

Toward the Definition of Multimodal Argumentation

Kateryna Bura

Ph.D. student, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine)

E-mail: burakateryna@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4147-9751>

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Argumentation theory is a crucial discipline for the development of the modern world. It provides innovative ways of evolution in interdisciplinary studies. Multimodality, which is the subject of this research, is an essential feature of human nature. Comparative analysis of modern views on multimodal argumentation and their generalization allows interpreting multimodal argumentation as "a social activity in which debaters use various modes to promote a particular point of view and study its acceptability." The structural elements of multimodal argumentation are verbal, visual, sound, taste, etc. modes. The involvement of the latter can increase the efficiency of argumentation.

Keywords: argumentation, multimodal, mode, argument, interdisciplinary, controversy, empiricalization

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Introduction

Nowadays, there is an increasing interest in other modes of argumentation, except verbal. Scholars face an important task: *to outline the subject field* of the theory and practice of argumentation, taking into account the peculiarities of visual, sound, taste modes, etc. Thereby it is not only a question of the emergence of interest in various modes of argumentation, but also of a change in the very idea of what argumentation is and by what means it can be investigated. The expediency of studying this issue within the theory and practice of argumentation is justified by the fact that the combination of different modes is a more effective means of achieving the goal of argumentation, namely — persuasion, than the use of each mode separately.

The research topic is relevant in a broader perspective as well: finding out the peculiarities of the application of different modes of argumentation is a current problem for the social sciences and humanities because argumentation is inherent in all fields of human life. In particular, interest in the study of modes of argumentation is present in linguistics, law, ethics, aesthetics, psychology, rhetoric, etc. From this, we can conclude the interdisciplinary nature

of the issue, which is most relevant today. Moreover, argumentation theory is no longer just a theory: it involves practical aspects that are expressed in such a way as *empiricalization*, which analysis empirical data to build conclusions on (Finocchiaro, 1994). Analysis of various studies, which are currently identified in modern literature as empirical, reveals two directions. On the one hand, it is the study of how argumentation works in various life spheres, such as medicine, law, and computer science. On the other hand, it is understood to conduct various sociological surveys and experiments to better interpret what the argument is.

Thus, this volume of essential tasks are:

- a) to consider terminological problems within the modern theory of argumentation;
- b) to show the main issues, argumentation theory is facing now;
- c) to highlight the structural elements of multimodal argumentation and show their relationship.

The urgency and expediency of the tasks are due to the scientific and socio-cultural need for a systematic study of argumentative skills development. Today there are almost no comprehensive systematic studies of the development and practical improvement of argumentative acquirement since most studies in this area are purely theoretical. At the present stage of social development, the argumentative process is becoming increasingly important. Still, practical research on this topic is fragmented and affects only some geographical areas (USA, Canada, Netherlands). Such studies in the framework of multimodal argumentation in the Ukrainian space are just beginning to appear and arouse the scientific community's interest.

Argumentation field endeavors to combine theory and practice by focusing on application of theoretical achievements. This is reflected in the study of critical thinking, decision-making issues and real argument. The study results can be part of a variety of courses on modern logic and theory of argumentation. The methods and techniques discussed in this paper are applicable and can be used to increase argumentative discussions' effectiveness.

Some ways to define the concept

The history of the development of argumentation theory can be considered divided into two major periods: to the middle of the twentieth century and from the middle of the twentieth century to the present day. The first stage includes consideration of argumentative topics in such historical periods as Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, Ancient India, Ancient China, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the New Age, and the modern research stage. The modern theory of argumentation (from the middle of the twentieth century to the present day) differs significantly in both issues and research areas from what it was at the beginning of its formation. Scholars working in this field face terminological problems and questions of defining the field of their own research. The theory of argumentation expands its boundaries and attracts the latest developments in logic, linguistics, computer and cognitive sciences. The main areas of research within the modern theory and practice of argumentation are the study of verbal and nonverbal (visual, sound) argumentation, the relationship of argumentation theory with other disciplines of the logical cycle, and the most effective study of argumentative techniques and tools in controversy.

For a long time, argumentation was seen solely as a verbal activity. The focus of researches was on the study of argumentative reasoning expressed in natural language. However, the last

decade has aroused scholars' concern is not only verbal mode but also visual, sound, taste, etc. This interest is due to the fact that argumentation is not a purely verbal phenomenon. So far, researchers have not agreed on a methodology for studying visual, sound, taste arguments, etc. on a par with verbal ones. Still, it is unlikely that anyone will deny their impact on the argumentation process.

The ambiguity of the term itself leads to a number of problems that need to be solved. One of them is the concept and phenomenon of *multimodal argumentation*. The term "*multimodal*" is used to denote a complex argumentative act, the components of which are not only verbal ones but also nonverbal ones that form together an integral message. Various argumentation modes include verbal language (oral and written), static and dynamic images, music, nonverbal sounds, gestures, posture, and more. These modes are used not only to inform the others, but also to persuade, to form a certain attitude to the given information.

Multimodality is a characteristic feature of human communication, which is multimodal. Information messages are combinations of semiotic modes that are used to form a certain meaning. We do not perceive information only through a single channel: it appears to us in a complex form and is analyzed as a whole. This feature of human perception allows us to declare the relevance of studying the phenomenon of multimodal argumentation, which can be defined as a rational and social activity in which two or more modes aim to promote *a particular point of view and study its acceptability*. Any dispute takes place within space and time and forms a certain semantic meaning due to the various modes that are turned on by the debaters. These can be both verbal and nonverbal modes. Combination of the latter forms new meanings in an argumentative context.

Paul Van den Hoven and Ying Yang declare various argumentation modes that deserve attention while analyzing the argumentative process. The theory of argumentation should emphasize the need to study nonverbal components such as sounds, music, images, taste, smell, etc. The named scholars try to clarify the nonverbal components. Multimodal argumentation should be developed in order to apply traditional standards (pragma-dialectics, informal logic, and rhetoric) to argumentative acts that use nonverbal modes to support the thesis (Van den Hoven & Yang, 2013).

Behind determining what argument is

The theory of argumentation has undergone radical changes from its inception to the present days. It is not only about the emergence of interest in non-verbal means of influence, which for a long time was almost not taken into account, but also about the shift of the very idea of what an "*argument*" is. Today, an "*argument*" should be understood as covering a much larger semantic area than the traditional understanding of persuade or convince. Such communication methods as persuasion, proof, and discussion are considered integral elements of argumentation. For this reason, the semantic field covered by the term "*argument*" needs to be revised and rethought.

The information messages we use today are not limited to the linguistic code we decipher. They consist of other semantic systems: images, music, sounds, gestures. The above components can be combined under the name "*nonverbal*" argumentation elements. The process of involving an agent in a certain action is accompanied by persuasion and arguments in favor of a particular provision. Nonverbal components also become elements of this belief, forming a complex system together with the textual component.

Thus, communication can be considered as divided into verbal and nonverbal. The verbal mode is the main and universal way of exchanging information between people (verbal means include oral and written speech). Verbal texts as a means of influence are widespread in politics, advertising, and the media. These components of verbal argumentation can be distinguished the following way: 1) *thesis (premises)* — a position that must be substantiated; 2) *arguments (conclusion)* — provisions that support, substantiate the thesis. There is a relation of inference (entailment) between the premises and the conclusion. This structure allows you to analyze written texts and oral speeches, as it is easy enough to find a rationale for the proponent's point of view if you are familiar with the techniques by which this can be done.

Assimakis Tseronis claim that nonverbal components of argumentation can be divided into two types: 1) *those that directly relate to the speaker* (gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, posture, and gait) and 2) *those that exist independently of the speaker* (visual images, sounds and music). The combination of verbal elements with other sign systems creates a complex semiotic message, which the audience usually perceives in its entirety and completeness. While it takes some time and intellectual effort to understand verbal reasoning, nonverbal arguments are directly accessible to perception. Argumentation theory usually focuses on the study of one — verbal or nonverbal — aspect. However, a new trend called “*multimodal argumentation*” is entering today's scientific arena (Tseronis, 2018). According to the multimodal argumentation, there is no clear distinction, distribution of forces between verbal and nonverbal (visual, sound) mode. Instead, attention is paid to both areas as a whole. The focus is on the content and style of argumentation.

Theoretical and methodological reference points in the study of multimodal argumentation are not the same. Researchers use tools from a number of different argumentative angles. Informal logic, pragma-dialectics, and rhetoric are the most common approaches. *Informal logic* considers multimodal argumentation, distinguishing between verbal and nonverbal (visual, sound, etc.) aspects (O'Keefe, 1977). However, scholars who stand on these principles (for example, Anthony Blair and Ralph Johnson) try to give such a definition of the term “argument,” which would take into account the peculiarities of both verbal and nonverbal argumentation (visual and sound).

The *pragma-dialectical* approach demonstrates how its principles can be applied to nonverbal argumentation and its components, interpreting argumentation as a speech act. Representatives of this approach (such as Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst) focus on rules and fallacies in the argumentation process (Feteris et al., 2011). Thus, pragma-dialectics is well applicable to visual argumentation, as the theory of hidden, implicit speech acts is applied to visual images. Visual images are seen as latent speech acts that function as visual arguments that serve as a means of defending positions in the context of critical discussion. That is why visual arguments become a very effective tool for persuading the audience. We considering argumentation as a social and rational activity, independent of the form of expression. The pragma-dialectical approach is quite promising for the study of multimodal argumentation as the interaction of all components.

The *rhetorical* view of multimodal argumentation requires an understanding of the context. For supporters of this approach (like Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca) the audience plays an important role. Proponents of this trend state that the characteristic features of nonverbal arguments are their enthymemic¹ nature. The need to study multimodal

¹ An enthymeme (Greek: ἐνθύμημα — “in thought”) is an abbreviated syllogism in which one of the premises or a conclusion is omitted.

argumentation arises from the inability to completely separate verbal and nonverbal argumentation. The approaches mentioned above differ from each other; however, each of them agrees that nonverbal arguments cannot be “translated” into the language of the text and verbal sentences. The peculiarity of the argumentative process is that the principles and provisions are not separate elements; on the contrary, they are interconnected.

Until recently, the argumentation theory largely ignored the prospects for the development of a multimodal approach. The reason for this was the disagreement of scholars on the division of roles between verbal and nonverbal arguments. Thus, some researchers have proposed to define the verbal mode as rational, while nonverbal (visual, sound, etc.) is irrational. In turn, others considered another division legitimate: verbal argumentation is an explicit form of communication, and nonverbal argumentation is implicit. In any case, nonverbal argumentation cannot, according to the proponents of verbal one, be the subject of objective analysis. Nonverbal components are difficult to analyze by the same methods used to study the verbal ones. However, it is necessary to insist on a holistic consideration of multimodal argumentation, which adequately describes and explains it. The technological development of the modern world has led to the fact that the audio-visual presentation of information has become commonplace. The information is no longer presented in the form of a text that has an exposition, the main part, a culmination, and a denouement. If the verbal mode is used in modern everyday mass communication, it is mostly fragmentary, presented in the form of short phrases, remarks, words, or even just exclamations.

Making nonverbal mode in parentheses limits the field of argumentative research. Moreover, claiming that nonverbal reasoning is not subject to formal evaluation criteria only narrows the understanding of the argumentative process as such and ignores the fact that different modes of can play a key role in argumentation, which is social, rational and cognitive interaction. The need for multimodal argumentation as a combination of several semiotic systems arises also for the reason that the study of nonverbal components separately is quite difficult to analyze and identify the original ‘embedded’ content. If we can discover this meaning due to the syntax and semantics of verbal language (although this is not possible in every case), then the discovery of the hidden ‘intentional’ meaning of nonverbal arguments becomes almost an impossible task.

According to Melanie Joy McNaughton, visual and sound arguments involve (1) omitted premises or conclusion that are probabilistic; (2) the involvement of “ethos” (means of influence that appeal to moral principles, to the norms of human behavior) and emotional expressions of arguments and (3) they are subject to agreement between the audience and the speaker on certain issues (McNaughton, 2007). Thus, such a broad field of interpretation makes nonverbal components vulnerable to criticism from those scholars who do not accept them as arguments. The inability to “translate” nonverbal elements into verbal language becomes the main thesis of such criticism. However, there is no need for such a translation. Referring to Anthony Blair, McNaughton states that the verbal mode becomes the context for the nonverbal, not the interpretation of the latter (McNaughton, 2007). Each semantic system performs its functions, and they cannot be “transposed in a different key.”

The evaluation of multimodal arguments remains an open issue. It can be agreed that the criteria for evaluating verbal arguments should not be used to evaluate nonverbal ones. It is necessary to create another evaluation system that would take into account the peculiarities of the nonverbal modes. Ian Dove proposes to solve this issue with the use of argumentation schemes, asking critical control questions about the content of the argument (Dove, 2016). Thus, argumentation schemes allow the reproduction of the interpretive boundaries and restore

the statements, conclusions, and arguments in the message. Dove emphasizes the need to evaluate multimodal arguments, supplement argumentation schemes, and adapt them to the new modes. For example, he proposes to apply methods of reasoning by analogy to visual arguments. This approach makes theorizing and evaluating visual arguments possible.

Another issue raised by Paul van den Hoven and Ying Yang has to do with identifying multimodal arguments. The scholar asks the question: are the arguments we receive from the multimodal context the “invention” of the recipient, the peculiarity of his perception, or were they really laid in the foundation by the “producer”? (Van den Hoven & Yang, 2013). Thus, entrenched in a cognitive-semiotic position, van den Hoven and Yang claim that the multimodal argumentative field does not contain arguments as such; instead, it defines the limits within which the recipient is able to construct such arguments and their meaning.

Janina Wildfeuer and Chiara Pollaroli suggest using semantic and pragmatic approaches when analyzing multimodal arguments. They consider the latter as enthymemes the scholar must reproduce while researching (Wildfeuer & Pollaroli, 2017). Thus, on the example of visual images, they show how the audience has to find the hidden premises of reasoning, taking into account the context and filling in the gaps in enthymemes.

Assessing modes: main approaches

Traditionally, arguments have been perceived as consisting of words and sentences. However, the use of nonverbal means forces us to pay attention to other “modes” of argumentation. The latter can be defined as structural elements used by the debater when he is directly in the process of dispute. According to Paul van den Hoven and Ying Yang, there are three different approaches to the consideration of argumentation:

1. For the *logical approach*, the central object of study is reasoning and the process of inference of the conclusion from the premises. Thus, arguments can be analyzed from a formal point of view. They do not even have to be ‘translated’ from the formal to everyday language.
2. In the *dialectical approach*, the greatest attention is paid to the rules and agreements that accompany the process of dispute. Only appropriate, valid arguments are considered, which are true or plausible statements.
3. The *rhetorical approach* studies argumentation, focusing on the latter’s effectiveness depending on the specific context and the audience. In this perspective, any means of communication can be considered as arguments used to attract the audience’s attention and persuade it.

Leo Groarke, one of the first scholar, who created the interest to the phenomenon of multimodality, claims that the debater, who uses words and sentences, involves a verbal mode of argumentation; the one who builds an argument using images turns to the visual mode; the arguer, who uses taste as a component of argumentation, resorts to the mode of taste (Groarke, 2015). Thus, there is a need to study these various modes and ways to combine them in different life disputes. Multimodal theory expands what is semantically significant for argumentation theory.

Thus, the general characteristic of modes can be defined as a *material* or *construct*, in the sense that the mode is defined as the “raw stuff” used by the debater in the process of constructing the argument. In the case of verbal argumentation, words and sentences become semantically important components that we involve in the implementation of the act of dispute.

Defining the modes as components that debaters use in constructing of argumentation act implies that there are modes that connect not only visual images of different types, such as diagrams, graphics, photographs, videos, drawings, etc., but also tactile sensations, musical compositions, nonverbal sounds, etc. In this context, Leo Groarke talks about “*sub-modes*,” which are understood as subsets of more broadly defined modes (visual, audio, etc.). This definition is used to emphasize the importance of considering not only the semiotics of everyday language we use, but also the semiotics of images, music, gestures, and so on (Groarke, 2015). That is why it should be noted that multimodal argumentation arises in order to explore not only verbal but also nonverbal (visual, sound, etc.) modes of the argumentative process. Nonverbal elements can play a major role in persuading the audience, as they directly impact it. Thus, the focus shifts from verbal elements, which have long been considered basic, to nonverbal ones, which are less developed and researched. Various modes should be the subject of research as structural components of the argumentative process.

Considering the modes of argumentation, we should turn to the works of Michael Gilbert, who claimed that 4 different modes can categorize arguments. In addition to (1) *logical* mode, he distinguishes (2) *emotional*, which relates to the realm of feelings, (3) *visceral*, which arises from the physical field, and (4) *kisceral* (from the Japanese “ki” meaning “energy”), which covers the intuitive and insensible sphere (Gilbert, 1994). Gilbert seeks to expand the boundaries of argumentation established by traditional logical theories. In particular, the scholar tries to take the process of controversy beyond linguistic attempts to resolve the conflict and emphasizes the recognition of acts of argumentation built with nonverbal components, such as visual evidence, actions, images, and performances. It should be noted that Michael Gilbert considers argumentation in a rather broad sense, as any attempt to overcome disagreement between opponents.

In contrast, Leo Groarke believes that the concept of argumentation is more closely related to the standard understanding of the process of dispute, which makes arguments a complex formation of principles and conclusions, able to provide rational, valid evidence for a particular point of view (Groarke, 2015). Of course, disagreement can be resolved in other ways — by distraction, beating, shaking hands — but the scientist does not classify this as an argument. Thus, in this context, Groarke’s theory of multimodal argumentation in general and modes of controversy, in particular, support the concept of argument, closer to the traditional logical understanding.

In summary, it is advisable to compare the two views. According to Leo Groarke, in order to see whether a certain argumentative act is an example of a specific mode, it is necessary to check whether it is constructed from the components that define this mode. The modes proposed by Michael Gilbert are more difficult to define because the definitions are quite vague and inaccurate, which makes it difficult to distinguish certain cases. Thus, the kisceral mode appeals to energy and intuition. These terms define it.

On the one hand, this expands the boundaries of argumentation. Still, on the other hand, it is not a completely clear definition, which leads to a multiplication of meanings and misperceptions of the concept. In the case of the visceral mode, we cannot clearly define how we should distinguish between its manifestations and other physical displays, which are understood as emotional expression.

Moreover, the modes proposed by Michael Gilbert have regulatory shortcomings. An argument that is an example of a logical mode should be evaluated according to traditional norms and logic rules. By analogy, emotional arguments appeal to emotional standards,

visceral ones to physical ones, and so on. In addition to the fact that it is very difficult to define such standards, this theory provides various alternative criteria for argumentation analysis. The question arises whether it is possible to combine them into one concept, given all the above differences. According to Leo Groarke, it is necessary to distinguish between modes of dispute and assessment of argumentation; otherwise, it is quite difficult to categorize acts of dispute in modal terms.

The use of Gilbert's theory leads to the need to recognize that the argument, which is a "representative" of a mode other than logical, requires the assertion not only of its different form than traditional logical arguments, but also the judgment that it should be evaluated by alternative standards that are not subject to clear definition criteria. Groarke's theory leaves open the question of whether the manifestations of different modes should be evaluated on the basis of different criteria. The researcher himself is inclined to believe that the criteria for evaluating different modes remain the same.

Conclusions

In this paper, the phenomenon of multimodal argumentation is considered as relevant modern research at the intersection of disciplines such as philosophy, logic, psychology, cognitive and social science, linguistics, sociology etc., and which is dedicated to future searches. Studies of multimodal argumentation face a number of problems, most of which are terminological. To date, there is no clear agreement among scholars working in this field to define not only the term itself but also the subject field of multimodal argumentation. That is why the explication of the English terms "argument," "argumentation," "multimodal," "mode" and their involvement in modern national scientific discourses is an urgent and expedient task.

Currently, studies of multimodal argumentation are distinguished by the fact that the modes are mostly considered separately from each other. This leads to the selection of a specific subject of study of each argumentative process. However, it is more relevant to study multimodal argumentation as a holistic phenomenon that has a specific subject of study, which is not limited to a set of different types of argumentation but is broader. Using a multimodal approach in this sense makes argumentation more effective.

The main components of multimodal argumentation are verbal, visual, and sound. The verbal aspect is the most developed, because the interest in language issues through the prism of not only logic but also linguistics, philosophy of language, cognitive sciences dates back to antiquity, historically evolving and becoming systemic in the late twentieth century. Whereas nonverbal (visual, sound) modes were not of interest to scientists until the beginning of this century. Despite the lesser degree of elaboration and detailing, nonverbal argumentation in the forms, visual and sound, becomes more and more relevant and is the subject of interest of logicians and argumentation theorists.

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