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Emotive Argumentation Exponents in Computer-Mediated Dialogue.
The case of a Romanian politician's blog

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The aim of this paper is to present an analysis of the emotive argumentation exponents present in the computer-mediated dialogue recorded on the personal blog of a Romanian politician, now an ex-major player on the political scene. The mini-corpus that we base our study on consists of the replies given to a blog posting written by the politician with regard to a statement made by the current Romanian president in a press conference. The emotive exponents identified and discussed in the present study are: slang/jargon words and expressions; use of foreign words and expressions; use of idiomatic utterances; forms of address (e.g. terms of endearment, etc.); value judgments; presuppositions; euphemisms; punctuation (exclamation marks, suspension points, etc.). We will also discuss these emotive exponents with regard to the relationships established between interlocutors, as well as to their politically-laden illocutionary force.

Introduction

We will start with a short theoretical background and some working definitions relevant to our study. *Weblogs* represent websites with a standardised but at the same time flexible structure built on a CMC (content management system). They also allow for a possibly attractive, marketable presentation. Unlike traditional mass media communication, weblogs support the interaction of authors (bloggers) with their readers by offering services to comment and give feedback on articles (the so-called "blog posts"). They also support the interaction with other bloggers by facilitating hyperlinking to other blogs or blog posts available on the Internet. It is different from emails in that it is group communication and everybody has access to what each interlocutor has previously said. It is asynchronous, since communication does not take place in real time. The totality of weblogs – the *blogoshpere* – represents the new virtual communicative space, with an exponentially increasing number of members every day.

A by-now quite common type of blogging is to be found in the political arena. *Political blogs* are weblogs in which the content concentrates on issues, events and policy in a constituency, national, international or party political context (Ferguson & Griffith 2006: 366). One of the reasons why blogs have become so popular in this sphere is that they may represent an alternative channel for the distribution of information as well as a mobilisation tool due to their ability to spread news very quickly (Ito 2004, Kahn & Kellner 2004). Bloggers are sometimes considered

as a "fifth power" that increasingly occupies the control function of the mass media (Gillmor 2004, Himmelsbach 2005), different from the established news values through their more personal, direct, and often location-specific style of reporting. To a certain extent, blogs can turn into a tool for opinion formation, as they may influence agenda setting and framing processes (Farrell & Drezner 2008). This orientation towards sustained dialogue and lasting social relations has a greater impact on partisans and supporters and seems to increase their political engagement.

On the other hand, there are some negative aspects pertaining to political weblogs, which can be detrimental to effective communication. For example, hyperlinking on weblogs might foster fragmentation by connecting only like-minded bloggers, who, consequently, avoid dealing with diverging views (Howard 2005). Political clustering along ideological divides may lead to homogeneous spheres with little, if any, communication with the outside world. Another aspect pertains to the threat that blogs pose to the reflective quality of public political communication by allowing anybody to share their more or less concise thoughts. Thirdly, it has been argued that blogs might worsen the inequality of voices in the public sphere by supporting a star culture with few prominent authors (the so-called "A-listers") and a large number of unknown bloggers (Shirky 2003).

Political blogging has existed for quite some time, to a larger or lesser extent, in different democracies. Tom Watson was the first UK's MP to use a blog in 2003. By 2004 there were 5 MP's using blogs, whereas during the 2005 general election campaign there were approximately 65 parliamentary candidates who resorted to blogging as part of their campaign structure (Ferguson & Griffith 2006: 366).

During the 2004 US presidential campaign weblogs were very much used in order to transmit information and to allow for political debate. Campaign blogging was also present in other Western democracies: the 2005 UK general election (mentioned above), the 2005 Danish parliamentary election, the 2005 New Zealand general election, the 2005 German Bundestag election, as well as the 2007 French election (Albrecht et al. 2007).

Emotive markers in computer-mediated communication

We shall argue for the purposes of this study that emotive argumentation exponents fall into two broad categories: the first being in relation with and specific to computer-mediated communication, while the second pertains to the pragmaliguistic means of achieving communication. Table I presents a taxonomy of the most frequent emotive exponents, revealed from a sample sub-corpus extracted from Adrian Năstase's blog.

In the following we will try to analyse this categorisation, accounting for the specificity of communication through blogging, which is a sub-category of computer-mediated dialogue (CMD) (along with chatting). CMD, as previously mentioned, is a hybrid-type of communication (neither purely written, nor verbal). For this very reason (the lack of paraverbal indicators), CMC needs to find substitutes in order to ensure the interpersonal dimension of communication.

For the first category of affective markers we identified the following: emoticons, punctuation, spelling and usernames.

TYPE	EMOTIVE MARKERS / EXPONENTS		EXAMPLES
CMC-related devices	Emoticons (smiley face, wink, frown, sad face, etc)		😃 😄 🙂
	Punctuation (suspension points, exclamation marks, inverted commas, etc.)		*I beg you… /* 'va rog eu frumos…' *Congratulations! /* 'Felicitari!'
	Spelling	Capital letters	*YOU'RE TELLING US NO NEWS* 'NU NE SPUNETI NICI O NOUTATE'
		Wilful transcription of faulty Romanian pronunciation/grammar	'almanhe' *(faulty plural for 'almanahuri' – almanacs)*
	Usernames (revealing vs concealing identity)		'mirceag' *(possibly indicative of another politician's name?)*
Non-directly CMC-related pragma-linguistic devices	Speech acts carrying emotive load: expressives/assertives		*I am ashamed of such a president /* 'Mi-e jena cu un asa presedinte' *I don't consider that [...] /* 'Nu consider ca [...]'
	Vocatives (affective forms of address)		*Liviu, sonny /* 'Liviu, taică[…]'
	Diminutives and superlatives		'superbase' *(from super + Băsescu)*
	Coinage of new words and expressions		*Băsescian dictatorship /* 'dictatură băsesciană'
	Foreign words and expressions		*'capisci'; 'c'mon'; 'j'en ai assez'; 'thanks anyway'*
	Slang/in-group language		the AN / 'AN-ul'
	Colloquialisms and use of the vernacular		*set-up /* 'facatura' *at once /* 'mintenas'
	Idiomatic expressions		*he shot from the hip /* 'l-a luat gura pe dinainte'
	Proverbs and sayings		*The truth will out /* 'Minciuna are picioare scurte'
	Presuppositions		*just like Mona Musca's denunciation on the letterhead of the DA Alliance /* 'la fel ca si denuntul Monei Musca pe antetul Aliantei DA'
	Implicature		*t b lied. answer: so what? he's a politician /* 't b a mintit. raspuns: si ce daca? e politician'
	Value judgments		*AN may represent a solution to this crisis /* 'AN poate reprezenta o solutie pentru aceasta criza'
	Controversial assertions		*Any lie is construed on a truth, otherwise it won't hold. /* 'Orice minciuna se construieste pe un adevar- altfel, nu sta in picioare.'

Table I: *Taxonomy of emotive markers in computer-mediated communication*

As far as the second category is involved, we detached 13 exponents which are non-directly CMC-related: speech acts carrying emotive load (expressives/assertives); vocatives (affective forms of address); diminutives and superlatives; coinage of new words and expressions; foreign words and expressions; slang/in-group language; colloquialisms and use of the vernacular; idiomatic expressions; proverbs and sayings; presuppositions; implicature; value judgments and controversial assertions. All these CMC-related or -non-related devices mostly account for the polarisation of allegiances and the individual expression of ideological stances.

The first Romanian political blog

Although at present there are numerous politicians (MP's) or private individuals (partisans/supporters of a political doctrine) who lead blogs, the one we are going to analyse in the following has the merit to be the first one on the Romanian political scene.

Adrian Năstase, the blogger, formerly an extremely potent political actor, lost the presidential elections of 2004 in favour of the current president, Traian Băsescu. The battle was fierce and the victory only came after the second scrutiny, the difference being almost unnoticeable. The failure was allegedly assigned to the politician's lack of popularity with common people.

Nevertheless, the claim to elitism is still overt in the motto:

> 1) "...Cititorii mei sunt mai inteligenți decât scriitorii altora."
>   '...My readers are more intelligent than others' writers.'

The implied idea is that other politicians are not even capable of writing their own speeches and therefore hire professional writers to this end. However, the people who engage in conversation in this blogospace outsmart the other politicians' writers.

The next line in the letterhead summarizes the political trajectory of the MP:

> 2) ministru – prim-ministru – blogger
>   'minister – prime-minister – blogger'

There is also an attached tag that reinforces the idea of intellectual elite:

> 3) blog cu accord intellectual / conținut implicit
>   'blog with intellectual consent / implicit content'

The corpus we chose to analyse in order to reveal affective exponents present in a computer-mediated dialogue is made up of all the comments triggered by an entry posted on 26th September, 2007, 12:09 PM. The post triggered 102 responses, the first on September 26, 2007, 12:15 PM (6 minutes after it was launched on the weblog), and the last on October 2, 2007, 1:23 PM (a week after, it still aroused interest among participants). The transcript totals 15226 words, out of which 3947 are unique words.

As to the patterns of interaction, there were 59 individual posters, some of them posting several times, mostly in reply to other posters. 26 posts were directly addressed to A.N.[1], 15 posts were not addressed to anybody in particular, 60 posts were replies to other posters' responses and only one reply of the blogger's was recorded.

The title of this post reads:

4) Traian Basescu minte!
'Traian Basescu is lying!'

This represents a forceful assertive, which sets not only the topic, but the tone and the direction of the conversation as well. It comes as no wonder, then, that the verb *to lie* (a minți) is found in 28 instances (25 present simple – 'minte', 3 past simple – 'a mințit', 1 gerund – 'mințind', all with reference to Traian Băsescu. From the same word family we also encounter *lie* (15 occurrences in the singular – 'minciuna' and 4 in the plural – 'minciuni[le]') and *liar* in 2 occurrences – 'mincinos'.

We will present below the input post in full, and will try to analyse the message that it conveys. The statement, taken out of context, seems, at first sight, completely nonsensical and contradicts common logic. In fact, the president makes a parallel with previous accusations of abuse that he himself made against Adrian Năstase and the prosecutors in office during Adrian Năstase's mandate as prime-minister. The difference, though, he states, lies in the fact that unlike his case, when the PSD officials gave instructions that his file be sent to the Prosecutor's office, now, during his mandate as president, nobody gave any instruction to anyone as to sending ex-ministers' files for investigation.

5) In conferința de presa de ieri, Traian Basescu afirma: "***S-a dovedit***[2] *insa ca, in ceea ce ma privește, exista o stenograma a PSD, in care demnitarii PSD din acea vreme au stabilit sa se trimtă dosarul la Parchet. Ceea ce ar fi foarte greu de susținut de către actualii miniștri. Nimeni nu a dat nicio instrucțiune nimănui.*"

'In yesterday's press conference, Traian Băsescu asserted that: "*It has been nevertheless **proved** that, as far as I am concerned, there existed a PSD[3] short-hand report in which the then PSD officials decided that the file be sent to the Prosecutor's office. Which would be very difficult to uphold by the present ministers. Nobody gave any instruction to anyone.*"'

As we shall see in the following, Adrian Năstase starts from the assumption that everybody is well within the context and leaves out completely this aspect of the apparent lack of logic and chooses instead to confute one verb - 'to prove' (used in the passive voice, to emphasise indirectness). By 'logically' inferencing that 'it hasn't been proved', the politician aims to demonstrate that Traian Băsescu is lying. The strongest argument used is the traditional one: quoting exact sources, with clear time reference.

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[1] The initials of the politician.
[2] A.N.'s bold type.
[3] The Social Democrat Party.

6) In realitate, in **Rezoluția DNA**[4] nr.6/P/2005, din 28.XI.2005, se arata ca: *"Din ansamblul actelor premergătoare efectuate in cauza **nu s-a confirmat existenta niciunei stenograme a discuțiilor purtate in cadrul sedintelor organismelor de conducere ale PSD** – mai precis in sedintele Delegației Permanente sau ale Biroului Executiv Central – ce s-au desfasurat in cursul anilor 2003-2004 si **nici ca s-ar fi dispus înregistrări ale discuțiilor pe banda magnetica sau alt tip de suport**."*
'In reality, in the **DNA's Resolution** no. 6/P/2005 on 28.11.2005, it was shown that: *"Out of all preceding documents drawn up for the purposes of this case, there has been **no confirmation of the existence of any shorthand report of discussions conducted within meetings of PSD management bodies** – more precisely the meetings of the Permanent Delegation or of the Central Executive Bureau – which were held during 2003-2004, **neither of the fact that there had been an order to magnetically tape or by any other means to record conversation**."'*

7) Deci **nu** s-a dovedit. Deci Traian Basescu minte.
'Therefore, it has **not** been proved. Therefore, Traian Băsescu is lying.'

Although political blogs, as we previously mentioned, may run the risk of becoming partisanship-driven, in this particular instance one can still find some divergent ideologies and side-takings. The first three replies are in fact against Adrian Năstase, the stance varying from mild to strong opposition. We will reproduce the one that Adrian Năstase chose to answer to (actually his only intervention in this dialogue).

8) haide D-nule Nastase nu ne mai luati de fraieri va rog eu frumos...macar faza cu stenogramele lasa-ti-o asa si nu va mai umpleti de penibil negandule autenticitatea...pentru ca totusi nu sunt numai fani care va sustin neconditionat cei ce mai scriu pe blogul dumneavoastra...apropo rugati administratorul sa nu mai cenzureze mesajele in care nu sunteti ridicat in slavi...daca sunt decente si nu contin limbaj licentzios nu vad rostul cenzurarii lor... Sau macar scrieti in titlul blogului: interzis a scrie celor care ma contesta
'com'n Mr. Năstase, please don't take us for fools any more...at least leave the shorthand reports thing as it is and don't plunge into ridiculousness by denying their authenticity...because anyway, there are not only fans who support you unconditionally, the people who happen to write on your weblog...by the way, ask your administrator to stop censoring the messages in which you are not being lauded...if they are decent and do not contain licentious language I see no point in censoring them...Or at least write in the letterhead of your weblog: forbidden to the ones who will contest me'

The first to answer to this reply is from the administrator himself:

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[4] The National Anti-corruption Department.

9) Liviu, taică, ai ceva să-mi transmiți sau te mai zbați niţel în conspiraţie?...☺
'Liviu, sonny, are you telling me something or keep struggling against the conspiracy?...☺'

The blog administrator replies to the overt accusations of purposefully planned like-mindedness in a superior, sarcastic tone ('taică' = affectionate term in the vernacular, used by an older person to address a younger one, cf. DEX 1998); yet the use of a smiley face can have a double role: to mitigate the effect of the rather blunt implication that the interlocutor has in fact nothing to say and to belittle the importance of the exchange. He is nevertheless the one who administrates the blog and enforces impartiality; therefore he has to at least apparently preserve a balance between the diverging ethea in the dialogue.

Adrian Năstase's reply is meant to clarify his reasoning. Nevertheless, he does so by shedding a somewhat negative stigma on the whole political body of which the president is a leading member. He declares that he did not refer to the 'shorthand reports thing', although the syntagm 'shorthand reports' does appear in bold type, and it actually represents the crux of his argument.

10) Eu nu m-am referit la chestiunea stenogramelor – istoria e lunga si murdara, legata de campania electorala, la fel ca si denuntul Monei Musca pe antetul Aliantei DA, avandu-l drept co-presedinte pe Traian Basescu. M-am referit la afirmatia "s-a dovedit". Eu am aratat simplu, citand dintr-un document al Parchetului, ca "nu s-a dovedit" si, ca deci afirmatia a fost o minciuna. Asta nu inseamna ca nu poti sa-l mai votezi odata pe Basescu!
'I did not refer to the shorthand reports thing – that's a long and dirty history concerning the electoral campaign, just like Mona Musca's denunciation on the letterhead of the DA Alliance[5]. I referred to the statement "It has been proved". I simply showed, by quoting from a document issued by the Prosecutor's Office that it hasn't been proved, and therefore, that the statement was a lie. This doesn't mean you can't vote for Băsescu once more!'

The condescending and sarcastic tone is again conspicuous: *I am telling you what is right, but in the name of free will, it is up to you to choose what's wrong*, would be a fair translation of the of last exclamative sentence.

I. *CMC-related emotive exponents*

a) *Emoticons* are probably the most important paralanguage affective marker in computer-mediated communication. According to Sanderson (1993: 1), emoticons (or "smileys") represent "a sequence of ordinary characters you can find on your computer keyboard. Smileys

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[5] Political alliance between the National Liberal Party and the Democrat Party, concluded in 2004 for electoral purposes. It subsequently proved non-functional and was therefore dissolved in 2007.

are used in e-mail and other forms of communication using computers". They were also described as "visual cues formed from ordinary typographical symbols that when read sideways represent feelings or emotions" (Rezabek & Cochenour 1998: 201). In CMC they are an expression of emotion, also called "pictographs" and are used as "surrogates for nonverbal communication" (Thompson & Foulger 1996: 226), giving clues as to the facial expression of the message sender, in order to provide "a paralinguistic component to a message" (Thompson & Foulger 1996: 230). According to Godin (1993: 4), when "properly used, a smiley can spice up virtually any form of written communication".

Most of the time, in this conversation, emoticons are used as a contextual tool and pragmatic mechanism shaping and acknowledging shared mindsets.

> 11) Ca Traian Basescu minte cum respira o stie prea bine orice roman intelegent. Cariera politica a scumpului nostru presedinte este cladita pe minciuna. Numai un mic exemplu: Mai tineti minte cand a promis ca va demisiona in 5 MINUTE. Ha, ha, ha, ce gluma buna!☺
> 'That Traian Basescu lies as he breathes is well known by any intelligent Romanian. The political career of our beloved president is built on lies. Just a little example: Do you remember when he promised he would resign in 5 MINUTES. Ha, ha, ha, what a good joke! ☺'

This final exclamation has by now an anecdotal value. It is the president's favourite expression of appreciation of his own sense of humour. Its use here is meant to emphasise the initial statement referring to the president's innate propensity to lie.

b) *Punctuation* is used as a substitute for face-to-face paraverbal indicators. Suspension points are used to suggest that the implications go beyond what was said; exclamation/question marks are used to mark the interactants' amazement, indignation, etc.; inverted commas indicate that the meaning of the word/expression is figurative.

c) *Spelling* performs the same function as punctuation, plus a supplementary one which again comes to reinforce the idea of cultivating group identity through common valorisation benchmarks.

Capital letters are a substitute for intonation and an indicator of higher voice pitch used for greater emphasis:

> 12) Mai clar, NIMENI, dar absolut nimeni din afara acestui partid nu ar putea "desăvârşi" lucrurile fără ajutorul "intern"!
> 'More specifically, NOBODY, but absolutely nobody outside this party could "round off" things without "insider" help!'

Wilful transcription of faulty Romanian pronunciation/grammar is used to refer to uneducated politicians. Marian Vanghelie, otherwise a prominent PSD figure, has made history with his illiterate discourses in broken syntax and suburban lingo. In this conversation just a few of his most celebrated linguistic blunders are referred to, e.g. marean /ma'ræn/ (instead of Marian /ma'rjan/); almanahe (instead of 'almanahuri' – almanacs, n.pl.); asfalte (instead of 'asfalturi' – asphalts, n.pl.).

d) *Playing the identity game* is a very important element of computer-mediated communication. Preserving anonymity in CMC is a double-edged sword, in that it has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it might be possible that behind an assumed name, people may feel freer to uninhibitedly express their opinions, while their interlocutors give them the benefit of the doubt and focus on the apparent truth value and accuracy of the arguments put forward, refraining from any conjectures as to ulterior motives or intentions. On the other hand, the positive dynamics of a discussion group may be based on the fact that people count on clear identification of the interlocutor, in order to ensure credibility. Interlocutors' anonymity may render their contributions less reliable or accurate, distorting the perception of the group members, who will distrust the expertise of the speaker and question the believability or motivations of the statements made[6].

The most relevant example in our mini-corpus refers to the assumptions one interlocutor makes about the identity of another poster. *Aya* (herself with an irrelevant nickname) replies to the comments of *mirceag* with a series of invectives and defamatory statements. Strangely enough, their language borders bawdiness at times, but their comments are not banned by the administrator, nor condemned by any of the other participants.

13) Marea problema a celui care are gresita impresia ca este cu adevarat presedintele PSD (individul despre care vorbim - stii care, ala care crede ca se ascunde cand semneaza "Mircea G" pe forum la JN sau "mirceag" ori "mircea" aici pe blog) e urmatoarea: dupa ce ca sta pe picioroange, mai si umbla tras de sfori de catre stapanii lui.

'The chief problem of the guy who is under the false impression that he is the real president of PSD (the guy we are talking about – you know who, the one who thinks he's under cover when signing "Mircea G" on the JN forum and "mirceag" or "mircea" here on the blog) is the following: not only is he walking on broomsticks, he is also being string-pulled by his masters.'

II. *Non-directly CMC-related emotive exponents*

a) Speech acts carrying emotive load: expressives/assertives are rather forceful tools for the expression of one's party identification or ideological orientation, or simply the articulation of closeness to or distancing from Adrian Năstase.

14) ...ma simt mai reprezentat de Adrian Nastase ca om de stat si, de ce nu?, presedinte decat de bufonul Basescu.

'... I feel more represented by Adrian Nastase as a statesman and, why not?, as president, than by Basescu the jester.'

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[6] For more information on competing hypotheses concerning perception of anonymous sources – the discounting hypothesis and the benevolence hypothesis, see Rains (2007).

15) Nu consider ca Adrian Nastase este un om desavarsit. Sunt convins ca are pacatele lui, asa cum avem toti.
'I don't consider that Adrian Nastase is a perfect man. I am convinced he has his shortcomings, like we all do.'

b) Vocatives (affective forms of address):

16) haide D-nule Nastase...
'come on, Mr Nastase...'

17) Domnule Adrian Nastase...'
'Mister Adrian Nastase...'

18) Domnule Presedinte,'
'Mister President,'

19) Prostanacule,...
'Dopey,...'

The first three instances represent forms of address to Adrian Nastase, and it is interesting to note that negative politeness strategies never go that far as to use the second person singular (in Romanian, social distance is grammatically marked through the use of the second person plural verb and the personal pronoun of politeness – 'dumneavoastră') The fourth instance is from an exchange between Aya and the one she considers to be Mircea Geoană, the current president of the PSD party. 'Dopey' is a nickname that Mircea Geoană was given by the first Romanian post-Decembrist president, the founding father and long-standing president of the PSD party (until demoted by scheming party dissenters).

c) Diminutives and superlatives are classical devices of expressing affect. Romanian is particularly linguistically rich in diminutives and superlatives, due to its agglutinant characteristic of word-formation through affixation. The following examples are included in the mini-corpus: 'base' (*from Băsescu*), 'superbase' *(from super + Băsescu)*, 'baselu' (*popular form of base + definite article*); 'fratioare' (*little brother*).

d) Coinage of new words and expressions is another lexical device that can contribute to the expression of emotions, all politically-oriented. Examples include 'dictatura basesciana' (Băsescian/Băsescu's dictatorship) or:

20) Nu stiu cat de corupt este, nu i-am numarat ouale.
'I don't know how corrupt he is, I haven't counted his eggs.'

A număra ouale cuiva ('to count sb's eggs') is a newly coined idiom in Romanian, meaning 'to probe sb's honesty', making reference to a political corruption scandal in which Năstase was involved, when he allegedly had some shareholding in a poultry farm.

e) Foreign words and expressions are indicative of the fact that the group members share a common language. Examples include: 'c'mon'; 'capisci'; 'J'en ai assez', 'y compris', 'bref', 'Wow!', 'Thanks anyway', etc.

f) Likewise, slang and in-group language are also used as a cohesion factor for the members of this virtual community. E.g. ANul, ANului (*the AN, i.e. the Adrian Năstase; proper noun initials + def. art. suffix, m.sg., N/G*); adminii (*the admins, i.e. the administrators of the weblog; abbrev. + def.art. Suffix, m.pl., N*).

g) Colloquialisms and use of the vernacular increase the degree of familiarity between interlocutors and spice up the conversation. Examples include:

> 21) Mi se rupe magistral de PSD/PRM/PNL
> 'I don't give an imperial damn about PSD/PRM/PNL[7]'

'făcătura' (*set-up*); 'mare specialist în cacialmale' (*real specialist in games of bluff*); 'mintenaş' (regional expression meaning *at once/in a second*, used in Transylvania); 'oleacă' (*a little bit*); 'nene' (*old chap, brother*); 'mai tre' (*still needs to*); 'idee faină' (*great idea*), etc.

h) Idiomatic expressions serve the same purpose as colloquialisms and use of the vernacular, contributing to an increased feeling of belonging to and solidarity within the group. From a pragmatic perspective, proverbs may serve a double function: of positive politeness when they are applied to the members of the group and negative politeness when they refer to group opponents.

> 22) haita n-are ce roade
> 'the pack has nothing to chew on' (meaning that the politicians in the PSD party have nothing left to steal).

> 23) Nici in gluma sa nu "arati coltii" cand e vorba de suferinta cuiva!
> 'Don't "show your fangs" when it comes to somebody's suffering, not even in jest!' (to show one's fangs = to be ready for attack)

> 24) Presedintele Romaniei nu minte, ci l-a luat gura pe dinainte (!).
> 'The president of Romania is not lying; he's just shot from the hips.' (he spoke without forethought)

i) Proverbs and sayings, used in the context of computer-mediated communication contribute even more to encoding in-group relations. On the one hand, they transmit solidarity by instituting a sort of positive politeness amongst participants, who adhere to the same set of rules, values and beliefs. On the other hand, they institute negative politeness, by expressing indirectness and by distancing from those who have divergent views and are not supportive of the same cause. As it might be easily expected, the proverbs/sayings/proverbial expressions used are mostly in relation to lies/lying/liars.

> 25) Minciuna are picioare scurte si odata si odata tot il va ajunge mania poporului!
> 'A lie has short feet (= the truth will out) and one fine day the rage of the people will run you down'

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[7] Acronyms for Romanian political parties.

26) Prostanacule, ai mare grija: cel care sare multe garduri, sigur "agata apasat"
    un varf de par cu sezutul pantalonilor!
    'Dopey, be very careful: he who jumps over many fences will surely hook
    his trousers on a picket' (= a thief will always be caught eventually).

j) Presuppositions refer to the "assumptions the speaker makes about what the hearer is likely to accept without challenge" (Givon, 1979: 50). In the example below, the speaker assumes as common ground the fact that Mona Musca's denunciation of former involvement with the Securitate[8] is a stain on the public image of the DA Alliance, which was supposedly founded on justice ('Dreptate') and truth ('Adevăr').

27) la fel ca si denuntul Monei Musca pe antetul Aliantei DA
    'just like Mona Musca's denunciation on the letterhead of the DA Al-
    liance'

k) Implicatures are useful means of expressing meaning without explicitly uttering or stating it. The example below is a relevant example. The speaker implies that by definition, politicians are notorious liars, and that their lies are common knowledge and have therefore no effect.

28) t b a mintit. raspuns: si ce daca? e politician
    't b lied. answer: so what? he's a politician'

l) Value judgments refer to a common set of values that the participants in the blogosphere share or dissociate themselves from.

29) AN poate reprezenta o solutie pentru aceasta criza
    'AN may represent a solution to this crisis'

30) Si eu ma simt reprezentata de un om de talia lui Adrian Nastase.
    'I too feel represented by a man of Adrian Nastase's stature.'

m) Controversial assertions are made with the purpose of building arguments in favour / in refutation of moral reasoning and political ideology.

31) Orice minciuna se construieste pe un adevar – altfel, nu sta in picioare
    'Any lie is construed on a truth, otherwise it won't hold.'

32) In politica, e nevoie sa minti frumos si credibil, nu sa spui adevaruri ne-
    placute. Daca alegatorul e bou si vrea sa i se spuna 'Sa traiasca bine', asa i
    se spune.
    'In politics, one needs to lie nicely and credibly, not to say unpleasant
    truths. If the voter is an asshole and wants to be wished 'Live well', that's
    what he will be told.'

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[8] The secret service of communist Romania.

Conclusions

Although blogs are generally created with a view to ensure communication between the author and his/her readership, in this case there is little, if any communication between the blogger and the posters, which consequently turns the blog into a sort of self-casting of the id of a formerly powerful political leader. We believe that in the long run this will surely determine less involvement from non-party participants, leaving space for divisive debate between close supporters and opponents of the Parliamentarian.

It is apparent that there is more communication among the posters themselves than between the blog owner and the posters, inevitably leading to an ideologically heterogeneous arena.

This pluralistic ideological positioning is still auspicious. The posters' utterances cover a wide range of stances, varying from solidarity/commitment to detachment.

34) Va spun toate acestea pentru ca stiu ca nu este nevoie ca unui om ca Nastase sa ii adresezi indemnuri la actiune. Dar pentru Adrian Nastase pe care il simt, stiu ca valoreaza mult sprijinul moral si prietenia in momentele de singuratate si confirmarea valorii in clipele de declin.
'I am telling you all these because I know that one needs not urge a man like Năstase to act. But for the Adrian Năstase I feel, I know that moral support and friendship in moments of loneliness and the confirmation of value in times of decline count a lot.'

35) Ca sa fim foarte clari, de la bun inceput: urasc PSD, il urasc pe Ion Iliescu si pe Nastase. Cred cu tarie ca aceste entitati au adus mai multe prejudicii Romaniei decit Nicolae Ceauşescu.
'To make myself very clear, from the outset: I hate PSD, I hate Ion Iliescu and Nastase. I firmly believe that these entities have brought more prejudice to Romania than Nicolae Ceauşescu.'

We have tried to demonstrate in this paper that the weblog under discussion is more emotion/affect-driven than politically programatic, particularly because of the interactants, who are minor political actors and/or supporters, and who display their side-takings by resorting to a wide range of emotive argumentation exponents.

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