we analysed. The quoted expression belongs to an indefinite speaker who is usually identified with a scientific or academic authority, i.e. the voice of science, of experts, of the department to which the teacher belongs, etc. By splitting the speaker's voice, teachers can join their voice to that of a group with authority which reinforces and objectifies their own opinion. This is the case of the following example, where the plural form indicates that the speaker is quoting a voice which joins his own, namely the voice of the group of teachers giving the same subject. In doing so, the speaker is reinforcing the authority of his suggestions in recommending some books.

3. L: amb un amb un asterisc// teniu marcats els [llibres] que **recomanem més aviat nosaltres**// (f.3.4.)

L: the books marked with an an asterisk// are those we most recommend//

### The reference to the own authority

Handbooks on rhetoric consider that the best way to use the authority argument is to cite a voice other than one's own. In the sessions we analysed, however, teachers justified their opinions or suggestions on the basis of the authority they conferred on themselves. In some cases, teachers validate this authority by making reference to their own experience or to their professional prestige. The marks which characterise these strategies indicate the presence of the subject of the enunciation in the discourse by means of the use of first person pronouns, "I", "me", accompanied by such modalising forms as "I think", "from my point of view", "I myself like it a lot", "I would say", "I myself think":

4. M: treballa a la: facultat des de fa molts: uns anys// molts molts molts//des del segon any de vida// per tant l'he vist créixer// i://i malgrat ser del departament de geografia// ser una geògrafa m'he dedicat sempre// a ensenyar// als futurs mestres// [f.1.2.]

I have been working in this faculty for many, -some years// many, many, many// since the second year of its existence// so I have seen it grow// and// although I am from the geography department// I am a geographer who has always been// in the teaching of future teachers //

5. P: **resulta que jo: a::h// he reflexionat molt sobre el grup// que he escrit moltes coses sobre el grup//considero que el grup és fonamental// per l'aprenentatge// hi ha molta gent que ho considera evidentment// però jo n'estic convençut diguem// no// [f.3.2.]**

It so happens that// I have thought a lot about the group// I've written many articles on the group// I consider it fundamental// for learners// there are obviously many people who consider this// but I'm convinced of it let's say// no//

In both examples it can be seen that references to the teacher's own authority, validated by experience (I have been working in this faculty for many years) and prestige (I have written many articles on the group) constitute the premise from which we may suppose a conclusion will be deduced with the effect of convincing the students of the validity of the teachers' opinion (the educational focus that a geography course will have, in the first case, the class methodology in the second case).

### ***The authority argument: recapitulation***

Analysis of the strategies which we see as related to the authority argument allows us to observe that teachers prefer argumentation types which have an influence on the students' ideas. Such an influence is achieved by relating the thesis to be accepted to the opinion of a person or group with authority in that matter.

The reasoning which takes place tends to be deductive - it sets out from a general premise (everything the teacher says is good) which confers authority on all propositions formulated by the teachers. The marks which enable us to detect these strategies are always related to polyphonic splitting of the speaker's voice, which quotes another voice with which he may or may not identify.

Among these strategies, the authority citation is the one which appears least and, often it is used in a way which could be said to breach the norms of scientific rigour, for the origin of the quoted discourse is not clearly acknowledged and in fact what proves the authority of the quoted voice is the teacher's opinion. No effort is made to confirm whether the students know the person or groups the teacher quotes. This rather imprecise use of the authority argument would appear to be fairly characteristic of the lecture genre, in which the mere act of referring to a discourse beyond the confines of the students' experience is sufficient to reaffirm the authority of the teacher.

The teachers involved make extensive use of polyphonic authority, with main aim of including themselves in a group which is seen as authoritative by the students, and thereby gaining added weight for their opinion. However, the favourite strategy of the teachers is recourse to their own authority, which may be validated in terms of their experience, their publications, etc. This preference breaches the recommendations for use of the authority argument in the rhetoric and argumentation handbooks and shows that despite claims by such authors as Adam (1992) that the lecturer's role in class is that of an enunciator-witness, who is not particularly bound up or personally involved with his discourse, the speaker does not behave as a mere transmitter of information. Rather he behaves as a speaker who believes, from his position of superiority which the academic institution confers him, that his statements and behaviour are convincing .

#### **3.4. Analysis of Forms which establish complicity: irony**

Rhetoric has traditionally studied irony as a figure of speech, generally as a form of antiphrasis which consisted of conveying a meaning diametrically opposed to what was actually said. Modern rhetoric manuals treat it as a pragmatic phenomenon in the category of the citation. Lausberg (1963: 215-16), for example, considers that irony can consist of a seeming concealment of one's own opinion by using the vocabulary or points of view which characterise the adversary, with the aim that the public should recognise their lack of

credibility. According to Mortara (1988:191) it is a form of distancing which consists of a dialogue between an utterance which is present and another which is evoked.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958: 325) consider irony to be a form of indirect argumentation, since the utterances that the addressees must interpret are not explicit. Use of this resource then, always presupposes that the locuteur and the addressee share the necessary knowledge which enables them to interpret the utterances as ironic. According to these authors, this confers irony with a paradoxical character, since if it is employed it is because it is useful for argumentative purposes, but its use requires a degree of consensus among the interlocutors. Logically then, the better defined and more sharply delimited the group to which the irony is addressed the more likely it is to be effective.

From the point of view of linguistic politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) treat irony as a hidden politeness strategy which breaches the quality maxim ("be honest") and which may serve to increase or decrease the social distance between the participants in a communicative act.

Finally, in the context of enunciation theory, which I am using as a framework within which to examine this strategy, irony is studied as an implicit act which can be explained as a phenomenon of polyphonic splitting. The authors who have analysed the strategy from this viewpoint (Berrendoner 1981, Ducrot 1984, Reyes 1984, 1994, among others) usually set out from the basis of the study carried out by Sperber and Wilson (1978), in which the phenomenon of irony was considered to be linked to the discourse of citation and that it could therefore be treated as echo-like in nature, that is, it is the echo of a situation, an attitude, a thought, a previous utterance, etc. formulated in such a way as to highlight its lack of precision or relevance or its absurdity.

According to Ducrot's theory of polyphonic enunciation (1984), in ironic utterances a locuteur (L) presents the utterance as if it expressed the point of view of an ennonciateur (E), although it is known that he does not subscribe to this point of view and that indeed he

finds it absurd or inadequate. L only accepts responsibility for his own utterances, while the points of view expressed in these manifestations are attributed to E. To highlight that L is different to E, L relies on situational evidence, shared knowledge, intonation, and so on. Therefore, irony serves to constitute a discourse which creates another utterance space, in which the locuteur gains legitimacy for his own voice by distinguishing it as different from the quoted discourse; in which he creates his own counter-space, which stands apart as different from other possible spaces.

According to the majority of authors writing on this strategy, irony always involves a criticism of either the addressee, a third party, a situation, or of the speaker himself, in which case we could speak of a form of "auto-irony" or self-directed irony. For this reason, Leech (1983) considers irony to be a manner of infringing the politeness rules without incurring in a breach of manners. However, as Reyes (1994) points out, irony also serves to reactivate an agreement on shared values held by the locuteur and the addressee.

In the corpus of introductory classes studied, it was observed that the teachers used this resource with the aim of gaining proximity to the students so as to establish a sense of rapport or complicity with them which would contribute to the creation of positive attitudes and expectations. Almost invariably then, irony was used as an approximation strategy with the objective described by Reyes of activating an agreement among the members of the group. The teachers employed this strategy in three different ways:

1. The target of the irony is a situation which is external to the group. In these cases, teachers and students act as a homogenous group and establish a level of rapport which improves group cohesion and differentiates it from other groups. In the following example the ironic effect of the teacher's statement is achieved from the pause between the first and the second *hem escollit* ('we have chosen'), but also from the vocalic lengthening of the conjunction *o* ('or'), which thematizes the second part of the proposition *no hem escollit* ('we haven't chosen'), and from the complicity expression *ja m'enteneu* ('you know what I mean'). Moreover, the first person plural involves speaker and addressees in the same opinion:



6. P: és a dir el ministeri d'educació// que: si us enrecordeu// resulta que:// forma part d'un govern// **que: amb els nostres vots// hem escollit// o:: no hem escollit// e::h// ja m'enteneu//** molt bé// [f.5.3.]

in other words// the Ministry of Education// which if you remember// is forms part of the government// which with our votes// we have chosen// or we we haven't chosen// eh// I think you know what I mean// ok//

2. The students are the target of the irony. The teachers use this type of irony in a rather uncritical way, since as can be seen in the two examples presented below, the purpose is usually to make all the students laugh, including those who are being criticised. In the following example, professor J has been commenting on the bibliography students need, and he considers the question posed by a student to be inconvenient (*els hem de comprar aquests llibres?*, 'do we have to buy these books?'). The teacher's answer (*no recomanaria mai robar-los*, 'I wouldn't recommend stealing them') can only be interpreted ironically, since in a classroom situation it would be absurd for a teacher to recommend students to steal books.

7. A: els hem de comprar aquests llibres //

J: aquests llibres eh// eh **no recomanaria mai robar-los**// ara tot lo altre feu lo que vulgueu// que us els deixin// que us els compreu// que els fotocopieu// [f.1.1.]

A: do we have to buy these books//

J: these books er// er I wouldn't recommend stealing// them do whatever you want apart from that// borrow them// buy them// photocopy them//

In the second example, faced with silence from the students, the teacher parodies legal discourse, the formality of which is much greater than that of a teaching situation. It is therefore inappropriate for literal interpretation.

8. J: a veure amb tota confiança qui sigui que parli perquè res del que digueu serà utilitzat en contra vostra \. [f.3.1.]

J: come on, don't be afraid to speak because nothing you say will be taken down and used against you in court//

3. The teacher himself is the target of the irony. Sometimes, the teacher's irony is self-directed and he himself is the subject of his own criticism. Use of this resource, which can be related to a number of forms of *captatio benevolentiae*, tends logically to reduce the social difference separating teachers from students and improves group cohesion. As we can see in

the following example, the self-criticism tends to focus on errors or memory lapses committed by the teachers:

**9. S:** *oh quina vergonya\ quin horror\.. em dic X\.. XX\..  
o X també em diuen\ us ho dic perquè ho sentireu\  
el que passa és que em sembla més sèrio en segons quins llocs\  
com que encara no ens tenim confiança—. al ser el primer dia\... però si::—.  
si a vegades sentiu això sóc jo\.. [f.2.]*

S: oh what a shame, how awful// my name is X\..XX//Or I'm sometimes known as X\I'm just telling you because you will hear it// You see I think it sounds more respectable depending on where you are// And since we don't really know each other yet - since it's the first day of class\.. But yes// If you ever hear that, it's me//

At the end of the class the teacher realises that he has not told the students his name. The irony here lies firstly in the hyperbole of his reaction (what a shame, how awful) and secondly in the fact that it is not usual (or perhaps appropriate) in a formal situation to explain why a person's full name is used instead of an abbreviated form (You see I think it sounds more respectable depending on where you are\.. And since we don't really know each other yet...).

### ***The strategie of irony: recapitulation***

We have dealt with irony as a strategy which in the discourse of introductory lectures aims to approximate teachers and students so as to establish a sense of rapport or group identity which will enable them see themselves as constituting a group of equals. We have considered this resource as a case of polyphonic splitting which always presupposes the presence of two locuteurs who make two divergent utterances, one explicit and the other implicit. The latter must be inferred from what is said. Successful interpretation of irony demands that there be agreement or consensus between the interlocutors or that they have shared knowledge or values, and this serves to identify the group and differentiate it from others.

When employing this resource, the teachers bear in mind the voice of the students, that is, the values, knowledge, etc. which they presume they may share with them and which the

addressee must share, or at least recognise, if he is to understand the irony. At the same time, the strategy has the effect of valuing the students, since irony can never be addressed to a universal addressee, but rather to a concrete and informed addressee. Thus, a sense of rapport is established among those who share something not available to those outside the group.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Analysis of these two argumentative strategies in introductory lectures permits us to highlight the argumentative component of teacher discourse. Use of these strategies is evident in the first class of the year, but they may also appear in any other class session and are a reflection of the social imbalance existing between the interlocutors in the lecture genre.

The argumentation is manifested through the use of different types of strategies, the marks of which in the utterances permit us to interpret them. These resources are employed in such a way that they have an effect on the students' attitudes, knowledge and values and the aim is to catch their attention, motivate them and get them involved, and to guide their interpretations. In short, they are employed to "persuade" the students, since generating interest in the subject matter and in the teacher who teaches it is one of the requirements for didactic effectiveness of the teacher's discourse.

The two strategies that we have examined in this article are an example of a double movement on the part of the teachers with respect to the students: a movement of distancing and approximation, and they are in keeping with the strategies recommended by rhetoric for use in the exordi.

Complete analysis of all the resources shows that the teachers make equal use of both strategies. We can then conclude that although the academic setting gives the teacher a higher status than students, they tend to employ a number of argumentative strategies with the aim of achieving a balance between power and solidarity which will enable them to consolidate their authority over the students and at the same time, present an accessible and pleasant image to them.

## NOTES

1 For the sake of simplicity, masculine pronouns will be used throughout this paper instead of the rather cumbersome forms 'him/herself's or 'she/he's. Needless to say, no offence is meant with this choice.

2 Following the bakhtinian tradition, we consider that discourse genres, which are part of the social and discourse activity of speakers, are defined as more or less stable creations of statements which can be identified and analysed by speakers according to the verbal marks which constitute the traces of their enunciation. Following Bronckart (1985) we consider that

genres can be analysed according to the three processes involved in the enunciation: contextualisation (where the referential variables are established), structuring (where the discourse type is chosen) and textualisation (where discourse is performed).

3 Numerous classification systems have been proposed for types of argumentation, based on Aristotle's system or on the guidelines of modern rhetoric, mainly derived from those presented by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in 1958 in their treatise on argumentation. In this article I have opted for the term argumentative strategy since my classification includes the various politeness strategies put forward, among others, by Brown and Levinson (1978) and Kerbrat-Oreccioni (1990–1994).

4 They can be classified for example on the basis of the three types of connection schemes proposed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958): quasi-logical arguments, arguments based on the structure of reality, arguments serving as the foundation for reality.

5 This article is limited exclusively to consideration of the strategies I take to be argumentative

in nature. I do not include then, all those resources whose main function is to provide discourse signposts (by contextualising information, structuring content, regulating information density) and which, in some cases, also have an associated argumentative cases, I feel the division here is justified since it enables us to isolate the units which permit study of the functioning of the resources employed by the teachers in class.

6 The corpus serving as the basis for this article can be consulted in microphotographic format in: Anna Cros Alavedra: Aspectes del discurs acadèmic oral: estratègies comunicatives

de la primera classe d'un curs. Servei de Publicacions de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. In order to transcribe the corpus we have followed the transcription criteria suggested by Payrató (1995) (And in particular the transcription criteria 0). We have simplified the transcription indicating only each tonal group with //. So that the results of the study would show discourse behaviour which could be considered to be characteristic of the introductory lectures of the Diploma in Primary Teaching, a representative number of both compulsory and optional subjects was chosen. A video recording of a lecture in each of the following subjects was selected for study:

Theory and History of Educational Institutions (compulsory)

Introduction to Didactics (compulsory)  
Teaching Mathematics (compulsory)  
Audio-Visual Communication and Education (compulsory)  
Mathematics I (compulsory)  
Voice Education and Applied Speech Therapy (compulsory)  
Basic Themes in Social Science (compulsory)  
Written Language (compulsory)  
Sociology of Informal Education (optional)  
Artistic, Physical and Musical Expression (optional)

7 The marks of the strategies are signalled in bold.

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<sup>ii</sup> Following the bakhtinian tradition, we consider that discourse genres, which are part of the social and discourse activity of speakers, are defined as more or less stable creations of statements which can be identified and analysed by speakers according to the verbal marks which constitute the traces of their enunciation. Following Bronckart (1985) we consider that genres can be analysed according to the three processes involved in the enunciation: contextualisation (where the referential variables are established), structuring (where the discourse type is chosen) and textualisation (where discourse is performed).

<sup>iii</sup> Numerous classification systems have been proposed for types of argumentation, based on Aristotle's system or on the guidelines of modern rhetoric, mainly derived from those presented by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in 1958 in their treatise on argumentation. In this article I have opted for the term argumentative strategy since my classification includes the various politeness strategies put forward, among others, by Brown and Levinson (1978) and Kerbrat-Oreccioni (1990-94).

<sup>iv</sup> They can be classified for example on the basis of the three types of connection schemes proposed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958): quasi-logical arguments, arguments based on the structure of reality, arguments serving as the foundation for reality.

<sup>v</sup> This article is limited exclusively to consideration of the strategies I take to be argumentative in nature. I do not include then, all those resources whose main function is to provide discourse signposts (by contextualising information, structuring content, regulating information density) and which, in some cases, also have an associated argumentative function. While the dividing line between both types of strategy is far from clear in many cases, I feel the division here is justified since it enables us to isolate the units which permit study of the functioning of the resources employed by the teachers in class.

<sup>vi</sup> The corpus serving as the basis for this article can be consulted in microphotographic format in: Anna Cros Alavedra: *Aspectes del discurs acadèmic oral: estratègies comunicatives de la primera classe d'un curs*. Servei de Publicacions de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. In order to transcribe the corpus we have followed the transcription criteria suggested by Payrató (1995). (And in particular the transcription criteria 0). We have simplified the transcription indicating only each tonal group with // .

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Basic Themes in Social Science (compulsory)  
Written Language (compulsory)  
Sociology of Informal Education (optional)  
Artistic, Physical and Musical Expression (optional)

<sup>vii</sup> The marks of the strategies are signalled in bold.