

# **JOURNALISTS' ARGUING NEWSMAKING DECISIONS ON THE BASIS OF ANTICIPATED AUDIENCE UPTAKE**

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## **Abstract**

Journalists' expectations concerning the way in which the audience will react to news strongly influence their decisions in newsmaking. This article investigates the argumentative dimension of journalists' anticipatory inferences in newsroom editorial conferences. In order to study journalists' reasoning processes concerning audience uptake that lead journalists to publish a certain news instead of another or to publish a news in a certain way, we will use the Pragma-Dialectical framework at the interactional level and Argumentum Model of Topics at the inferential level. Through a case study, we will investigate the anticipation of the audience interest and the anticipation of the audience persuasion, showing how editorial conferences function as places of reflection in which certain kinds of standpoints are at stake and particular aspects of the audience uptake are anticipated.

*Keywords: newsmaking, anticipatory inferences, metapragmatic strategies, pragma-dialectics, argumentum model of topics*

## **1. Introduction**

This paper sets out to explore the argumentative dimension of journalists' anticipated audience uptake in editorial conferences, with a special focus on print-journalism domain and on the handling of cross-mediatic topics in newspapers<sup>1</sup>. More specifically, we aim at clarifying the role of these strategies in taking newsmaking decisions about news selection and news editing. We will provide

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<sup>1</sup> The present paper has been developed within the framework of the project "Argumentation in newsmaking process and product" aimed at examining the role of argumentative practices in newsmaking discourse with a special attention to the forms of practical argumentation in newsroom decision-making (funded by the SNF (PDFMP1\_137181/1, 2012-2015))

an empirical case study concerning a complex argumentation in a deliberative editorial conference at the *Corriere del Ticino*, the main newspaper in the Italian speaking part of Switzerland (see section 4). We will observe how journalists come to decisions whereby an analysis of their reasoning in editorial conferences.

It is known from the literature that journalists' expectations concerning the way in which the audience will react to news strongly influence decisions in newsmaking (e.g. Bell 1991). We will sketch an overview of how journalists accommodate not only their news style but also the topics of the news to their audience cognitive and emotive demands, by looking at their argumentative discussions concerning the audience's uptake in editorial conferences discussions. Two types of anticipation of uptake will be discussed: the anticipation of the audience's interest and that of persuasion. The anticipation of the audience interest can be said to be subordinate to the anticipation of persuasion, indeed raising interest in the audience is a strategy, which in the end aims at persuading the audience. We will show that the anticipation of persuasion plays a crucial role in journalists' anticipatory reasoning concerning audience uptake. However, journalists' attempt to be persuasive represent only a part of their aims; indeed, they also aim at conveying a balanced view of the event they are reporting and at enabling readers to build an autonomous opinion on it.

## 2. Journalists' anticipated audience uptake.

The prototypical nature of news style, *i.e.* the way in which journalists present their news in terms of choosing relative importance and intended audience, can be said to be set in the idea that journalists are making inferences in an attempt to respond to their audience<sup>2</sup>. This is usually displayed in a journalist shifting his style to be more suitable to the purpose he wants to reach with the audience he/she is talking to. Therefore, as Allan Bell observes, "the basic dimension on which we can examine a speaker's style is therefore a responsive one"<sup>3</sup> (Bell 1991: 105). In this endeavor, traditionally, we can distinguish two types of approaches

<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, we will see that all levels of a journalist's linguistic choices are concerned.

<sup>3</sup> Audience design parallels closely the principles of the Soviet literary theorist and philosopher of language, Michael Bakhtin. Bakhtin's theories are founded on the dialogic nature of speech and literature: "For the word (and, consequently, for a human being) nothing is more terrible than a lack of response" (Bakhtin 1986: 127). For someone to speak is to respond and be responded to: "An essential (constitutive) marker of the utterance is its quality of being directed to someone, its addressivity" (Bakhtin 1986: 95).

studying the way in which a speaker constructs his message for his audience; while Bell's strand of research, focused on audience design, came from a disciplinary background in sociolinguistics applied to journalism and media, a parallel approach arose in social psychology, namely accommodation theory. As the theory was largely accounting for how speakers modify their speech in interpersonal encounters, the context of mass media characterized by an absent audience shows specific accommodative strategies exploiting stereotyped audiences. This state of affair calls for the consideration of the link between two domains, namely journalism studies and pragmatics. On the one hand, the research trend concerning the audience demand in journalism studies (e.g. Peters 2012, 2013; Witschge 2012, 2013) focuses on audience demand as a social criteria, and is based on theories which aim at standardizing the random pressure of social forces on newsmaking decisions, so that audience demand is considered a simple *criterium* intervening in journalists' newsmaking discussions. On the other hand, pragmatics (e.g. Grice 1969, 1991, 2001; Recanati 1988, 2003; Sbisà & Turner 2013; Senft 2014) which traditionally studies how the speaker takes advantage of the expectations concerning the way in which the other speaker will intervene, lacks however of an empirical study of practices in context.

Therefore, these approaches do not say much about how journalists actually reason starting from their expectations concerning audience uptake in the everyday life of news organization. Starting from the assumption that such expectations strongly influence journalists' decisions in newsmaking, the present paper aims at investigating this anticipating dimension of newsmaking from an argumentative perspective. The main research questions of the paper are the following:

- a) which types of standpoint do journalists put forth? Where do they speak overtly about that?
- b) does a correlation exist between the specific place of reflection, such as evaluative/deliberative formal or informal editorial meeting and a particular type of standpoint?
- c) does the audience uptake anticipation aspects concerning interest and persuasion correlate with a specific type of premises?

d) can we postulate the existence of some naïve pragmatics theories among journalists, which are in turn due to empathy and identification with the audience?

The argumentative lens that we adopt gives the chance to shed light on the reasoning processes concerning audience reaction that lead to publish a certain news instead of another and on the way in which journalists decide to publish a news, starting from their anticipatory inferences concerning audience reaction. Indeed, an argumentative approach allows us to understand the audience design not just in terms of the abstract mapping of speakers' anticipations concerning the audience uptake onto the message, but, in terms of a reasoning process which does not take place exclusively at an intra-individual level, but rather that is worked out publicly at a collective level through concrete speaking practices within conference meetings. As a matter of fact, looking at argued anticipatory strategies in the newsroom gives an important contribution to socio-linguistic research on newsmaking, and is complementary to the focus that a large share of it places on audience design (e.g. Bell 1984; Bell 1991), and more generally on message design (e.g. O'Keefe 1991).

The analysis of argumentation helps us to understand how writers adapt to their audience because it captures the reasoning that formed the basis of editorial choices and on the basis of this reasoning it allows the reconstruction of the conscious pragmatic theories of journalists.

### 3. Data and methodology.

The corpus on which our investigation is based enables comparative and contrastive studies from a multilingual as well as a multimedia perspective, since data are gained from both TV-journalism and print-journalism in the three linguistic areas of Switzerland. Part of the corpus was collected at the Swiss public service television (SRG SSR) in French and German<sup>4</sup>. A more recent dataset was collected at *Corriere del Ticino* (CdT), the main Italian-language newspaper in the country<sup>5</sup>. Both datasets were collected with the same methodology

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<sup>4</sup> This part of the corpus was collected during the project "Idée Suisse: Language policy, norms and practice as exemplified by Swiss Radio and Television" (SNF NRP 56, 2005-2010).

<sup>5</sup> These data were collected during the project "Argumentation in newsmaking process and product" (SNF PDFMP1\_137181/1, 2012-2015).

(Progression Analysis: see Perrin 2003, 2013), and comprise audio-visual recordings of various newsroom activities, such as formal and informal editorial meeting discussions, retrospective verbal protocols, interviews with journalists, s-notation protocols, television news items and newspaper articles.

For the scope of the present paper, we will focus on the Italian data of *CdT*, and more specifically on morning editorial conference discussions. In this paper we reconstruct the context of newsmaking by means of the model of communication context developed by Rigotti & Rocci (2006). According to this model, the social context of communication can be subdivided in two dimensions: the institutionalized and the interpersonal dimension. The institutionalized dimension is based on the key-notion of activity type, which is composed of an interaction field and of an interaction scheme. An interaction field is a social reality in which the interaction takes place and that is affected by the interaction; interaction schemes are part of a virtual social reality, as they consist of a culturally shared knowledge determining certain roles. Rigotti and Rocci define interaction schemes

culturally shared 'recipes' for interaction congruent with more or less broad classes of joint goals and involving scheme-roles presupposing generic requirements (Rigotti & Rocci 2006: 173)

Hence, the newsroom is considered as an interaction field where specific interaction schemes are activated. In the case of editorial conferences, the interaction scheme of *deliberation* or of *evaluation* is mapped onto the interaction field of a given newsroom, resulting in the activity type "deliberative editorial conference" or "evaluative editorial conference". In this activity types, questions, issues, disagreements or explicit confrontations emerge in the pursuit of shared goals.

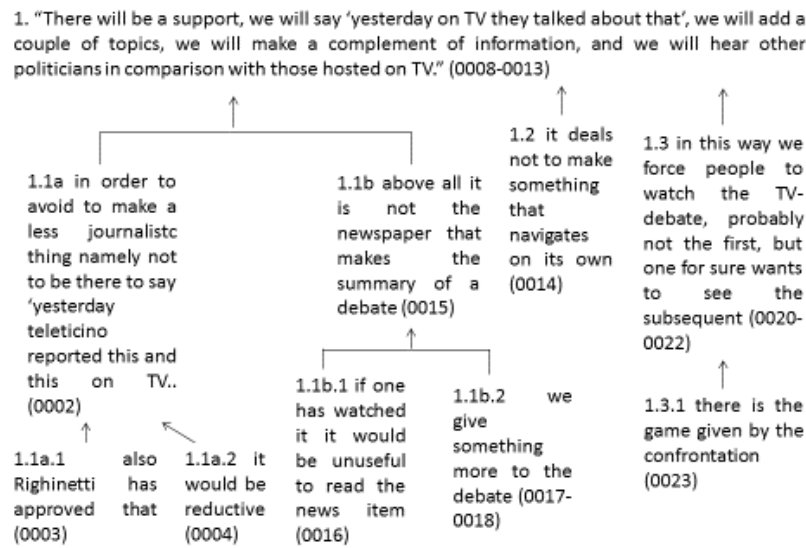
We will carry out *a)* an argumentative analysis of newsroom discussions dealing with the distinct aspects of audience's uptake in the activity type "editorial conference", which are strictly bound to the distinct premises at stake, and *b)* we will verify the implementation of the journalists' strategies in the respective news products. In our argumentative reconstructions of editorial conferences, we follow pragma-dialectical principles (Eemeren van & Grootendorst 2002, 2004), *i.e.* we identify the issue at stake, the related standpoints and the arguments supporting each standpoint. Then, our fine-grained analysis goes one step further, also investigating the inferential level of arguments, following the Argumentum

Model of Topics (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010; Rigotti & Greco in preparation), in order to deepen the distinct types of hidden premises bound with the distinct aspects of audience uptake.

#### **4. Argumentative analysis of an editorial conference discussion**

Our case study is based on a Monday morning editorial conference, held on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2013 in the newsroom of *CdT*. Typically, during Monday morning editorial conferences, journalists argue newsmaking decisions about news items for the whole week. In the case under investigation the discussion is focused on the way in which a news item, referring to a political debate to be broadcasted on TV, should be published in order to raise the reader's interest. The debate deals with the incoming federal elections in Switzerland, to be held in April 2013, for the renewal of the Legislative. The local TV- station *Teleticino* is owned by the same media company controlling *Corriere del Ticino* and the political talk-show *Piazza del Corriere* employs the same brand of the newspaper *CdT*. At that time two political debates concerning these elections were broadcast on the local TV-channel, during a television program called *Piazza del Corriere*, a Swiss-Italian program devoted to debates. The two recently aired debates were discussed in the editorial conference in relation to two newspaper articles. One newspaper article should have been published before that the TV debate was broadcast, whereas the second item should have been published some days after the debate. It is interesting to stress that the case study deals with the interweaving of print-journalism and TV-journalism; indeed, we observe an inter-media chain in the editorial conferences, which can be found also in the news items published in the newspaper.

In order to understand the reasoning processes at play when the journalist deals with the anticipated audience uptake and in order to understand the reasons why print- and TV- journalism are strongly interweaved in this case study, it is necessary to reconstruct the argumentative structure of the selected excerpt of the editorial conference in which the journalist argues in favor of the necessity to interconnect in an interesting way the newspaper item with the TV- item (see the transcript of the data in the Appendix):

**Fig. 1. Argumentative reconstruction of the standpoint that the journalist supports**

As we can see from the Figure above, the argumentative structure in support of the journalist's standpoint is multiple and subordinative. The journalist argues that they will publish a news item concerning the elections and mentioning the tv-debate broadcasted on the previous evening; however, the journalist asserts that it is necessary to add some new information, in order to make the topic less 'journalistic', meaning more newsworthy (1.1a), which is in turn further supported by the argument of authority "we discussed it also with Righinetti and he has approved that" (1.1a.1); Righinetti has a strong authority in the field, since he is not only a prominent figure in the editorial board of *CdT*, but also the journalist leading the debate of the TV-program to be announced in the newspaper. While the first argumentative line deals with the necessity to follow an editorial norm, namely to avoid to publish something less journalistic, the second argumentative line (1.2) supports the need to make something coherent with the TV debate, something logically linked with the information already given on TV. Looking at the whole argumentation structure, we notice that the third argumentative line takes a different direction, focusing on incentivizing the newspaper audience to watch the TV debate; we observe a shift of focus on an "inter-mediatic" continuum, spacing from the newspaper to the TV. In the first and second argumentative lines the journalist refers to the already broadcast TV debate and pays attention not to publish a summary of the debate, then the journalist focuses on the connection of the newspaper item with the TV item, taking into account the information already given on TV. Finally, in the third

argumentative line she completely concentrates on the way in which the audience could be persuaded to watch the forthcoming TV-debate, so that the newspaper item becomes a means of persuasion. The use of clearly evaluative arguments reinforces the journalist's will to reach the desirable end of persuading readers to read the news item and to subsequently persuade them to watch the TV-debate. This move is played out through the third argumentative line (1.3; 1.3.1), which deploys the strategy to be played out concerning the intriguing cognitive effect given by the curiosity raised in the readers by the confrontation between the already broadcasted debate and the one to be broadcasted.

We can gain evidence of the journalists' will to persuade the audience also in the usage of evaluative terms within arguments, since the first argumentative line, even though the persuasive aim becomes prominent only in the third argumentative line; in (1.1a) he uses "to avoid to make a *less journalistic* thing" in order to signal the will to distinguish the newspapers' article style from the purely news reporting, traditionally associated with poor quality news articles. Furthermore, in the second argumentative line the journalist supports his standpoint by arguing that the news item should be published referring to the debate broadcasted on the previous evening so that "it is not something that *navigates on its own*", implicitly judging in a negative way a newspaper item which does not take into account audience previous knowledge on the topic already presented on the TV debate.

It is in this scenario that we can identify the evocation of two distinct frames: the frame of a desirable outcome of the news, aiming at an audience persuasion, and the frame of an undesirable outcome of the news, which would not interest readers and therefore not persuade them to read and to watch the TV-debate. Moreover, in the last argumentative line (1.3), the word "game", which has a positive value connotation, functions as link in the "inter-mediatic" chain and bridges the newspaper media level to the TV media level. By arguing, the journalist goes one step further in the third argumentative line, and we observe a shift in the aspect of the anticipation of the audience uptake; by saying "we should make a complement of information on the newspaper because in this way we force people to watch the debate" the journalist this time explicitly appeals to anticipation of persuasion. Nevertheless, the third argumentative line not only shifts to the anticipation of persuasion, but also comprehends a shift from rising interest in newspaper audience to persuading readers to 'become' TV-audience.



Therefore, the analysis of the whole argumentation enables us to observe a case of inter-mediatic connection, in which some objectives of newspaper practice, for example in this case the objective to make an interesting news item carried out by using a certain template deals in the last analysis to persuade audience to watch a TV-debate.

The journalist's will to persuade the *CdT* readers to watch the TV-debate is reinforced in the discussion by the subsequent practical standpoint, which follows the previous one mentioned above, and which is put forth by the *CdT* journalist who will lead the TV-debate:

(2) "the day of the debate, as previously planned, we will make the typical launch of the tradition in the news section of Lugano and Mendrisio as we usually do when the tv-program *Piazza del Corriere* is broadcasted and in the first page I ordered to insert a slightly modified appendix".

Concluding, the first part of the case study under investigation enables us to identify the correlation between the deliberative editorial conference meeting as a place of reflection and the emergence of a practical standpoint on the basis of journalists' anticipated audience uptake.

#### **4.1. Argumentative analysis at the inferential structure level**

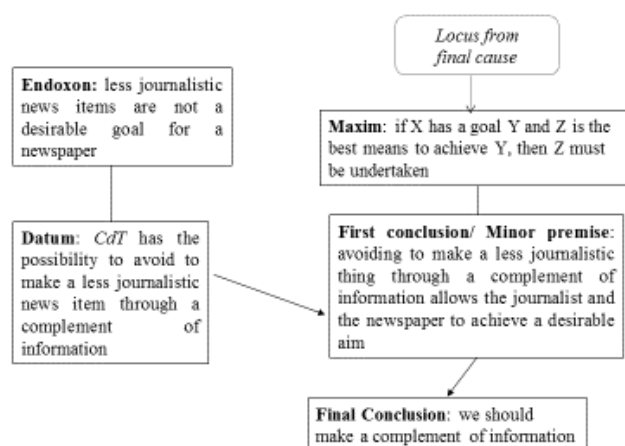
Until now this paper has focused on the interactional or sequential level of argumentation; however, in order to prove the crucial role of journalists' audience uptake anticipation strategies in achieving reasonable decisions, it is necessary to make a more in-depth analysis and to investigate the inferential structure of arguments. The analysis of the inferential structure of arguments permits to identify the type of premises bound with the specific aspect of the anticipation of the audience uptake at stake.

We propose an analysis of the inferential structure of arguments following the approach known as Argumentum Model of Topics (henceforth AMT) (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010) for we claim that it offers a proof of the implicit premises at stake in journalists' anticipation strategies. The AMT aims at proposing a coherent and founded approach to the study of argument schemes, which can overcome several emerging difficulties, yet being in line with previous achievements on this aspect. In general, argumentation scholars conceive argument schemes as the bearing structure that connects the premises to the

standpoint or conclusion in a piece of real argumentation. In the AMT, the argument scheme combines a procedural component (universal and abstract), in which an inferential connection (maxim) is activated, with a material component, guaranteeing for the applicability of the maxim to the actual situation considered in the argument (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010). In order to move from the argumentation structure to the Y-structure, the fundamental principle that must be kept in mind is that each arrow of the argumentation structure corresponds to a Y-structure diagram (Rigotti & Palmieri 2010).

In this empirical part of the paper we will analyze, according to the AMT, the focal argument schemes of the three argumentative lines of the editorial discussion analysed in the previous section, analyzing the underlying reasoning processes at stake bound with the contextual premises at stake. We will now sketch the Y-structure of the single argumentation “we should make a complement of information since in that way we can avoid to make a less journalistic thing” in the first argumentative line, in which the journalist starts by arguing in favor of the editorial template that enables to avoid to make a less journalistic thing. According to the taxonomy of loci, this can be classified as a *locus from final cause*, shown in the Figure below:

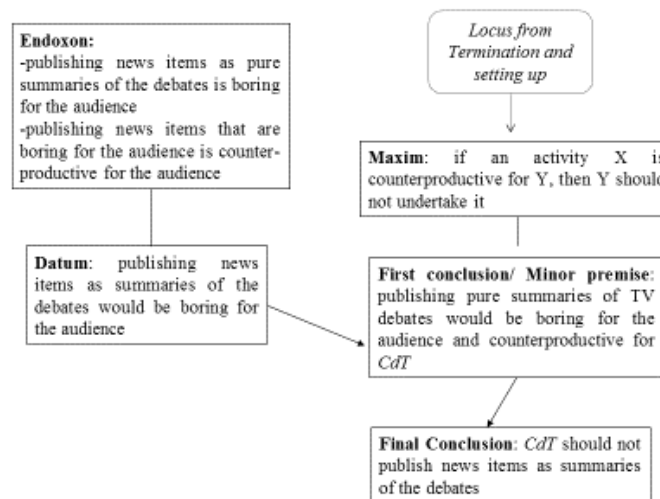
**Fig. 2. Inferential structure of the *locus from final cause*.**



In this Y-structure we notice that the *endoxon* is based on the undesirability of following a certain editorial guideline. On the contrary, in the inferential analysis of the focal point of the second argumentative line (1.1b), which can be classified as a *locus from termination and setting up*, we can observe the presence

of an *endoxon* based on the inability of a certain editorial template to raise interest in the audience, as we show in Fig. 3;

**Fig. 3. Inferential structure of *locus from termination and setting up*.**



The *datum* also deals with the interest of the audience, more specifically it deals with the actual possibility of raising disinterest by carrying out an action (publishing the news in form of a summary of a debate) that would be boring for the audience. The conjunction of the statements of the *endoxon* and *datum* creates an inferential effect leading to the first conclusion “Publishing pure summaries of TV debates would be boring for the audience and counterproductive”. This conclusion perfectly meets the condition established by the maxim and, conjoined with it, allows inferring the standpoint. We know from the maxim that “if an activity X is counterproductive for Y, then Y should not undertake it”, and from the first conclusion/minor premise that “publishing the news in form of a summary would be boring for the audience”. Therefore, the journalist is forced to conclude that they “should not publish news items as summaries of the debates”.

As we can see from the figure above, for what concerns the interweaving of the material and procedural components at the horizontal level of analysis, the basic function of the *endoxon* is to identify the context-bound entities implementing the locus. Furthermore, the datum implements the minor premise of the logical form activated in the procedural starting point. Concluding, the first conclusion/minor premise that is obtained is equally exploited by the procedural starting point as well as by the material starting point. This point of intersection

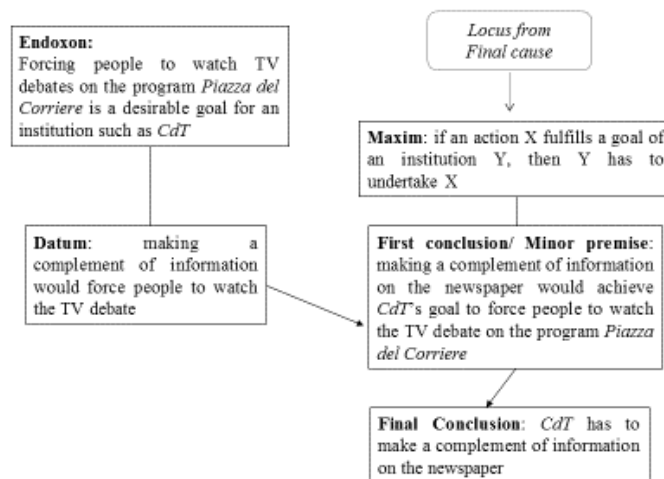
is crucial in the perspective of the AMT since it represents the junction between the material and the procedural starting points and shows how different types of premises are combined in real argumentation.

At this stage of the analysis, we consider the single argumentation in the focal point of the third argumentative line that deals with the journalist arguing in favor of the need to add new information in order to foster curiosity and therefore to persuade the audience to watch the TV-debate (1.3). Again, according to the taxonomy of *loci*, this argument concerning the anticipation of persuasion can be classified as a *locus from final cause*. Generally speaking, in editorial conferences

the locus from the final cause can be expected to recur frequently because deliberative discussions aim at fulfilling institutional goals, therefore arguments will draw upon a standpoint's validity in relation to such goals (Zampa 2015: 125).

In the figure below we analyze more in depth the argument scheme under investigation by producing another Y-structure:

**Fig.4. Inferential structure of the *locus from final cause*.**



A careful analysis of the *locus from final cause* through the Y-structure permits to observe the presence of an *endoxon* centered on the desirability of persuading readers to watch the TV debate and of a *datum* focused on the actual contextual circumstances that enable *CdT* to carry out this goal. On the vertical level of the structure the conjunction of the *endoxon* and of *datum* creates an inferential effect leading to a first conclusion, which is determined by the desirability of the action, which permits to achieve a good goal, namely forcing

people to watch the TV-debate; the first conclusion that is obtained from the material starting point is equally exploited by the procedural starting point. Indeed, this conclusion perfectly meets the condition established by the maxim and, conjoined with it, allows inferring the standpoint “we need to make a complement of information on the newspaper”. We know from the maxim that “if an action X fulfills a goal of an institution Y, then Y has to undertake X” and from the minor premise that “making a complement of information on the newspaper would achieve *CdT*’s goal to force people to watch the TV-debate on the program *Piazza del Corriere*”. As a result of this, we can conclude that “*CdT* has to make a complement of information on the newspaper”. It is interesting to notice that journalists’ strategies concerning audience interest and audience persuasion mainly correlate with loci from final cause and loci from termination and setting up; these are the most deployed due to their usefulness in reaching newsroom’s desirable shared goals, and due to the fact that the main purpose of an editorial newsroom is to satisfy audience demand and to continue to do that whereby productive editorial practices.

#### **4.2. Verifying journalists’ anticipatory strategies in the newspapers’ items.**

At this stage of the analysis, a test of the implementation of the strategy discussed in the editorial meeting, *i.e.* the attempt to persuade the newspaper audience to watch the first and the second debate, is carried out. On the day of the first TV-debate, namely on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013, a newspaper item with the participants to the debate and with the most intriguing topics of elections is published, as we can see in the Figure below.

Fig. 5. News item of the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013 about the TV debate of the evening.

**Elezioni Lugano è l'ombelico del mondo?**  
 I rapporti con gli altri: dai milioni versati al Cantone all'occholino ad Expo 2015 e alla Cina

**TELETICINO PIAZZA DEL CORRIERE**  
 SPECIALE ELEZIONI LUGANO

**GLI OSPITI** (Dall'alto in senso orario) Giorgio Giudici, Michele Malfanti, Raoul Ghisletta, Paolo Pamini, Yves Wellauer e Angelo Paparelli.

■ Questa sera prende il via la volata di Piazza del Corriere speciale elezioni. Ogni venerdì in diretta dalle 20.45 alle 21.45 su TeleTicino ospiteremo i candidati al Municipio di Lugano e di Mendrisio. A moderare i dibattiti sarà il giornalista del CdT Gianni Righinetti. Oggi si parte dalla sempre più grande Lugano che il 14 aprile rinnoverà Esecutivo e Legislativo. La campagna in città si annuncia incandescente tra i partiti in lotta per le poltrone che contano, ma anche all'interno delle forze politiche. Alcune tensioni sono già emerse in maniera palese. Nel PS dopo l'abbandono di Nenad Stojanovic, ora a fare rumore è la rinuncia di Patrizia Pesenti. Piazza speciale elezioni non mancherà di seguire tutto quanto accade, ma intende offrire ai telespettatori una serie di confronti tematici. Oggi parleremo dei rapporti di Lugano con gli altri. Con i Comuni, le associazioni che li rappresentano, ma anche il Cantone. Con quest'ultimo da anni i litigi sono all'ordine del giorno. La città è stufo di fuggire da casa dalla quale tutti (chi più, chi meno), per interposto Governo, ogni anno prelevano complessivamente una quantina di milioni. Lugano deve pagare e tacere? Il polo del Sottoceneri è anche una città a vocazione turistica. Parlare dei rapporti con gli altri significa valutare l'attrattiva, la capacità di sapere coccolare i turisti. La crisi del settore è solo determinata dalla recessione e dal cambio economico oppure è dell'altro?

In studio ci sarà il sindaco Giorgio Giudici (PLR) che con il Cantone non è mai stato tenero, mentre ha sempre guardato con interesse e simpatia alla metropoli milanese, in primis ad Expo 2015, ma ha anche coltivato stretti contatti con la Cina. È qualcosa di fruttuoso o solo marketing? Con Giudici ci sarà Raoul Ghisletta (PS), poco tenuto sulla "politica estera" di Lugano il leghista Angelo Paparelli, il pipidino Michele Malfanti, Paolo Pamini di AreaLibera e il democristiano Yves Wellauer. Attendiamo da subito le vostre suggestioni via Twitter e, prima della diretta, anche via e-mail a piazza@teleticino.ch.

**centrista Yves Wellauer. Attendiamo da subito le vostre suggestioni via Twitter e, prima della diretta, anche via e-mail a piazza@teleticino.ch.**

**Oggi si parte dalla sempre più grande Lugano che il 14 aprile rinnoverà Esecutivo e Legislativo. La campagna in città si annuncia incandescente tra i partiti in lotta per le poltrone che contano, ma anche all'interno delle forze politiche. Alcune tensioni sono già emerse in maniera palese. Nel PS dopo l'abbandono di Nenad Stojanovic, ora a fare rumore è la rinuncia di Patrizia Pesenti.**

**TWITTER #piazzelezioni**

Since from the title “Elections Lugano is the centre of the world?”<sup>6</sup>, which sounds as a rhetorical question, we can understand the persuading nature of the article, which raises curiosity through the announcement of the present hosts of the program and of the main topics to be discussed during the debate, *i.e.* the renewal of legislative branch of the State. The rhetorical question in the title contains a semantically strong idiom, which compares the elections of Lugano to the ‘world’s belly-button’, inducing the audience to construe Lugano as the place in which the most important political debates of the world take place. In this way, the article follows the mind of the imagined audience, trying to raise interest and curiosity. Moving on to the highlight “The relationships with the others: from the millions given to the Canton to the wink to Expo and to China”, the reader finds a motivation to believe that Lugano’s elections are so important to be considered the belly-button of the world, thanks to the topics introduced by the journalist, namely the national and foreign affairs, ranging from the money given to the

<sup>6</sup> We translate.

Canton, to Expo, and arriving far beyond European boundaries mentioning China, in a sort of ascendant climax.

Going on, the reader, in the body of the article, finds all the elements that contextualize the event taking place on that evening: the journalist introduces the main information concerning the debate. She carefully explains them with the usage of linguistic markers specifically referring to the event to take place, such as 'this evening' and specifies the exact time 'from 20-45 to 21.45' and virtual place 'on TeleTicino'. The journalist also specifies exactly who will be hosted, by listing the candidates to the Municipality of Lugano and Mendrisio, and who will mediate the debate, namely the journalist Righinetti.

An interesting point, emphasizing the grandiosity of the city elections announced in the title and raising interest in the audience, is the usage of the propositional phrase 'from the always bigger Lugano', which with the usage of the adverb *always* and of the majorative adjective *bigger* conveys durability to the growth of the city, as we can see in an extract from the news item below:

**Excerpt 1. Excerpt from the news item "Elezioni Lugano è l'ombelico del mondo?"**

Today we start from the always bigger Lugano that on the 14th of April will renew the Executive and Legislative branch of the Government. The campaign in the city seems to be exciting not only among the parties fighting for the seats of power, but also within political forces. Some tensions have already clearly emerged. In the socialist party after the abandonment of Nenad Stojanovic, now it is Patrizia Pesenti's surrender that cause a stir.

The frequent usage of evaluative vocabulary, such as 'the campaign *seems* to be *exciting*', and the metaphorical framing of the event of the elections as a battle field via the verb *to fight* 'the parties are *fighting*' give evidence of the journalist's will to encourage the audience to follow the topic with interest. Furthermore, we observe the usage of the concessive argument 'the campaign announces to be interesting *not only* with fighting parties, *but also* within political forces', aiming at persuading readers that the debate seems to be interesting from many points of view. The journalist goes on arguing in favor of the prevision that the TV debate will be exciting by adding an evidential basis, namely the fact that some tensions had already emerged, quoting one of them, namely the abandonment of one leader and the refusal of another one of the party PS. However, it is with the concessive argument 'Piazza affair won't omit to follow everything that happens, *but* intends to offer to his TV viewer a series of thematic comparisons' that the news item reaches the top of its persuasiveness; this argument recalls the standpoint put forth

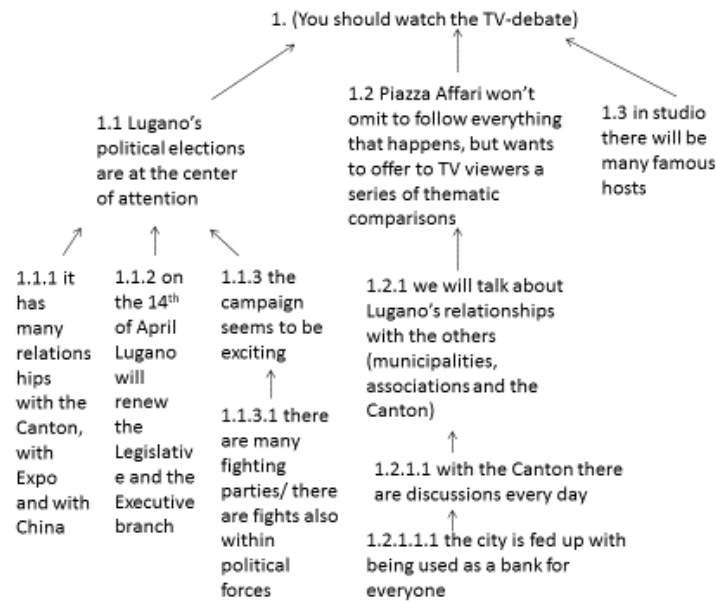
by the journalist in the editorial meeting analyzed in section 4.1. Indeed, the conceded argument 'Piazza affair won't omit everything that happens' is presented to the audience as less important than the argument following the adversative conjunction 'but', namely 'intends to offer to his TV viewer a series of thematic comparisons'; this sequence perfectly meets the decisions taken by the journalist during the editorial meeting, namely not doing simply a news reporting, but rather rising the audience interest by presenting thematic confrontations, able to open a cognitive gap that can be filled only by the audience minds.

In general, we can notice a very high frequency of concessive arguments, in which the adversative 'but' splits the two arguments, giving prominence to the second one and stimulating readers' curiosity. Many other rhetorical questions insinuating doubts and raising curiosity follow in the whole body of the text; 'Lugano must only pay and be silent?', 'the crisis of the branch is given only by the recession and by the change euro-franc or is there something else?', 'Is it something fruitful or is it only a marketing?'. The threefold reiteration of the adverb *only* in these three rhetorical questions insinuates that there is something else to discover, something that can be discovered only by watching the TV debate.

Furthermore, in the last paragraph of the news item, the explicit recall to the readers to send a feedback via e-mail or via twitter "we are waiting for your suggestions since now via twitter, and before of the live recording also via e-mail to piazza@teleticino.ch" is an explicit strategy in order to incentivize the audience to get involved and to be responsive, which is a desirable consequence of persuasiveness, acted out by the journalist in the previous parts of the body copy. Even with the aid of visual elements, the journalist attempts to raise curiosity, by visually showing the hosts of the debate and by adding the special colored column saying 'special elections Lugano, Teleticino Piazza del Corriere'.

In order to give evidence of the coherent continuum of the inter-textual chain consisting of editorial conference and news item, we show the argumentative reconstruction of the news item in the Figure below;



**Figure 6. Argumentative reconstruction of the news article.**

Via the argumentative reconstruction of the news item the link between the journalistic intention to persuade the audience in the editorial conference and the argumentative nature as well as the rhetorical implementation of the text, also conveyed by linguistic markers used in the news item, becomes evident.

Another clue of the persuasive nature of the anticipatory strategy planned by the journalists in the editorial conference can be verified by observing the subsequent news item published on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, *i.e.* the day after the TV-debate of the 25<sup>th</sup> January, and aiming at fostering audience to watch the second debate. Again, the journalist attempts to increase the persuasiveness of the item by adding new informational elements aiming at promoting the debate and by using evaluative terms, signaling the journalist's will to persuade the readers. Consider Figure 7. below:

Fig. 7. News appendix published on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

**IDEE A CONFRONTO**

**LUGANO E IL GOVERNO**  
 È giusto che la Città abbia un canale preferenziale di dialogo?

**ROBERTO BADARACCO (PLR)**

 «Lugano ha 60.000 abitanti e una grande forza finanziaria. Con tutto il rispetto per gli altri Comuni, è giusto che la Città abbia un canale preferenziale con il Governo. Non è un privilegio, ma una necessità per evitare conflitti. Per un cantone piccolo come il Ticino, la cosa peggiore è quella di essere in conflitto con la sua città-polo».

**LUGANO E GLI ALTRI COMUNI**  
 Lugano investe da sola in opere di cui beneficia tutta la regione: serve una nuova ripartizione delle spese?

**CRISTINA ZANINI BARZAGHI (PS)**

 «In generale è giusto che i Comuni partecipino a questi investimenti. Sul LAC, ad esempio, Paradiso avrebbe dovuto fare la sua parte. Sono convinta che le aggregazioni potranno dirsi concluse solo quando a Lugano si uniranno i Comuni importanti già integrati a livello territoriale, ma fino ad allora servirà più collaborazione».

**LUGANO E BERNA**  
 La Città viene considerata abbastanza dalla Confederazione, ad esempio nei sussidi per le opere viarie?

**ANGELO JELMINI (PPD)**

 «La Confederazione ci ha dato 207 milioni di franchi per la galleria Veduggio-Cassarate, ma il finanziamento era legato al piano viario del polo: una misura fiancheggiatrice che proprio Berna aveva imposto al Municipio e al Consiglio comunale di approvare al fine di creare

Since from the title of the column “ideas in comparison” the attempt of fostering curiosity in the audience seems to be the main aim; every subtitle is underlined in red and followed by a question, answered by a political participant, covering the three main areas of intervention bound with Lugano: the government, the other municipalities and the relationships with Bern. We can observe the presence of a complement of information in addition to what was broadcasted in the debate, as planned by the journalist in the editorial conference we analyzed (Fig.1); indeed, the journalist does not simply report information concerning the previous debates, but rather he adds the opinions of new interviewed experts, and fosters the curiosity of the audience through questions insinuating still open political issues. From a linguistic point of view, we find many markers that indicate evaluation in these provoking questions. In the first one ‘is it *right* for the town to have a preferential channel of dialogue?’ the adjective ‘right’, inserted in such a question, insinuates the possibility of an error and therefore incentivizes the need for further information, which is given through the subsequent quotation of the expert. In the second

highlight an insinuating question is preceded by an implicitly evaluative sentence: ‘Lugano invests *alone* in activities in which the *whole* region is involved: do we need a new expenses repartition?’. Here we notice the negative evaluation of how Lugano’s investments are managed, by using the adverb ‘alone’, which contrasts with the idea of totality evoked by the adjective ‘whole’, implicitly suggesting that satisfying the needs of the *whole* Canton is too much if Lugano invests *alone*. The colon after the sentence and before the question has the function to raise a doubt in the reader and aims to foster the reader to go on to read the quotation. Even the third highlight presents a provoking question; ‘The city is considered enough from the Confederation, for example concerning the subsidies for the various activities?’. This question again is representative of the whole item,

indeed it raises curiosity whereby the usage of the evaluative verb 'consider' and the adverb 'enough', which declare an implicit negative stance of the journalist towards the money management acted out by the Confederation, and insinuates the doubt in the reader, so that he is invited to read more. Even though at a first glance we may think that the journalist simply quotes the answers of the interviewed, the journalist does much more than this and takes a stance by choosing which quotation to publish, therefore framing the news in a particular way, constructing his own viewpoint and fostering persuasiveness. The structure of this second news item, with direct open questions and with the answers of new experts in respect to those of the broadcasted debate, opens a space for argumentative reasoning also in readers' minds and fosters curiosity, leading them to go on in deepening the raised issue, and therefore persuading them to watch the next TV-debate.

## 5. Conclusion

Concluding, we claim that the argumentative lens offers a valid aim in understanding journalists' anticipatory inferences about audience uptake emerging in newsroom discussions at a conscious and collective level. The argumentative analysis we have conducted lends support to Bell's claim (1991) that style suits a news outlet's audience by means of specific linguistic variables. The results of our study add to this conclusion that journalist's anticipatory strategies, standing behind editorial decisions and guiding the choice of item's selection and items' details, are continuously discussed and redefined via argumentative practices.

The argumentative analysis has illustrated two focal points, which play a crucial role in the argumentative discussion of the editorial conference at stake, namely *a)* a certain editorial template is used as a means to raise audience interest in the news, and *b)* this interest is deployed in order to persuade the audience to watch the TV-debate, following an inter-media chain from the newspaper to the audience. Therefore, we can conclude that an argumentative analysis of newsroom interaction and the test of the implementation strategy in the news product is a sound methodology for uncovering the focal points of a discussion dealing with decisions about journalists' audience anticipation, and for understanding the way in which these strategies can be retrieved in news products.

We have also shown that audience anticipation in newsroom editorial conferences often leads to the emergence of a deliberative standpoint, focused on the ways in which news items should be produced taking into account the audience uptake.

Furthermore, we also carried out an argumentative analysis at the inferential structure level; we have shown that the AMT approach gives us the chance to understand that the specific anticipatory aspects concerning 'raising audience interest' and 'persuasion' correlate with two types of loci, which can be used to build goal-directed and productive-oriented inferences, namely locus from final cause and locus from termination and setting up. These inferential mechanisms fit well with journalists' main aim, namely performing news able to satisfy the audience demand. As a result of an interactional or sequential and of an inferential argumentative analysis, we can postulate the existence of some naïve pragmatic theories among journalists, which are due to their spontaneous anticipation of the consequences of their editing decisions for their audience; indeed, when they reach a collective agreement on the anticipatory strategy to follow, they find a confirmation of their expectations.

However, much remains to be done and the analysis poses further challenges. At the inferential level, the correlation between the aspect of the anticipation at stake and locus should be deepened also with a quantitative study. Furthermore, future work should be devoted to better analyze the relationship between journalists' anticipatory inferences strategies and arguments' acceptability for readers.

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## Appendix

Transcript of interactional data used:

*Monday morning editorial meeting; 13/01/2013*

[start at: min 16.20]

X1 0001: sulla base del programma che gentilmente ci ha fatto avere righinetti

On the basis of the program kindly received from righinetti

0002: come cronaca per evitare di fare una cosa veramente poco giornalistica

as news section in order to avoid to do a very less journalistic thing

0003: ne abbiamo discusso con lo stesso righinetti

we discussed also with righinetti

0004: ovvero stare lì a fare ah ieri sera teleticino si è fatta la tribuna etc

that is just saying yesterday evening teleticino made electoral debates

0005: allora noi prendendo il suo tema che sono quelli i temi poi

then we retaking this topic these are the topics

0006: noi probabilmente ne aggiungeremo un paio

we will probably add another couple of topics

0007: comunque a partire dal venticinque noi usciamo

However starting from the twentyfive we will publish

0008: il ventisei noi usciamo con ieri sera dibattito

on the twentysix we will say yesterday evening there was the debate

0009: e poi sentiremo altri politici rispetto a quelli che avevi tu in studio quella sera

and then we will hear other politicians in respect with the other that you had in studio that evening

0010: con una breve dichiarazione su quell tema e la gente

with a brief declaration on this topic and we will hear people

0011: soprattutto le persone interessate alla socialità

above all people interested in sociality

0012: ci sarà un appoggio dicendo ieri sera si è parlato di questo

there will be a recall saying yesterday they talked about that

0013: si farà un complement di informazione sul giornale

we will make a complement of information on the newspaper

0014: di modo che non è una cosa che naviga a sé stante

so that it is not something that navigates on its own

0015: ma soprattutto non è il giornale che fa il riassuntino di un dibattito

but above all it is not the newspaper that makes the summary of a debate

0016: che se uno l'ha già visto che cavolo se lo legge a fare il giorno dopo

that if one has yet seen the debate it is unuseful to read it the day after

0017: cioè gli diamo qualcosa in più al dibattito

indeed we give something more to the debate

0018: dicendo che c'era il giudice che c'era questo che c'era quello saying that there was the judge that there was this host and this

0019: e in definitiva parlando coi colleghi si è detto

and finally speaking with the colleagues we said

0020: in questo modo costringiamo la gente a guardarsi il dibattito

in this way we force people to watch the debate

0021: probabilmente non il primo perché usciamo il ventisei

probably not the first because we publish on the twentysix

0022: però quello successivo uno se lo guarda sicuramente

But for sure one watches the next one

0023: perché c'è il giochetto del confronto

because there is the game of the confrontation

X2 0024: una cosa che non ho detto

a thing that I haven't said

0025: che il giorno del dibattito

that the day of the debate

0026: come concordato in cronaca di lugano e di mendrisio si fa

as agreed in the news section of lugano and mendrisio we will make

0027: il classico lancio della tradizione e in prima pagina

the classical launch of the tradition and as a splash

0028: ho fatto fare uno strilloncino leggermente modificato

I prepared a slightly modified column