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It goes without saying (though I will say it anyway)

It is not very frequently assumed that negation may play an active role in achieving specific conceptual frames, but as claimed by Langacker (2008) or Lakoff (2004), language enables the actual physical presence of words, even if in some kind of a negative construction, to create the positive conception of what is being denied.

Our research focuses on the phenomenon of praeteritio or apophasis as a rhetorical device in political discourse, where we noticed a frequent use of various types of negation constructions as introductory lines for the content which is actually not being negated but rather accentuated. Structures like 'It goes without saying...', 'We don't want to mention that...', etc., which are then followed by actual descriptions of affected participants or events, have been spotted in our corpus of public political speech events, particularly in the media discourse and in other types of discourse involved in shaping public opinion.

The cognitive and pragmatic functions of apophatic structures in the elicited corpus are analysed as well as their role in creating the persuasive force of this rhetorical device. Their iconic nature and psycholinguistic background are used as a vehicle to explain their unique position in the process of conceptualization of the world around us.

Key words: political discourse; rhetorical device; apophasis; negation; public speech.



1. Introduction

One aspect of negation that has often been tackled by linguists and philosophers alike is the relationship of negative expressions to their affirmative counterparts or its inherent feature of describing the phenomenon of semantic opposition in natural languages. Horn and Wansing (2007) describe this aspect in detail as both a semantic and pragmatic mechanism¹ and propose its deeply human origins as a universal design feature of natural languages absent from e.g. animal communication systems.

A systematic analysis of negative structures reveals their origin in the binary nature of the organisation of human thought where we would claim that they have a redundant position when opposed to the affirmative structures of basically declarative sentences in the indicative mood. Horn and Wansing (2007) observe that many philosophers, linguists, and psychologists have situated the asymmetry of negation in logic or semantics, as in the claim that every negation presupposes a corresponding affirmative (but not vice versa). As further claimed by Horn (1989) and Horn and Wansing (*ibid.*), negative constructions are psychologically more difficult to process since they rely on the iconically construed structures that contain more linguistic material than their affirmative counterparts, those being either morphological elements, like negative prefixes, or examples of sentence-scope negation with free-standing adverbs or particles (German *nicht*, English *not*), a bound inflectional form (Japanese *-na-*, English *-n't*), or a verb (Finnish *en*, *ei*). The actual contradictory status of the negative linguistic construction as iconically construed resides in the fact that the negatives contain negative markers and thus provide a diagrammatic iconicity feature of the expanded linguistic structure corresponding to the added semantic weight, while at the same time they actually subtract from the desired semantic weight of the encoded concept by negating or annulling some of its qualities or semantic features.

The difficulty in the processing of negative constructions is not only due to their structural complexity, but also due to the obligatory existence of the presupposed affirmative conceptual predecessor. The missing quality of informativeness represents the additional weight during the processing of negative structures since it is the presupposed conceptual frame with the affirmed and confirmed background knowledge which supports any possible negative construal. Negation can thus be characterized as a frequent and universal grounding mechanism in Langacker's sense: "Negation evokes as background the positive conception of what is being

¹ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/negation/>.



denied” (Langacker 2008: 59). It is inevitably connected to the contextual grounding of the profiled event since negation has a deeply rooted communicative purpose of expressing the speaker’s attitude toward the positively construed event. The speaker automatically assumes the position of a participant in the communication process by shaping the piece of information as the opposite of what might be termed a default affirmative status of the observed event. The interactive nature of the presupposed communication process reveals itself in current discourse space (CDS). According to Langacker (ibid.), the CDS is “a mental space comprising everything presumed to be shared by the speaker and hearer as the basis for discourse at a given moment.”

The information structure of the process is thus directed by switching off and on the portions of the shared mental space where negation may be purposefully used as a mechanism of a strategic placing of the desired piece of information. Discourse space thus seems to be a rather fluid affair that does not always rely, but is dependent on the potential affirmative construal of the event. It means that the negative structure hinges on the backgrounded affirmative structure, but forges its own way in the construal of meaning.

This fluidity of discourse is nowhere so obvious as in the case of political discourse, and the aim of this paper is to show how negation may be used as a cognitively based grounding element in the strategically used rhetorical figure of speech called apophasis (from Gr. *apophanein* “deny, say no”), highlighting its use in public or political discourse.

Apophasis as a rhetorical device is typologically universal but scholarly not so well described cognitive linguistic phenomenon, and it may be safely said that phrases like “It goes without saying...” or “It need not be mentioned...” escape our notice precisely because they cleverly use the notion of promoting the backgrounded affirmative content by introducing the foregrounded negative structure. The background information invokes some kind of knowledge shared by the speaker and the audience, and the implied understanding is introduced through phrases which may vary in their constructional elements in different languages, but which rely on the force of construal through the backgrounded affirmative content. An example for the construction in question can be found in Langacker’s discussion on grounding elements:

- (1) *It goes without saying (though I will say it anyway) that every language has its own grounding system, which must be described in its own terms.* (Langacker 2000: 272)



What we witness in this claim is, however, an excellent example of how some ancient ‘tricks of the trade’ may work in favour of the claim that there are many universal features in the construction when a negative clause is a grounding element for the content of the object clause. The universal feature in this example is the above mentioned apophasis or praeteritio or paralipsis, as it is sometimes called in rhetoric handbooks, a structure that has sprung out from Aristotelian logics where Gr. apophasis in the meaning of ‘denial’ stands opposed to Gr. kataphrasis or ‘affirmation’. This broader understanding of the word ‘apophasis’ covers even its most extreme version, the instances of the so called prolepsis when in the act of denying something, the speaker lists all items denied:

- (2) *I promised I would not say that she ran Hewlett-Packard into the ground, that she laid off tens of thousands of people and she got viciously fired, I said I will not say it, so I will not say it.* (Donald Trump, source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-rhetorical-device_us_56c358cbe4b0c3c55052b32b)

More recently, rhetoric scholars have dealt with the phenomenon on and off (Burton 2016; Hohmann 2008, and many others mostly in its sense within the field of negative theology), but its power as a mechanism of persuasion, which is in Aristotelian terms the actual purpose of any rhetorically shaped public speech, relies on “understanding human character and goodness in their various forms” (Aristotle Rhetoric Part I and Part II). The power of understanding the human character lies in the fact that a simple switch of attention from the negated portion of the sentence to the content of the affirmative part serves to reiterate and thus strengthen the impact of the claim in the human mind.

The cognitive linguistic process activated by apophasis has been recognized, although not labelled as such, in one of Lakoff’s works on framing the political debate entitled *Don’t Think of an Elephant* (2004). The simple psychological trick hidden in the title of the book reveals the beauty of the power of negation: we are neurologically wired to process the content which is negated and thus susceptible to the meaning of the affirmed conceptual frame.

The aim of the paper is to reveal how such a simple syntactic transformation may contribute to establishing a subtle manipulative relationship between the speaker and his or her audience and, at the same time, allow the speaker to save face.

We shall provide a qualitative analysis of examples of apophatic constructions collected over time from various Internet and textual sources with an emphasis on



Donald Trump, the current president of the United States of America. Trump will serve as a case study for apophasis which he has been using very cleverly throughout his career as a public persona, and even more so in his role as a politician. Being a master of insinuation, he has managed to enforce his rhetoric style of simple, straightforward delivering of structurally simplified utterances with a hidden agenda of manipulating the masses through his populist ideology. His tactics of enforcing the conceptualisation of the desired facts through evasion techniques, among which apophasis seems to be his favourite weapon, is claimed by some authors to have features of the so-called stochastic terrorism.² This kind of implicit communication carries the danger of inciting, among other things, violence among his supporters, in the form of subsequent response in his audience as a result of the gradual processing of the apophatically delivered messages.

In the following section we shall describe in very broad strokes the position of apophasis in view of the theoretical background of negation as a linguistic and psychological phenomenon. In section 3 we observe the processes of conceptualization and framing as applied to this rhetorical figure, as well as its pragmatic function in the context of public discourse. In the final section we shall offer some tentative conclusions on the basis of the examined examples, and a micro study in order to set the ground for more elaborate future work on the structure of apophasis in other languages and its role as a powerful pragmatic tool.

2. Apophatic negation

2.1. *Structural types of apophasis in relation to other types of negation*

Bianchi et al. (2011) summarize the functions of negation in natural language in the following way: as a means of being polite (Colston 1999; Giora, Balaban, Fein, and Alkabetz 2005; Horn 1989), in order to convey understatement or irony (Giora, Fein, Ganzi, Levi, and Sabah 2005), in order to contradict a common expectation or belief held by the receiver (Allwood 1977; Clark and Clark 1977; Givón 1978; Jordan 1998; Leech 1983; Wason 1965), in order to explicitly express denial and opposition as in “I don’t want to go to the cinema tonight” (Tottie 1991; Tottie and Paradis 1982), or as a modifier of degree as in “the water is not hot” said about water that may be warm, lukewarm, or cool (Bolinger 1972; Fraenkel and Schul

² Stochastic terrorism is the use of mass communications to incite random actors to carry out violent or terrorist acts that are statistically predictable but individually unpredictable. In short, remote-control murder by lone wolf. <http://stochasticterrorism.blogspot.hr/>.



2008; Giora, Balaban et al. 2005; Horn 1989; Israel 2001, 2004). In their work on the psychophysical effects of negation, they established the mitigating function of negation, albeit only in the cases of contradictory examples. Their results conform partially to Colston's experiments (1999) which demonstrated that one of the critical factors causing negation to work is the negative or positive orientation of the negated term. He found that a negated positively oriented adjective (e.g., "the food was not good") is synonymous with its opposite having a negative orientation (e.g., "the food was bad"). This is an example of the eliminative function of negation. In contrast, a negated negatively oriented term (e.g., "the food was not bad") does not have exactly the same meaning as the opposite positive term (e.g., "the food was good").

Apophysis in the sense of the word does not refer to any sort of denying but refers mostly in its rhetorical standard to the negation of the verbs of speaking or cognition which introduce the actual negative statement. Since there is no academic consensus on the actual required structure to be called either apophysis or praeteritio, we have compiled a small corpus of examples collected from various Internet and textual sources, which distinguishes roughly two basic categories of apophatic structures, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Structural types of apophysis

Negation in the first part of the statement	Negation in the second part of the statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• nothing need be said about	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It may safely be said that..., but I won't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I pass over the fact that...,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I could sit here and tell you..., but I won't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• it need not be said/mentioned,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm sure my opponent has read the legislation..., but her apparent inability to understand it ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I will not mention ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I forgive you for your jealousy, so I won't even mention what a betrayal it was



• we will overlook the fact...	• I was going to say ‘dummy’ Bush; I won’t say it. I won’t say it,
• I do not mean to suggest	• She’s bright, well-read, and personable--to say nothing of her modesty and generosity
• you need not be reminded,	• His state is a disaster, but I won’t say that.
• it is unnecessary to bring up,	
• I won’t go into details, suffice it to say...	
• we can forget about,	
• no one would suggest,	

It may be claimed that this feature of the “not x, but x” or “x, but not x” construction follows the line of thought of the asymmetric quality of negation proposed by Hegel or Givón, who considered negative propositions less relevant than their affirmative counterparts. In Horn’s view negation is about the statements, not the actual state of affairs:

... every negative statement presupposes a corresponding affirmative (although it is not always clear just which affirmative), but not vice versa. Negation is consequently a second-order affirmation: negative statements are about positive statements, while affirmatives are directly about the world.” (Horn 2001: 3)

In view of the opposition between descriptive and metalinguistic negation (cf. Zovko Dinković 2013: 116), we see some similarity between the features ascribed to the latter type and the apophatic examples in our corpus. The samples also contain a negative sentence followed by a correcting affirmative one, they are descriptively contradictory, the recipient must return to process the initial negative sentence after having processed the second, affirmative one and also the intonation in reading them contrasts the negated part and its corrective in the second part. This feature of metalinguistic negation is pragmatic in nature and provides an analytical explanation for its hedging effect discussed in section 3.3.1. below.



2.2. *The retention effect and negation bias*

Giora et al. (2004) discuss the results of their research which tend to coincide with folk wisdom, i.e. how people conceive of negation, when opposed to the consensus among psycholinguists that a negation marker is an instruction from the speaker to the hearer to suppress the negated information. In their view, suppression hypothesis is not completely plausible, especially since negation turns out to be the result of deliberation and social context and not a matter of automatic operation of elimination of salient meanings. They claim that salient meanings of negated concepts are not wiped out even when comprehenders are allowed extra processing time. Rather, they are retained and affect the ongoing discourse processing.

The retention effect combined with Colston's suggestions renders the following examples of apophasis positively efficient in their defamatory intentions:

- (3) *I refuse to call Megyn Kelly a bimbo, because that would not be politically correct. Instead, I will only call her a lightweight reporter!*
(Trump, D., source: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/692312112115380224>)
- (4) *“Unlike others, I never attacked dopey Jon Stewart for his phony last name. Would never do that!”* (Trump, D., source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-rhetorical-device_us_56c358cbe4b0c3c55052b32b)

Both examples above refer to the concepts denoted by the lexemes with negative orientation, ‘bimbo’ and ‘dopey’, which call forth not a positive term of any kind, but some undetermined concept which remains not clearly delineated, allowing for the retention effect to take place so that the negative bias remains operative through the remainder of the utterance.

In line with the observation above, we found that Beukeboom et al. (2010) provided results on the experimental research on the role of negation and linguistic bias in reflecting stereotypic expectancies. They showed that recipients are sensitive to the biased use of negations by communicators, in that they will make biased attributions on the basis of this information. Further to this claim, they conclude that the negation bias may contribute to the interpersonal maintenance and transmission of stereotypes. The fact that sometimes only an inkling of the assumed, mostly negative characteristic is sufficient to create negative impressions about the target was shown in Wegner et al. (1981), where the incriminating innuendo questions in various media sources served as triggers for malignant conceptualizations of targeted subjects. In this case the innuendo effect of apophatic structures may be hidden in the form of delivering partial information as sustained, but nevertheless incrimi-



nating declaration, which in most cases is sufficient to create the desired negative image.

Cognitively, as Lowler (2008) suggests, negation is elementary offline thinking in that it involves some comparison between a ‘real’ situation lacking some particular element, and an ‘imaginal’ situation that does not lack it. The fuzziness of the apophasis as a rhetorical device (cf. section 2.3.2. below) may be analysed in terms of his observation that the particular element in focus anchors and contextualizes the negative element, which, since it is constrained by grammar, i.e. either its syntactic or morphological structure, frequently does not provide enough information for a listener to determine what its focus is intended to be.

2.3. Apophatic negation and diagrammatic iconicity

An additional element which refers to the hedging potential of apophasis (cf. section 2.3.1. above) and relies on the negative element in the structure is the notion of iconicity attributed to negative morphological and syntactic structures in typologically diverse languages. Since the universal nature of apophasis has already been claimed, but its more detailed description must be postponed for some further research, it suffices to refer to Horn and Wansing (2007) who claim that not only are negative statements (e.g., *Paris isn't the capital of Spain*) generally less informative than affirmatives (*Paris is the capital of France*), they are morphosyntactically more marked (all languages have negative markers while few have affirmative markers), and psychologically more complex and harder to process.

Their markedness in surface structures reflects the complexity of their deep structures where the iconic nature of apophatic structures is visible when the additional element of negation within them imitates the real life situation when the linguistically encoded concept presupposes the pre-existing features being overridden by their denial.

As noted by Gradečak-Erdeljić (2009), in the quite dispersed terminology regarding iconicity (see Haiman 1980, 1983, 1985; Panther and Radden 2004; and Haspelmath 2008, for an overview), diagrammatic iconicity or, in a narrower sense, structural iconicity (since it excludes isomorphism as a separate phenomenon)³ includes cases of morphological and syntactic marking of negation where the additional linguistic material in the form of the negative particle *not* or a negative pre-

³ Cf. Taylor (2002: 45ff) for a detailed justification of this distinction.



fixes, e.g. *un-* in *unclear*, reflects the additional operation of opposition to the starting, affirmative point.

Our view on iconicity in the case of apophasis refers to the basic feature of lexical and syntactic negation performing the hedging function of distancing the speaker from the content of the utterance by augmenting the number of linguistic structures, one of which may be some negative element:

- (5) “*I’m very happy that I was able to hold back on the indiscretions with respect to Bill Clinton because I have a lot of respect for Chelsea Clinton and I just didn’t want to say what I was going to say.*” (Trump, D., source: <http://npaper-wehaa.com/sdcitybeat/2016/10/05/#?article=2818173>)
- (6) “*Now I won’t even bring up the fact that the Indians have gone wild on that statement. You know that, okay. The Indians have said that statement is a disaster statement and they want a retraction. I’m not gonna get into that.*” (Trump, D., source: <http://www.redstate.com/saragonzales/2016/05/02/cnn-host-laughs-trump-whines-unfair-double-standards-says-indians-mad-clinton-video/>)

In example (5) above we have the periphrastic modality structure (*was able*) and the negative nominal structure (*indiscretions*), which at the same time dissolve the impact of the message and condense the implied slur. The iconic motivation resides in the complexity of the linguistic structure which includes a form of the double negative: *to hold back on* and *indiscretions* revealing the face-saving strategy of iconic distancing with the speaker refusing to expose himself as divulger of dangerous secrets, but at the same time promoting them.

Example (6) relies on the diagrammatic iconicity of periphrastic structures where the verb phrase *bring up the fact* instead of the more neutral verb *say* performs the same function of hedging by expansion of the linguistic material, whereas the noun *fact* introduces the idea of undisputed factuality, despite it being previously negated.

This clever strategy of ‘in your face’ exposure while hiding behind negation and circumlocution is in no way an isolated incident involving apophasis, but a standard procedure Trump uses in an attempt to promote his ideas and win over the audience to his side, and it will be discussed in the framework of its pragmatic function in section 3.3. below.



3. Cognitive linguistic processes and rhetorical devices

3.1. *Conceptualization*

A cognitive linguistic approach to political discourse has already abundantly shown that meaning is not always expressed directly, in its referential sense, but, quite the opposite, relies on construals as linguistic expressions of the underlying background knowledge. The approach has been applied in many different instantiations of public (and private) discourse, but our interest lies in the realm of political action where a more critical standpoint may be assumed since this type of human interaction offers an excellent overview of the influence language has as a means of communication in human lives. There are different levels of the directness in approaching the linguistic encoding of socially sensitive topics and many linguists have recently found that a blend of research methods relying on cognitive processes and various theoretical vantage points embedded in pragmatics, discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis research may lead to some generally applicable principles of public linguistic conduct (Charteris-Black 2005; Chilton 2004; Cienki 2007; Dirven et al. 2001; Gibbs 1994; Goatly 2007; Gradečak-Erdeljić and Milić 2011; Lakoff 2002; 2008; Mussolf 2004; van Dijk 2006; Wodak 2006).

Our analysis will focus on a cognitive semantic analysis of what, in a traditional sense, may belong to the linguistic discipline of rhetoric, a study of practical use of language as a means of persuasion. Our particular blend of rhetoric and cognitive linguistics will find its vantage point in the process of conceptualization, or how meanings are evoked in human minds and what the role of language in the process may be. As claimed by Langacker (2004: 4):

In cognitive semantics, meaning is identified as the conceptualization associated with linguistic expressions... an expression imposes a particular construal, reflecting just one of the countless ways of conceiving and portraying the situation in question.

If figures of speech such as e.g. metaphor or metonymy, appropriated for so long by rhetoricians as purely linguistic structures used for embellishing public speech, were understood as cognitive operations imposing a particular construal of the reality, we might be much closer to the idea of what and how language is actually used in the public or political arena. If figures of speech were only surface linguistic phenomena, their impact would be of very short duration and the economy of the procedure would be questionable. If we, on the other hand, observe them as linguistic reflexes of a variety of cognitive operations, as proposed by Robinson and Ellis (2008: 513), we may be able to understand how rhetoric became such an



elaborate system of constructions and why the rules of their use have preserved their relevance over the centuries. Rhetorical figures offer alternative construals of entities or situations achieved by a variety of cognitive operations, and the constructions borne as the results of those operations have a much deeper impact because they have a neuro-cognitive basis and are embodied (Lakoff 2004, 2008; Lakoff and Dodge 2005). Developing this theory from the frame semantics originating in the works by Charles Fillmore (1975, 1982) and correlative notions of idealized cognitive models (Lakoff 1987), Lakoff further claimed that the way a person frames a particular situation will determine what they experience as relevant phenomena, what they count as data, what inferences they make about the situation, and how they conceptualize it. In our case, cognitive modelling is shown in terms of framing or establishing the so-called deep frames (Lakoff 2007), structures which both determine and reflect the underlying conceptual structures connected to one's moral worldview or political philosophy, i.e. working structures which employ certain metaphorical models.⁴

The relevance of rhetoric as an academic approach to public speaking and public discourse in general has been most recently overshadowed by scholarly work in the field of discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. Public discourse is mostly political discourse, i.e. linguistic structures displaying various levels of political engagement and political cognition with an ultimate goal of one group or individual gaining power over the other. The analysis of the skill of persuasion, as a favourite topos of both of these linguistic disciplines, is recognised by Teun A. van Dijk (2002), who introduces the concept of underlying mental representations that are shared by humans as participants in the political arena and refer to political structures and processes employed in everyday human communication which connect common social concepts and personal beliefs. Van Dijk's mental representations were a step further in developing the terminological apparatus for introducing the process of conceptualization in the field of public discourse and its meaning may be compared to the concept of Lakoff's deep frames that are explained below. According to van Dijk, all our knowledge about public or political figures is acquired, transformed or confirmed by being exposed to some kind of text or speech in the process of our socialization, formal education, media exposure and interpersonal communication. The structures contained in a political discourse (such as e.g. political topics, personal pronouns or metaphors) require description and explanation

⁴ Gradečak-Erdeljić and Milić (2011) describe two basic models proposed by Lakoff (2007) (Strict Father model vs. Nurturant Parent model visible in the policies and politics of the Republicans and Democrats in U.S., respectively) in order to derive the so-called surface frames, working conceptual metaphors which are activated in particular situations (issue-defining frames), e.g. 'War' in Iraq.



within the framework of the underlying mental representations, which can relate to both structures and processes found in some political environment.

The essential notion here is that mental representations are thus created and subsequently triggered by some linguistic operation, be it exposure to spoken or written linguistic structures, and specific rhetorical figures have certainly contributed to the constructional force which is present during those processes.

Framing has to do with all the starting positions which serve as motivation for any social activity, the ensuing consequences and any possible further measures. Cognitive modelling of this kind relies on the long-term memory being a product of individual and collective mental processes resulting in specific political discourse structures, ideologies and policies as types of memory recall. Short-term memory understands and creates representations through 'online' processes of discourse production which are systematically stored within specific frames, prepackaged pieces of information which become parts of the long-term memory. Repetition and frequency of use of particular linguistic structures activates large portions of memory and inevitably changes the structure of the stored data. A simple lexeme may trigger a series of associations, so even if we negate its existence, the actual utterance containing the negation, may evoke or even strengthen the frame containing it. To evoke Lakoff's famous book title: "Don't think of an elephant!" will not prevent the image schema of an elephant from appearing in your mind⁵. He pertains that it is the unconscious aspect of language which activates the frames or conceptual metaphor networks (Lakoff 2008: 15) and the unconscious part very frequently hinges on the emotional reactions the frame or the metaphorical mapping is related to within a particular time or context of its creation and subsequent recall.

3.2. Apophasis as a rhetorical device

This connection of emotional response and language is an integral part of rhetorical studies relying on the Aristotelian tradition, as being one, if not the most relevant in Aristotle's opinion, (Rhetoric I. and II.) the method of persuasion. Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character, with Ethos as an element in the efficiency of the method, or Logos as the method of persuasion by proof. The third, the

⁵ Lakoff (2004, 2008) and Feldman (2007) proposed the strategy of how to reframe political debate as the presentation of political ideas and principles so as to encourage one interpretation over another. Framing redefined political debate as a stage for invoking principles and values through keywords, metaphors, and strategic phrases and Lakoff stressed is that it is not issues but emotions that win the elections.



most efficient rhetorical method, which is the playing upon the emotions of the crowd, Pathos actually brings certain results that the speaker aimed at. However, this second method is slightly less efficient, since inflaming the passions and fears of the audience may achieve certain short term goals but such an easily excited group turns very quickly to another, equally gifted orator. Still, it seems that Pathos is nowadays one of the most frequent tactics of manipulation. The final method of persuasion, by proof, seems to have taken the back burner position in view of the impenetrable network of available information from both electronic and other sources. Proof requires personal experience of the phenomenon to be conceptualized and, as we have already established above, many topics pertaining to political discourse, or to any type of discourse revolving around socially relevant, but rather abstract concepts, refer to passed-on experiences of (political) actors, who frame them in particular ways which set off their own networks of connected meanings. These pre-packaged chunks of information are very quickly and very thoroughly swallowed by many a gullible audience and it is a universal cross-linguistic and intercultural process which thus renders the resilient character of many ancient rhetorical figures even more obvious. E.g. John F. Kennedy's chiasmus "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" is both striking and memorable because it plays on word repetition and rhythmic crisscross pattern, relying once again on the basics of conceptualization: construction and frequency. This strategy is quite similar to Yoda's anadiplosis "Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering", in which a repeated word or phrase is used both at the end of one sentence or clause, and at the beginning of the next. The fact that behind both of them lie very elaborate cognitive processes of conceptualization, universal and also deeply individual in nature, justifies the approach taken here, which is to provide a link between a well-accepted rhetorical figure and its cognitive linguistic nature.

As claimed by Hohmann (2008: 767), in identifying central issues in (controversial) arguments rhetors use the system of stasis (Lat. status or constitutio), which is a schematic ordering of argumentative topics among which assertion (Gk. kataphasis; Lat. affirmatio or intentio) and denial (Gk. apophasis; Lat. negatio or depulsio) have the central role. The principles of rhetorical schematic ordering are reflections of a much more universal logics of deductive reasoning where there are asserted propositions to be agreed with in order to reach a logical conclusion. The schema assumes the kind of a dialogue, which may or may not be in the form of a spoken discourse, but is sometimes also employed as a kind of the communication between the author and the reader in literary works. Thus examples below represent, as in



the literary theory they indeed do, excellent examples of how a topic may be introduced from two different vantage points:

- (7) *It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.* (Jane Austin, *Pride and Prejudice* 1998: 1)
- (8) *In the pages to follow I shall not indulge in descriptions of persons—except when a facial expression, or a gesture, appears as a sign of a mute but eloquent language—because, as Boethius says, nothing is more fleeting than external form, which withers and alters like the flowers of the field at the appearance of autumn; and what would be the point of saying today that the abbot Abo had a stern eye and pale cheeks, when by now he and those around him are dust and their bodies have the mortal grayness of dust (only their souls, God grant, shining with a light that will never be extinguished)?* (Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 1986: 12)

Whereas Austin's introductory sentence to one of her capital works uses the assertive power of the initial phrase to prompt the reader's agreement with the suggested shared knowledge, Eco's hero Adso uses strategically the rhetorical device of apophasis or paralepsis, as Eco (1984) himself calls it, in an attempt to emphasize the allegedly omitted material.

Dupriez (1991: 353) suggests that the operation draws attention to the interplay between the enunciation (uttering) and the utterance itself, especially when the link seizes to be implicit by the utterance being preceded by a *verbum dicendi*, which itself may be negated, creating thus a contradictory context which is an excuse or, as he calls it, 'a pseudo-simulation' for the actual claim being made, e.g. *I don't need to tell you that..., I won't remind you how....*

Stasis thus has a central role in the rhetorical theory of invention, which is a close counterpart of what would be the notion of the construal and conceptualization, and apophasis as a rhetorical device aids in resolving or obscuring even more the issues cropping up in the process of argumentation. It is usually introduced at the beginning of the speech or a portion of text when the topic to be discussed is mentioned for the first time and the relationship between the speaker and the audience is established and delineated.

In view of the political discourse as a type of argumentation with an ultimate goal of the speaker manipulating the addressee, as a rhetorical device it often depends on their mutual relationship and the implied shared knowledge. In the case of the apophatic structure in example (1), *it goes without saying* implies that there ob-



tains background knowledge and the shared context which would serve as a starting point or the initial status for the ensuing argument. If the knowledge, even implied, is not shared, we may claim that the structure is intended as factual and, even more, with an authoritative stance. If the phrase e.g. *needless to say* introduces the fact with which the audience is actually not familiar, it may be safely said that there is a level of condescending attitude toward the listeners, because the speaker points out with this apophatic structure the piece of information that the audience actually should know. In this way, the speaker manipulates the context of the argumentation, putting the audience in an inferior position, paving the way to further arguments which are thus purportedly more reliable since they originate from the speaker who is seemingly authoritative on the given topic. As seen in example (2), apophasis may be, and usually is, employed to make subversive ad hominem attacks, and although it may also be seen as a rhetorical play on irony,⁶ the impression of the meaning opposite from the one that is actually stated is lost in this case, since the claim is obviously present in the second part of the structure.

Thus the *I do not mean to say/suggest/imply/claim/mention that...* construction is used by rhetors or writers precisely to maintain the clarity of expression and to preclude jumping to conclusions by the reader or the audience. On the other hand, as explained in section 3.1., the suggestion is given and takes hold in the brain. The mental representation is established of things that members of the audience would themselves never dream of assuming in the first place, so that the implication would remain, while being safely denied by the writer.

3.3. The pragmatic function of apophasis

3.3.1. Apophasis as a hedging strategy

Further to the claim above about the safety of the author's denial, we may suggest that apophasis fits nicely the schema of politeness theory and may be used as one of the face-saving strategies, particularly in negative politeness, and as one of the linguistic hedges, which, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), may have indefinite 'surface forms'. Their account on politeness in language defines hedge as "a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 145), i.e. a linguistic means

⁶ In *The Mysteries of Rhetoric Unvail'd*, published in 1657, John Smith described apophasis as "a kind of irony, whereby we deny that we say or doe that which we especially say or doe." In this sense, we may speak of the situational, rather than verbal irony, since the context itself renders the whole of the event ironic.



that speakers use to avoid potential conversational threats. As claimed by Varga (2016), it is probably impossible to come up with any definite list of formal linguistic devices functioning as hedges, as there is no simple correlation between a linguistic item and hedging functions, and no linguistic device is inherently a hedge but can only acquire hedging qualities depending on the nature of the context, the speakers' or writers' intentions, the background knowledge of the interlocutors, etc. (Markkanen 1997). Beside some prototypical devices commonly associated with the function of hedges, which primarily cluster around epistemic verbs, nouns, adverbs, and adjectives (e.g. *this might be true*); concessive conjunctions (e.g. *Though this may be true, we...*); indirect speech acts (e.g. *Would you please open the door?*); progressive forms (*I was wondering if...*); if clauses (e.g. *If you happen to find time...*), and metalinguistic comments (e.g. *theoretically speaking...*), the closest resemblance to the function of apophasis is found in Grice's (1967, as quoted in Brown and Levinson 1987) conversational Maxims, and include Quality hedges which suggest a speaker's unwillingness to assume full responsibility for the truth of the utterance, as in *I assume; To the best of my recollection* (p.164).

In reference to its quality hedging role, apophasis is very frequently used in order to raise a criticism indirectly, for taboo topics or for what would be termed politically incorrect language:

- (9) *I'm not going to say it. I refuse to say that I cannot stand her screaming into the microphone all the time. I just couldn't stand it... But I won't say it because we're not allowed to say it, right?* (Trump, D., source: <https://wp.nyu.edu/therevealer/2016/06/23/trumpophasis-on-what-cannot-besaid/>)
- (10) *I'm not going to call him a lightweight, because I think that's a derogatory term.* (Trump, D., source: http://www.slate.com/articles/video/video/2015/12/donald_trump_s_preferred_rhetorical_tactic_is_called_praeteritio_is_also.html)
- (11) *While @BetteMidler is an extremely unattractive woman, I refuse to say that because I always insist on being politically correct.* (Trump, D., source: Twitter: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/262584296081068033?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

In connection to the pragmatic function of rhetorical devices, Fraser (2010) observes that there is a general agreement today that hedging is not a grammatical, but rather a rhetorical strategy which signals either a speaker's lack of full commitment to the proposition (e.g. *It was sort of acceptable*) or to the force of a speech act (e.g. *Perhaps you might sit while waiting*). Apophasis, in this sense,



would fit well into the class of rhetorical devices exhibiting the characteristics of negative politeness, in which the speaker is being polite via making a request less infringing, showing deference toward the interlocutor by cautiously presenting the potentially harmful content:

- (12) *“I know where she went -- it’s disgusting, I don’t want to talk about it,” Trump said, screwing up his face, as the crowd laughed and cheered. “No, it’s too disgusting. Don’t say it, it’s disgusting.”* (Trump, D., source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/12/21/donald-trump-calls-hillary-clinton-disgusting-for-using-the-restroom-during-a-debate/?utm_term=.c04f70ae13f0)

This example, although at first glance showing an appropriate level of protectiveness for the audience’s feelings, actually serves as a second hand attack on the person outside of communication. Negative politeness subsumes minimizing imposition on the interlocutor’s face, but in many of the examples above, we could say that apophasis actually burdens the other party, by imposing the content delivered in the structure where the full import of the message ricochets against the negated part, and directs its force toward the recipient.

3.3.2. *Apophatic fuzziness*

According to Gradečak-Erdeljić and Varga’s (2013), and Varga’s (2016) account of epistemic modality and its hedging function in academic discourse, languages possess an array of devices which can signal a degree to which a certain member is a representative of its category and the level of commitment to the argument the speaker exhibits when using precisely these devices. Whereas epistemic stance is one of the essential features of academic discourse where the relevance of facts presented in research papers is almost as strong as the position of the researcher and the reader towards them, the degree of categorial membership of linguistic structures in reference to the strength of the auctorial commitment is under no circumstances reserved only for the academic world, but is a universal feature exhibited in their hedging function. Lakoff (1973: 471) claims that this function is basically performed by hedges or words “whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness,” including items such as sort of, kind of, essentially, more or less, practically, principally, etc. Lakoff’s (1973) work on the logic of fuzzy concepts is connected to the early concepts of linguistic hedges and is based on Zadeh’s (1965) framework of the fuzzy set logic which presupposes a gradual membership of the elements in a set. Lakoff’s major argument reflects the view that the meaning cannot



be accounted for in bipolar, clear-cut terms and that speakers possess an intuitive feeling that certain lexemes, expressions or sentences are more or less true rather than only true or false (Žic-Fuchs1988).

Apophysis as a rhetorical device serves its hedging function by exhibiting the effect of fuzziness when intentionally playing on the feeling the audience gets that there is a swinging level of commitment toward the proposition which is simultaneously negated and confirmed by the speaker:

- (13) *I was gonna say that De Blasio's the worst mayor in the history of our city but I couldn't say it, oh he's a terrible mayor ... but I was gonna say that but now I won't say that.* (Trump, D., source:<http://languagelog ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=27091>)

In example (13) above we have a structure in which the negation part follows the hypothetically construed virtual situation, where even the use of the progressive aspect in the Past Progressive tense accentuates the subsequently negated potentiality of the actually claimed proposition. This dual distancing from the purported fact enables Trump to safely guard himself from the insinuation of the actual claim about De Blasio, whereas, at the same time, the audience is presented with a fuzzy concept in which the qualification is presented in a supposedly veiled manner, but nevertheless, seems to be quite effective in delivering the desired punch line.

As a face-saving strategy, apophysis goes a long way in protecting the source and, at the same time, setting the scene for the desired effect Trump wants to achieve. Namely, by presenting the qualification as something he struggles with to accept and present to the audience, as if trying to protect them from its effect, he designates the content as something stronger than his own will, and when he eventually delivers it in the form of the apophatic structure, he makes it even more valid, as an undeniable truth that escapes any trace of fuzziness that has been there as the initial effect.

This strategy is the very essence of the manipulative power of this rhetorical device and is efficient in delivering any sort of message, particularly when the message is a political one, and the speaker has the clear aim of creating a specific ideological and linguistic pool of resources to be activated over and over again. Trump has proved himself to be the master of the trade on many occasions. As Aristotle claimed in his Rhetoric: "To be persuasive, it is necessary to understand human character and goodness in their various forms", and further to this claim, more contemporary authors, such as Walton (2007: 18) declare rhetoric to be a branch of psychology where the element of persuasion can be measured by empirical indica-



tors, such as opinion polls after an election campaign or a rise in sales after an advertisement campaign. For him, rhetoric has nothing to do with the dialectical structure of the argument or whether the argument is structurally correct by some standard, such as that of deductive logic. An audience could find it quite persuasive if exposed sufficiently to a well-planned set of psychologically sound steps, or to an argumentation scheme which relies on both emotional appeal and rationalisation. His claim supports Lakoff's vision of emotionally charged deep frames structured around deeply rooted metaphorical networks that govern our lives much more than any rational argument.

4. Conclusions

The ideas presented in the analyses above suggested one of the possible approaches to readdressing the traditional rhetorical figures from a cognitive linguistic point of view. The resilience of some of the tropes that have been promoted as an essential skill from ancient times to contemporary communication educational programmes and have been used on an everyday basis in both the public and private sphere, may have their foundation in deeply rooted cognitive processes. We have approached the topic of apophasis as a rhetorical figure based on the cognitive-linguistic process of framing or conceptualization, aimed at manipulating the debate in the way preferred by the speaker and relying on the shared current discourse space in terms of Langacker's (2008) proposal of social and linguistic interaction.

On numerous examples of apophatic constructions extracted from various internet and textual sources, we have presented apophasis as a clever persuasion technique which creates the positive conception of what is being denied by the actual physical presence of words, even if they are elements in some kind of a negative construction. We have focused on examples from the repertoire of current U.S. president Donald Trump, because it has been noticed that he has been using the figure quite abundantly, and with the clear aim of promoting his political and other, politically non-related ideas. Apophasis is a useful tool in the process of manipulation in public discourse where the audience is placed at the brink of the potential claim, which is immediately negated and the atmosphere of uncertainty is created, which provides the opportunity for the speaker to lead the argument in the desired direction.

We have established two basic types of structures, with the negated part of the statement in either the first or the second part of the complex sentence, or as separate individual sentences used in a string of contextually related ideas. Furthermore,



we have introduced the notion of diagrammatic iconicity as an operative mechanism in connecting the utterance(s) to reality. Negation as the focal point of apophasis is explained by psycholinguistic data on the retention effect and negation bias, while its pragmatic function as a hedging device is elaborated within the context of politeness theory and fuzzy hedges.

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NIJE NI POTREBNO GOVORITI O TOME (IAKO ĆU SVEJEDNO REĆI)

Ne smatra se često da negacija može imati aktivnu ulogu u postizanju određenih konceptualnih okvira, no kao što tvrde Langacker (2008) ili Lakoff (2004), jezik omogućava stvarnoj fizičkoj prisutnosti riječi, čak i ako se one nalaze u nekoj vrsti niječne konstrukcije, stvoriti pozitivnu sliku onoga što se niječe.

Naše se istraživanje prije svega bavi pretericijom i apofazom kao retoričkim sredstvima u političkom diskursu, gdje smo zamijetili čestu uporabu različitih vrsta niječnih konstrukcija koje uvode sadržaj koji se zapravo ne niječe, već naglašava. Konstrukcije poput 'Nije ni potrebno govoriti...', 'Da i ne spominjemo...', itd. iza kojih neposredno slijedi opis "prešućenih" sudionika ili događaja, pojavljuju se u našem korpusu javnih političkih govora, u medijskom diskursu te u drugim tipovima diskursa kojima se oblikuje javno mnijenje.

U radu se analiziraju kognitivne i pragmatičke funkcije apofaznih konstrukcija u navedenom korpusu te njihova uloga u stvaranju uvjerljivosti ovoga retoričkog sredstva. Njihova ikonička priroda i psiholingvistička pozadina koriste se kao alat za tumačenje njihova jedinstvenog položaja u procesu konceptualizacije svijeta oko nas.

Ključne riječi: politički diskurs; retorička sredstva; apofaza; negacija; javni govor.