Proximisation, Common Ground, and Assertion-Based Patterns for Legitimisation in Political Discourse

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Abstract

This methodological-critical paper aims to investigate the interplay between three prime strategies for legitimisation of the speaker's actions, or actions for which she/he bears responsibility in political discourse: proximisation (cf. Cap 2006), common ground, and assertion-based patterns. It starts with a brief description of the phenomenon of linguistic legitimisation of the speaker's actions, or of actions for which she/he is responsible. The notion may be readily associated with one of the positive politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), however, it is far more than a politeness strategy, as it consists of a number of pragmatic and extra-pragmatic phenomena: (a) proximisation theory and the STA model for legitimisation (Cap 2005, 2006) enriched with positive, negative and neutral values, (b) assertive speech acts, and their role in assertive-directive and thesis-antithesis patterns, (c) common ground strategy. The operation of these mechanisms will be demonstrated in the analysis of a speech delivered by the Spanish Prime Minister on the acceptance of the bill allowing same-sex marriages. The application of a top-down approach to the analysis (de? Beaugrande 1991) reveals that all the aforementioned aspects comprise a net of complementary linguistic mechanisms ideally suited for the purpose of legitimisation.

Keywords: Legitimisation, political discourse, proximisation, common ground, assertion

1. Legitimisation

However simplistic the term 'legitimisation' may appear to be, it is a rather complex notion. Legitimisation is an example of Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategies (1987), as it provides reasons for undertaking certain past, present, or future actions, which in turn mitigates potential Face Threatening Acts. Schäffner sees it, along with 'coercion, resistance, opposition, (...) protest, dissimulation' (1996: 203) and obviously delegitimisation, as one of the strategic functions of political discourse. In this matter, Cap agrees, yet he upgrades its role, indicating that legitimisation is not just one such strategy, but rather 'the principal goal of the political speaker seeking justification and support of actions which the speaker manifestly intends to perform [or actions already performed] in the vital interest of the addressee' (2006: 7). Cap formulates a much broader approach to this notion: 'legitimization can be defined in terms of a linguistic enactment

of the speaker's right to be obeyed' (2005: 12), which unites scientific, i.e. politically-oriented, and linguistic prompts for the analysis of a legitimisation-driven discourse. Legitimisation signals the speaker's authority and 'provides rationale for listing reasons to be obeyed' (Cap 2005: 13) by means of a number of strategies realized either explicitly or implicitly:

> the awareness and/or assertion of the addressee's wants and needs, reinforcement of global and indisputable ideological principles, charismatic leadership projection, boasting about one's performance, positive self-presentation and many more. (Cap 2005: 13)

Other strategies include negative presentation of the opposition (cf. Van Dijk 2005, 2006) through 'blaming, scape-goating, marginalizing, excluding, attacking the moral character [and rationale] of the adversary' (Cap 2005: 13).

Legitimisation enhances both the speaker's projection of 'charismatic leadership' and positive presentation of the self which constitutes a pivotal element of any speech's success (Cap 2006: 7). According to the aforementioned views, legitimisation appears to be a much broader notion than just a positive politeness strategy. Thus, it may be defined as an umbrella term for a number of pragmatic and extra-pragmatic strategies.

1.1 Proximisation Theory Revised

The notion of proximisation, one of the most complex legitimisation-driven mechanisms, is fairly new. First commented on by Chilton (2004), the idea was then developed and organized into a fully applicable model for political discourse analysis by Cap. Chilton's theory, however, was not intended to be a device applicable in pragmalinguistic analysis of a legitimisation-oriented political discourse, but rather in grammatical analysis. His Discourse Space Theory (DST), as he named it, comprised solely of spatial aspects and defined discourse space as a construct of three axes: spatial, temporal and modal, each stemming from a deictic centre. It was Cap's STA model that has given proximisation the threefold dimension applicable to the analysis of legitimising discourse: (s)patial, (t)emporal, and (a)xiological. The cooperation of Cap's three original aspects facilitates the speaker's repeated attempt to instill in the addressee the image of a threat entering the deictic centre, i.e. their location. These aspects, however, do not exhaust the notion's potential: they exhibit properties enabling a classification according to an extended taxonomic system in which they possess positive, negative, and neutral values.

This section of the paper is a tentative attempt to develop Cap's STA model of legitimisation (2005, 2006). It indicates that proximisation is a complex legitimisation-driven device in which spatial, temporal, and axiological dimensions interact on explicit and implicit levels facilitating legitimisation of the speaker's actions. Generally speaking, virtually all positive proximisation patterns (irrespective of the dimension) constitute the macro-act of offering (or promising), which facilitates justification of the speaker's stance, decisions, or actions. By the same token, negative proximisation patterns constitute the macro-act of warning; their potency, however, ranges from advice to a threat.

In short, the spatial dimension of proximisation presents occurring events as: (a) physically close, (b) consequential and threatening, and thus (c) demanding instant (re)action (Cap 2005, 2006). Such spatial proximisation is referred to as *negative spatial proximisation*. The negative character is produced and imposed by the fact that events are seen as 'consequential and threatening' to the addressee. In *positive spatial proximisation* the events are such as defined by points (a) and (c), but instead of being 'consequential and threatening' they are 'beneficial and promising.' The positive, rather than negative outcome of a given event, is within the addressee's grasp, which compels them to (re)act. The following example is an excerpt from President Gerald Ford's speech delivered in April 1975 after South Vietnam's collapse. Ford claimed that the war 'is finished as far as America is concerned' and voiced the need for young Americans to focus on their future, which was his way to legitimise the decision to withdraw American forces from Vietnam. Instances of positive spatial proximisation below are italicised:

> Each of you are preparing yourselves for the future, and I am deeply interested in your preparations and your opinions and your goals. However, tonight, with your indulgence, let me share with you my own views. I envision *a creative program that goes as far as our courage and our capacities can take us*, both at home and abroad. My goal is for a cooperative world at peace, *using its resources to build, not to destroy*. As President, I am determined to offer leadership *to overcome our current economic problems*. My goal is for *jobs for all who want to work and economic opportunity for all who want to achieve*.

Notions such as *jobs* and *economic opportunity* are presented as rather distant, but gradually brought closer to the deictic centre (where the addressee is located). The addressee is being continually convinced that these will produce benefits, rather than constitute threats. Moreover, their proximity compels the addressee to undertake immediate action. The coercive effect is achieved by means of the implicature in *a creative program that goes as far as our courage and our capacities can take us*, as well as by the implied information in the thesis-antithesis pattern: *using [world's] resources to build, not to destroy*. Interestingly enough, here the addressee is assigned the active role of the agent 'grasping' the benefit, which will fulfil the addressee's wishes (temporal dimension), and bring it into the deictic centre at some time in the future. In negative spatial proximisation the threat would normally approach the deictic centre without the addressee's active participation.

By the same token, the second aspect of proximisation, namely temporal, can be characterised as having positive and negative, as well as neutral values. According to Cap (2005: 29), the temporal dimension presents events as 'momentous and historic (...) thus of central significance to the discourse addressee,' which is inherently neither positive nor negative, but neutral. Cap (2005, 2006) himself allows for the possibility of double-valuing the remaining parameters for temporal dimension of proximisation: (a) interpreting the aftermaths of past events being referred to (negative temporal proximisation), (b) suiting the addressee's expectations, wishes, and desires (positive temporal proximisation). Thus, the evaluation distributes various elements of the occurring events on the time axis, since the negative dimension is definitely past-oriented, the neutral one present-oriented, and the positive one future-oriented. The excerpt below comes from Gerald R.

Ford's remarks on taking office after his predecessor, Richard Nixon, had resigned from it in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal during the 1970s. The main goal of Ford's speech was to legitimise his 'promotion' building up the image of a new, unquestionably better leader. Phrases of interest are underlined with a single line to indicate positive temporal proximisation, with a double line to indicate negative temporal proximisation, and with a wavy line to indicate neutrality:

> The oath that I have taken is the same oath that was taken by George Washington and by every President under the Constitution. But I assume the Presidency under extraordinary circumstances never before experienced by Americans. This is an hour of history that troubles our minds and hurts our hearts. (...) In all my public and private acts as your President, I expect to follow my instincts of openness and candor with full confidence that honesty is always the best policy in the end. My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over.

Both *extraordinary circumstances never before experienced by Americans* and *our long national nightmare* constitute an implicit reference to Nixon's disgraced actions. Its effects have unquestionable impact on the deictic centre creating the aura of a disharmonious and unstable political situation. The addressee is thus made aware that unless they accept the new leadership they will face a catastrophe in the direct aftermath of the scandal. Alongside the examples of a negative temporal proximisation strategy there are also examples of a positive one: by the implied promise in *all my public and private acts as your President* further developed by the following explicit promise, the speaker attempts to convince the addressee that their expectations towards him as the leader are going to be fulfilled. The same message, but reinforced by an implicit reference to the Watergate issue, is communicated by *honesty is always the best policy in the end*, where the underlined phrase clearly constitutes the implicature trigger. As has been indicated above, positive, negative, and neutral proximisation can coexist side by side within the body of one text, or even one paragraph. Moreover, their complementary character strengthens the overall goal of legitimisation.

Not surprisingly, the axiological aspect of proximisation exhibits similar properties. According to Cap, this dimension 'narrow[s] the distance between two different and opposing ideologies' resulting in a clash. The clash, in turn, can lead to the events defined by the two remaining dimensions (2006: 6) and determine the character of the axiological dimension as either positive or negative. In fact, it is mostly the addressee's predisposition towards the opposing ideology, as well as the speaker's credibility in the eyes of the addressee which determines the evaluation. These factors affected the way the addressee received the following speech by John Paul II. The Pope was a speaker whose credibility and authority were generally recognized and hardly ever questioned by either side of the conflict between Jews and Catholics. The clash in question arose during the Nazi period when the Catholic Church did not give any public response to the treatment Jews received during the Holocaust. The Pope, on behalf of the Church, responded in the year 2000 presenting Catholics and Jews as two separate denominations, but by no means determined to fight each other:

> Jews and Christians share an immense spiritual patrimony, flowing from God's self-revelation. Our religious teachings and our spiritual experience demand that we overcome evil with good. We remember, but not with any desire for vengeance or as an incentive to hatred. For us, to remember is to pray for peace and justice, and to commit ourselves to their cause. Only a world at peace, with justice for all, can avoid repeating the mistakes and terrible crimes of the past.

By presenting *Jews and Christians* as being gradually brought closer together, the speaker implies that, although both religious groups have their own *teachings and [...] spiritual experience,* they are bound together in pursuit of one, mutual goal, i.e. *overcom[ing] evil with good,* as well as establishing *peace with justice for all.* In this case, the negative temporal proximisation strategy of referring to the past events was used to determine the axiological dimension. The speaker implies that unless the two sides of the conflict cooperate, a similar situation is likely to occur in the future. On the other hand, he asserts that both sides remember the Holocaust and its aftermath; as a representative of Christians, the speaker establishes common ground with Jews by means of the information entailed in *we remember, but not in any desire for vengeance or as an incentive to hatred.* By the same token, the relationship between these two religious denominations is implicitly defined as positive, thus exemplifying the positive axiological proximisation strategy.

1.2 Common Ground

Claiming common ground with the addressee (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987) is a positive politeness strategy, or rather a super-strategy covering a range of other strategies. In informal, or less formal contexts, positive politeness strategies are much more frequent, while in formal contexts more conventionalised negative politeness techniques prevail (1987: 101, 129-130). The speaker, however, may deliberately employ certain strategies to instil in the addressee the aura of familiarity and intimacy to legitimise particular actions she/he bears responsibility for. Such is the case with claiming common ground, as it indicates that the speaker and the addressee share specific wants, including goals and values. According to Brown and Levinson, there are three methods of making the claim: (a) the speaker presents some of the addressee's wants as being of interest to her/him as well, (b) the speaker stresses that she/he and the addressee are members of the same group, and (c) the speaker claims a shared perspective with the addressee.

An important element of claiming common ground is the inclusive/exclusive reference made to the addressee on different levels of explicitness. Apparently, the indication of inclusiveness may stem from the use of plurality 'deriving from the treatment of the individual as a member of a corporate group' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 199); by the same token, the indication of exclusiveness may stem from the use of singular forms. However, the implicature in *We'll meet at the usual place at the usual time* is capable of communicating the addressee's exclusion from a particular group irrespective of the use of plural pronoun *we.*

According to Cap, the notion of common ground is based on 'a construction of a mental frame shared by the speaker and the addressee' which is related to 'enactment of [the speaker's] credibility, imposition of common discourse goals or attracting the addressee to a particular course of action' (2005: 22-

23). It is defined as a device integrating the viewpoints of the speaker and the addressee:

> Common ground (…) involves not only the particular substrategies for unification of the discourse parties in a common insight based on enactment of common discourse setting or equal discourse power (…), but also all the reformulations which, on top of the original scope, account for the latter discourse goals (…) in terms of a balanced contribution from the speech act of assertion and the mechanism of (conventionalized, conversational) implicature. (Cap 2006: 49-50)

In other words, 'the aura of common ground and partnership' in the speaker-addressee relationship can be manifested through a complex interface between the speech act and the implicature perspectives (Cap 2005: 23). As common ground clearly constitutes a complementary parameter to the assertion-implicature interface, 'the enactment of mental closeness between discourse parties' (2005: 25) allows the speaker to expect that the audience will share her/his point of view, at least to some extent (2006: 51-52). While assertions communicate that the speaker's views are constant and unchanged, the implicature is treated 'as a temporary container of conflicting insights,' thus it facilitates the speaker's potential attempt to adjust his original ideas (2006: 49). However, such possibilities are not limited exclusively to implicatures, since assertives themselves may be containers for implied information.

The following excerpt comes from the Taliban's response to American claims for Osama bin Laden after the attack on 11th September (Cap 2006: 50). Islamic clerics' (*Ulema*) reaction aptly illustrates the way the assertion-implicature interface operates. Simultaneously, this particular enactment of common ground constitutes a response to American rhetoric:

> Afghanistan's Ulema is sad over the losses (1) in the United States AND hopes that the United States will not launch an attack (2) on Afghanistan.

The two assertives marked (1) and (2) are linked with 'and,' which usually indicates either a causative or a sequential relationship. If the conjunction is treated as 'a [valid] marker of conventional implicature' its interpretation indicates that (2) stems from (1), and thus provides some justification for potential American military action in Afghanistan. The Arab addressee, however, may interpret the implied message contrary to the interpretation of the world audience ignoring both any causative and sequential relationship between assertives (1) and (2), simply because they are thematically diverse. They are prone to consider their leaders' actions as the expression of care for the Arab compatriots (Cap 2005: 23-24).

1.3 Assertion

Similar to proximisation and common ground strategies, the speaker's extensive use of assertion can also be perceived as a legitimisation-driven strategy due to a number of roles which assertive speech acts play in political discourse. According to Austin (1962), they undergo assessment as either true or false and their main function is simply to assert. Thus, members of this category of speech acts 'express ideological principles which are in line with

psychological, social, political or religious predispositions of the addressee' (Cap 2005: 13), i.e. are assigned some truth value. However, the speaker may purposefully employ assertions which she/he knows to be false:

> statistically, (...) speakers usually believe what they assert to be true, and usually this belief is (...) part of the reason for making the assertion. However, we cannot go from there to take a speaker's having this aim as necessary for [her/his] utterance to be assertoric, for lies are assertions as much as honest utterances. (Pagin 2007)

What is often being communicated through assertions is factual information which cannot be challenged or denied and which is readily accepted as truthful. Therefore the speaker is capable of instilling within the addressee the aura of credibility, which is 'a natural prerequisite for successful legitimisation' (Cap 2006: 29). Yet according to Pagin, assertives do not necessarily have to be true, even if their aim is to attest the speaker's own truthfulness in legitimising her/his actions, or to give factual information:

> Assertion[s] can be insincere even though what is asserted is believed by the speaker. This can happen if the speaker deliberately tries to make the addressee infer something false. (Pagin 2007)

Still, if a speaker is considered credible, she/he is better able to legitimise even controversial statements located further in the text. The addressee is psychologically determined to be consistent in their beliefs, thus they tend to accept the statements in the light of the truthfulness of the previous assertions and of the speaker:

> If a novel message is generally accepted after it has been communicated for the first time, its credibility (and hence the credibility of the speaker) tends to increase over time. (Cap 2006: 29)

This in turn may lead the addressee to 'believe in [the speaker's] predictive, deductive, and explicative capacity' (Cap 2005: 17) and perceive her/him as being in authority. Frequent use of assertives facilitates the speaker's positive self-presentation as competent, informed, trustworthy, powerful, etc. The following excerpt from a speech delivered by George W. Bush on the fifth anniversary of the September attack in which he attempts to legitimise the decision to undertake further actions against Al-Qaeda by means of assertives clarifies the aforementioned features:

> Five years ago, this date -- September the 11th -- was seared into America's memory. Nineteen men attacked us with a barbarity unequaled in our history. They murdered people of all colors, creeds, and nationalities -- and made war upon the entire free world. *Since that day, America and her allies have taken the offensive in a war unlike any we have fought before. Today, we are safer, but we are not yet safe.* On this solemn night, I've asked for some of your time to discuss the nature of the threat still before us, *what we are doing to protect our nation, and the building of a more hopeful Middle East that holds the key to peace for America and the world.*

Through the extensive use of assertives George W. Bush establishes his credibility in the addressee's eyes: (a) making reference to rational, and

justified actions expected by the addressee, yet difficult to verify at the moment of speaking, for example *Today we are safer, but we are not yet safe*, (b) employing general and vague, thus hardly deniable statements, for example *Since that day, America and her allies have taken the offensive in a war unlike any we have fought before*, and (c) referring to the sense of mutuality of purpose and partnership, for example *what we are doing to protect our nation, and the building of a more hopeful Middle East that holds the key to peace for America and the world*. The speaker presents himself as an intelligent, informed, skilful, and trustworthy person, which provides him with an array of possibilities to manipulate the addressee (cf. Cap 2006: 32). Under such circumstances, the audience is receptive enough for the speaker to impose 'messages which start to diverge from the addressee's original predispositions' (2006: 29).

1.3.1 Assertive-Directive Pattern

If a speaker is able to legitimise her/his actions, or actions she/he holds responsibility for through extensive use of assertive speech acts which build up the aura of the presented information's truthfulness, as well as the speaker's own credibility, her/his situation is advantageous enough to postulate a more controversial claim or to make a request towards the addressee:

> The process of imposition of a novel message involving a controversial claim or a directive may develop over large discourse segments whose illocutionary force is not of an individual speech act but rather that of a speech event. (…) This is often the case when the macro function of the speaker's performance is complex or challenging to enact and therefore requires a continual, step-by-step preparation of announcement of the ultimate goal. (Cap 2006: 34)

Following Searle, directives 'generally express only future events and are addressee-oriented, as the addressee is the intended agent responsible for future events.' Moreover, 'directive[s] require collaboration' to succeed as manipulative and coercive mechanisms (quoted by Dontcheva-Navratilova 2005: 16). Thus, the addressee is more willing to accept a new message on the basis of the aura of truthfulness built on top of the preceding assertives. This is the case even if the message diverges to some extent from the addressee's general stand (Cap 2006: 32).

In 2003 George W. Bush presented the early effects of the coalition troops' presence and intervention in Iraq attempting to convince the public of the rightness of his decision. The speaker employed a tactic of gradually introducing his aims throughout the text:

> (1)
> My fellow citizens, at this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people, and to defend the world from grave danger.[…]

> (2)
> Our nation enters this conflict reluctantly -- yet, our purpose is sure. The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder. […]

(3)
We will meet that threat now, with our Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines, so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of fire fighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities. [...]

The paragraphs above represent 'a continuum of assertions' whose directive potential, reinforced by the preceding assertives, increases over time. Paragraph (1) is a simple expression of facts and the speaker's beliefs, and paragraph (2) constitutes an addressee-directed appeal to convince them to take action in such a serious matter. Paragraph (3), on the other hand, specifies the actions the addressee is to agree on and enhances its already coercive character with a presupposition in *so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of fire fighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities*. The speaker deliberately delays the disclosure of his aim (to employ more forces in the conflict) long enough for the preceding assertions to built up the aura of his credibility (cf. Cap 2005: 18).

1.3.2 Thesis-Antithesis Pattern

As has already been mentioned, assertions constitute a perfect medium for expressing ideas and beliefs. Strong and undeniable, they are essential elements of a thesis-antithesis pattern, 'us and them,' as well as 'now and then' rhetoric. Following Mann (1984), arguments in a thesis-antithesis pattern are presented as 'collections of [contrastive] ideas.' Usually the first set consists of the notions the speaker disagrees with, while the second set of the notions the speaker agrees and 'identifies with' (Mann 1984: 370). If the speaker disagrees with rejection-prone ideas which the addressee would also consider unacceptable on moral grounds, she/he is more likely to succeed in convincing the audience to welcome the more acceptable alternative (by which means the speaker strengthens the overall legimitising power of her/his speech). Moreover, the addressee is predisposed to memorise and develop positive attitudes toward the second set of ideas for at least two reasons: (a) having been presented against the rejectable set, it constitutes a more acceptable alternative, and (b) being presented later in the speech it is better integrated in the mind of the addressee. Cap noticed that a thesis-antithesis pattern is 'a broader logical and psycholinguistic construct which can equally apply to single utterances, (…) larger textual chunks, [and] entire discourses' (2006: 19). The following excerpt from Gerald R. Ford's speech delivered after U.S. troops were withdrawn from Vietnam illustrates the legitimising force of the thesis-antithesis scheme:

> Today, America can regain the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam. But <u>it cannot be achieved by refighting a war</u> that is finished as far as America is concerned. As I see it, the time has come to <u>look forward to an agenda for the future</u>, <u>to unify</u>, <u>to bind up the Nation's wounds</u>, and <u>to restore its health and its optimistic self-confidence</u>. <u>In New Orleans, a great battle was fought after a war was over</u>. <u>In New Orleans tonight, we can begin a great national reconciliation</u>. The first engagement must be with the problems of today, but just as importantly, the problems of the future.

The ideas underlined with a single line stand in antithetical relation with those underlined with a double line: the dividing capacity of war is juxtaposed with

the notion of *a great national reconciliation*. The speaker chooses to mention two wars, in Vietnam and in New Orleans, as enhancement for the general idea of war which the addressee is likely to disapprove of. As a more acceptable idea for a democratic country the speaker proposes *to unify*, and *to bind up the Nation's wounds*. This comes as a better alternative for the future than *refighting a war*. Having the two options, of which one is rejectable, the addressee is more willing to accept Ford's decision to withdraw American forces from Vietnam implicitly presented against the image of the British being driven out of America in the New Orleans battle. Moreover, the overall legitimisation power of a thesis-antithesis pattern is strengthened by the addressee's natural inclination to memorise better the messages she/he agrees with. Therefore the initial rejectable message is offset with a more acceptable one. To intensify the negative character of the initial information he implicitly comments on the war as being the cause of the impairment of U.S. morale: *the time has come (...) to restore [the Nation's] health and its optimistic self-confidence*. The implicature only adds to the addressee's unfavourable perception of military actions.

2. Contextual Information

On the 29th June 2005 a bill allowing same-sex marriages in Spain was approved in Madrid. Together with the right to form *a marriage contract* homosexual couples were allowed to inherit from their partners and adopt children. It was a highly contentious issue in Spain, since the majority of its inhabitants are Catholic. On the other hand, Spanish society tends to be in favour of many changes (including changes in the law) making the country a more liberal place. Thus, through a forceful socialist agenda, the Bill that had been rejected by the Senate was finally approved by 187 votes in favour, 147 votes against, and 4 abstentions.

The Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, delivered a speech legitimising the acceptance of the change in the Spanish law in the Congress. The text was aimed at different types of audiences: following Schäffner (1996: 202), these could be labelled with a very general term 'internal' (i.e. addressed to politicians rather than to the nation), as well as 'external' (i.e. the nation), and 'inner-state' political communication. Two extreme cases of external audience were: the homosexuals, a minority group whose expectations towards the speech could be easily satisfied, and religious institutions along with their followers, highly influenced by the disallowing approach held by the two Popes: John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The more religious members of the audience would be defiant, thus their expectations ran the risk of never being fully satisfied. Between these two extremes there was yet another type of audience, namely the Spanish society in general, less radical in their beliefs, and not prone to hold the firm beliefs of either side.

2.1 Analysis

The speech illustrates the interplay between the three legitimisation-oriented strategies mentioned above. It requires a top-down pragmatic-functional approach to analysis (Beaugrande 1991). Hence much attention will be paid to data supporting the presupposed macro-function of the text, the speaker's

legitimisation of the bill and his self-promotion as an efficient and truthful leader. The following text is a translation of the speech in question and as such the analysis will naturally be constrained to some extent, in particular with regard to lexical equivalents. In cases of salient differences the English examples will be juxtaposed with their Spanish equivalents. The following paragraphs are numbered to facilitate navigation through the analysis. For the sake of clarity, selected linguistic data within the speech's body is italicised:

(1)
Today, my government definitively submits for Senate approval the Bill, modifying Civil Law, which gives the right to form a marriage contract, *a fulfilment of an electoral campaign promise*. (1.1.)

(2)
We recognize *today in Spain* (2.3.) the rights of same-sex couples to enter in a marriage contract. *Before Spain, they allowed this in Belgium, Holland, and, as of two days ago* (2.5.), *Canada* (2.1.). We have not been the first, but I assure you that we will not be the last. After us, there will be many more countries motivated (2.2a.), *honourable members*(2.4.), *by two unstoppable forces: freedom and equality*. (2.2b.)

(3)
It is *just a small change* (3.2.) to the legal text, *adding but a paragraph* (3.3.), in which we establish that marriage will have the same requisites, and the same rights, when the couple is either of different sexes, or the same sex. *It is a small change in the letter of the law that creates an immense change in the lives of thousands of our fellow citizens*. (3.1.)

(4)
We are not legislating, honourable members (4.4.), for **a** far away and unknown people (4.5.). We are extending the opportunity for happiness (4.2.) to our neighbours, co-workers, friends, and our families (4.1.): at the same time, we are making a more decent society, because a decent society is one that does not humiliate its members. (4.3.)

(5)
In the poem "The family" *our poet* (5.1.) Luis Cernuda lamented:
"How does man live in denial, and how in vain/ by giving rules that prohibit and condemn."

(6)
Today, Spanish society (6.3.) responds to a group of people (6.4.) that for years have been humiliated, whose rights have been ignored, whose dignity has been offended, and whose identity and freedom has been denied. (6.1.) Today, Spanish society grants them the respect they deserve, recognizes their rights, restores their dignity, affirms their identity, and restores their freedom. (6.2.)

(7)
It is true that (7.3.) they are *only a minority* (7.2.), but their triumph is everyone's triumph. *It is also a triumph of those who oppose this law, even as they attempt to ignore it* (7.1.), because it is the triumph of freedom. This victory makes all of us a better society.

(8)
Honourable members (8.4.), there is no damage to marriage or to the family (8.1.) in allowing two people of the same sex to get married. Rather, these citizens (8.3.) now have the ability to organize their lives according to marital and familial norms and demands. (8.2.) There is no threat to the institution of marriage, but precisely the opposite (8.5.): this law recognizes and values marriage.

(9)
Aware that some people and institutions profoundly disagree with this legal change (9.2.), I wish to say that like other reforms to the marriage code that preceded this one, this law will not generate bad results (9.1a.), that its only consequence will be to avoid senseless suffering (9.1b.) of human beings. A society that avoids senseless suffering of its citizens is a better society.

(10)
In any case (10.6.), I wish to express my deep respect to those people and institutions (10.1.), and I also want to ask for the same respect for all of those who approve of this law (10.3.). To the homosexuals that have personally tolerated the abuse and insults for many years, I ask that you (10.5.) add to the courage you have demonstrated (10.4a.) in your struggle for civil rights (10.2.), an example of generosity and joy with respect to all the beliefs. (10.4b.)

(11)
With the approval of this Bill, our country takes another step in the path of freedom and tolerance that was started by the democratic Transition. *Our children view us with incredulity when we tell them that many years ago, our mothers had less rights than our fathers, or we tell them that people had to stay married against their will, even though they were unable to share their lives. Today we can offer them a beautiful lesson* (11.2.): every obtained right, and liberty has been *the result of the struggle and sacrifice of many people* (11.1.) of whom we must recognize and be proud.

(12)
Today, we demonstrate with this Bill that societies can better themselves, and can cross barriers and create tolerance by *putting a stop to the humiliation and unhappiness*. (12.1.)

(13)
Today, for many, comes the day (13.1.) evoked by Kavafis a century ago:
"Later was said of the most perfect society/someone else, made like me/ certainly will come out and act freely."

Both the original text and its translation have been taken from *Partners Task Force for Gay & Lesbian Couples: An International Resource for Same-sex Couples* web page (http://www.buddybuddy.com/zapat-01.html).

2.2 Top-Down Prompts

It can be assumed that the macro-goal of this speech is of a double nature: (a) the construction of the text and its content serve to legitimise the acceptance of the bill, and (b) to promote the Prime Minister as a credible and competent leader. The speaker chooses not to state explicitly that the married gay couples are lawfully capable of adopting children. He only does so implicitly, through

the use of the implicature in 8.1. *there is no damage [...] to the family* and 8.2. *[homosexuals] have the ability to organise their lives according to [...] familial norms*. Drawing relevant inferences the audience is well able to recover the implicature of homosexuals' new possibility to form a full family unit. However, particular addressees may be incapable of recovering the implicature, as it may be too weak, they themselves may lack key premises, or simply be ignorant of this aspect of the bill in question.

The speaker leads the audience through the speech using assertives quite extensively, which serve to build up his political competence and truthfulness. Moreover, they reflect the addressee's and the speaker's moral principles (Cap 2005: 13): the speaker applies a thesis-antithesis technique, contrasting two ideas of which one is absolutely unacceptable, and the following is, depending on the type of audience, anything from a lesser evil to an ideal. Paragraph 6 is an elaborated instance of such a practice. 6.1. provides instances of an impersonalisation-in-the-service-of-rejection mechanism. In other words, the clauses with no agent presupposed can be readily rejected, as the addressee does not identify themselves as or with those bearing responsibility. In the contrastive part (6.2.) the agent is clearly stated, and refers to the addressee, and possibly to Spanish government acting on behalf of the addressee, which builds up the aura of their generosity. The face threat of effort is also mitigated by the use of the prefix *re-* in *restores* (Spanish *restaurar*) implying a return to the past situation, to normality. Thus, the action of *restoring* indicates that whatever the beneficiary is offered does not demand the giver's excessive effort or any loss on his part (cf. the original version: *Hoy la sociedad española les devuelve el respeto que merecen, reconoce sus derechos, restaura su dignidad, afirma su identidad y restituye su libertad*).

In fact, every time the speaker applies a face threatening act he mitigates it with a reference to the past effort, for example in 10.2. *your struggle for civil rights* or 11.1. *every obtained right, and liberty has been the result of the struggle and sacrifice of many people*. He additionally removes the threat of excessive effort from the addressees leaving them room for their own reading of the implicature housed in *many people*. With the past reference the effort is not as oppressive and saves the audience's positive face. Whenever a face threatening act has present or future orientation, the speaker minimizes the threat by lowering the level of expectations towards the hearer, for example 3.3., 4.2., 12.1. He clearly obeys Leech's (1983) Tact Maxim: expressions implying cost to other should be minimised and those implying benefit should be maximised accordingly. Following the maxim, the speaker frequently uses 'minimisers,' or hedges, such as in *it is just a small change* (3.2.), which is not that explicit in the original text: *un pequeño cambio*. In 4.2. he mentions *extending the opportunity for happiness*, which presupposes its previous existence and implies only a consent on the part of the non-homosexual Spanish audience. The speaker elaborates on further benefits from this change in the law: he refers to moral values of a democratic country to convince the audience that even this minimal effort exercised in granting the rights to homosexuals brings more than might have been expected. He repeatedly asserts the existence of *two unstoppable forces: freedom and equality* (2.2b.), being determinants of democracy. In 4.3. he redefines the concept of decent society, implying at the same time that without the change, Spain would have been far from ideal. The speaker goes as far as to claim that the triumph is all-

inclusive, it also belongs to *those who oppose this law, even as they* <u>*attempt*</u> <u>*to*</u> *ignore it* (7.1.). Here, the verb *attempt* entails some amount of struggle necessary for the action of ignoring and presupposes that the results of the change are as far-reaching as it is impossible to ignore. In the Spanish original, however, only the presupposition triggered by *aún* is present: *su triunfo es el triunfo de todos, también aunque aún lo ignoren.*

The speaker uses assertive speech acts frequently and only towards the end of his speech, in paragraph 10 (reproduced again below), does he apply directives. At this stage the face-threatening quality of the request is mitigated by downplaying the costs of its fulfilment:

> In any case, I wish to express my deep respect to those people and institutions (10.1.), and *I also want to ask for the same respect for all of those who approve of this law* (10.3.). To the homosexuals that have personally tolerated the abuse and insults for many years, *I ask that you add to the courage you have demonstrated* (10.4a.) in your struggle for civil rights (10.2.), *an example of generosity and joy with respect to all the beliefs* (10.4b.).

Directive 10.3. is a face-threatening act, yet it requires fairly little effort on the part of the addressee, and is still mitigated by positive politeness strategy exhibited in the previous clause of the same sentence, where the speaker claims reciprocity and common ground with the audience. 10.4a., by contrast, demands a lot more from the homosexual addressee, as the implicature arising here requires them to face the forthcoming, potentially threatening events with even more courage than they have exhibited so far. The strength of this implicature lies in the reading of the following clause: if 10.4b. constitutes the object of the transitive verb *add* (*sumar* in the Spanish text), the implicature in question makes way for a simple entailment. If, on the other hand it is an elaboration on 10.2. and assesses the struggle, the implicature remains intact.

Yet another such instance of thesis-antithesis pair appears in 9.1.: *this law* <u>*will not generate bad results*</u> *(9.1a.), (…) its only* <u>*consequence*</u> *will be to avoid senseless suffering* (9.1b.). Here, apart from contrasting two ideas (of which the second is better integrated into the addressee's mind and so better remembered) the reading demands interaction of a number of pragmatic tools. Again different hearers have access to different levels of understanding and may be able to reach the entailed meaning exclusively. On this level in 9.1a., the speaker indirectly promises that there will be no consequences of the acceptance of this bill. Yet the implied suggests at least double interpretation: there may be no results whatsoever, or the hearer may expect benefits, which gives the speaker some room for manoeuvre and a possibility to distance himself from any potential responsibility in the future. Moreover, it is not specified who the unfortunate recipient is, which constitutes another avoidance strategy in case of failure. The very word *consequence* used in 9.1b. reinforces the aforementioned explicature (accessible to the largest number of addressees and relevant enough to push any implicature backstage). 9.1b. is also an ironical comment on the opposition, since avoiding suffering could hardly be perceived in terms of an inconvenient result of the new law.

The frequent employment of assertives in the text builds up the aura of the speaker's truthfulness and so does the entailment of 1.1., which states that

forcing the bill through the Senate leading up to its acceptance was *a fulfilment of an electoral campaign promise*. The speaker presents himself as a trustworthy and powerful leader who fights for the society's wellbeing and for democracy. He also strengthens the position of Spain in the hearer's perception by enumerating it among the most liberal and progressive countries of the world (2.1.). In 2.2., he further highlights the role of the recent changes in the law and, by the same token, the new status of the country:

> After us, there will be many more countries motivated (2.2a.), honourable members, by two unstoppable forces: freedom and equality (2.2b.).

The implicature arising from 2.2a. indicates that the Spanish government's decision motivates other countries to follow suit and recognize the rights of their homosexual inhabitants. Although, it is almost immediately cancelled by 2.2b., some addressees may not draw enough inferences to recover any implicature whatsoever and treat 2.2a. and 2.2b. as a simple entailment. Yet the use of the honorific address *honourable members (Spanish señorías)* in the middle of the sentence impairs its natural flow and gives rise to the aforementioned implicature which is immediately cancelled. Its effects, however, do not wear off fully, affecting the following messages communicated by the speaker.

The speaker builds up his political competence overtly acknowledging his opposition, for example in 9.2.: *aware that some people and institutions profoundly disagree with this legal change*. The referents are strongly presupposed and his statement does not need to be made more explicit. He asserts the wish to *express [his] deep respect* (10.1.) to the opponents, however by applying person deixis in 10.1. he implies the existence of a grand ideological gap between the two parties in a more implicit way: *those people and institutions* (Spanish *algunas personas e instituciones*) vs. 8.3. *these citizens* (Spanish *esas personas*), which refers to homosexuals.

In Zapatero's speech all three aspects of proximisation have positive rather than negative character. As has already been mentioned, *those people and institutions* (10.1.) and *these citizens* (8.3.) imply the existence of an ideological gap. In this speech, it is a rather rare instance where the axiological aspect of proximisation can be noticed. Throughout the speaker avoids presenting the events through the negative axiological dimension, as he attempts to create and uphold the aura of lately accomplished unity within the Spanish society. Yet the clash between those who are in favour of same-sex marriages and those who are against is by no means destined to be threatening. Quite the contrary: the speaker brings up repeatedly (by means of implicatures and directives, among others) the possibility of reconciliation and creating a *decent society* (cf. 7.1., 8.1., 8.2., 10.3., 10.4. etc.), each being an instance of positive axiological proximisation. The length of the speech enables frequent use of other proximisation strategies which instil the sense of tangibility of the event in the audience. Spatial and temporal dimensions are incomparably more prominent and more frequent, as they point at benefits to be reaped, as well as at the momentous character and importance of the event respectively. Phrasings such as *today in Spain* (2.3.), duplication of *today, Spanish society* (6.3., 6.4.) within the space of one paragraph, or *today (…) comes the day* (13.1.) are instances of both spatial and temporal dimensions.

The change is presented as close physically and mentally and beneficial to the addressee (positive spatial proximisation). 13.1. presupposes that the event was long awaited and now is finally tangible (positive temporal proximisation).

4.1. is another notable and manipulative use of spatial proximisation: *We are extending the opportunity for happiness to <u>our neighbours, co-workers, friends, and our families</u>*. The order of the underlined items is hardly accidental, as the named groups constitute circles of people from the addressee's surrounding. The first ring is the farthest psychologically and each following is gradually closer to its centre, thus to the addressee. The historic character of the moment is further reinforced by a paraphrase of the sentence summing up another historic event, i.e. the 1969 Moon landing. As Sperber and Wilson claim, parallel constructions reduce the addressee's processing effort, but also produce parallel effects (1986: 22-223). Thus, 3.1. is introduced as an already familiar expression: *It is a small change in the letter of the law that creates an immense change in the lives of thousands of our fellow citizens*. The aura of mutual success, attainment and celebration present at the time of the original event is naturally instilled in the addressees mind. It is a powerful comparison which strengthens the implicit comment on the political importance of the change in Spanish law and implies forthcoming benefits. An intriguing means of stressing the historic nature of the event is the elaborated metaphor in 11.2.:

> *Our children* view us with *incredulity* when we tell them that *many years ago*, our mothers had less rights than our fathers, or we tell them that people had to stay married against their will, even though they were unable to share their lives. Today we can offer them *a beautiful lesson*.

Such a wording entails that the unfair treatment of homosexuals is a matter of distant past, and is now going to be brought up only as a story with a moral. On the other hand, it implies that the children, or to be more precise the future generations are going to judge this historic decision and people who took it. It also contains and implicit comment that it is the Spanish society who actively create the *immense change*.

3. Conclusions

The present paper focused on cognitive-pragmatic strategies of legitimisation employed in the political discourse. It started with an elaborated account on the mechanism of proximisation operating within the frame of the STA model of legitimisation (cf. Cap 2005, 2006). Proximisation as an extremely powerful device can be assumed to be one of the most significant and complex legitimisation-driven strategies. First of all, it can be activated by a number of pragmatic and extra-pragmatic tools, such as metaphorisation, or implicature. Secondly, it is not confined to having solely spatial aspects, but also temporal and axiological ones. Finally, all three dimensions exhibit properties which enable us to classify them fairly independently of their original classification, i.e. according their positive, negative, and neutral values. The three dimensions of the notion in question, i.e. spatial, temporal, as well as axiological, proved to be manipulative enough to coerce the addressee into

recognising the speaker's stance. The positive, negative, and neutral values, which were introduced as an update on the STA model, indicate more potential stimuli for the addressee to undertake immediate action. It is, however, a matter of further investigation to ascertain which of the two give stronger impetus to the addressee's (re)action.

It would also be of great interest to investigate an opposite strategy, i.e. de-proximisation, or distancing. Assuming that such a notion exists, its aims should be determined, as well as text types in which its employment could be expected. The next step would be to answer the following questions: Can de-proximisation be assumed, by analogy, to have spatial, temporal and axiological aspects as well? If so, can these be valued as positive, negative, and neutral? What are the features of this device, apart from the power to de-proximise, or rather distance occurring events from the addressee located in the deictic centre?

Other legitimisation-oriented strategies discussed in this paper include the following notions: (a) assertive speech acts being the basis for assertive-directive and thesis-antithesis patterns, and (b) common ground politeness strategy. These pragmatic and extra-pragmatic devices are by no means separate and independent. They usually overlap, enhance, and enrich one another producing a net of meanings accessible to the addressee on the basis of her/his cognitive capabilities, predisposition, knowledge, etc. Some mechanisms operate on top of others or form elements of other devices, the extreme case being implicatures which constitute an integral part of thesis-antithesis, or common ground strategies for legitimisation. Moreover, these mechanisms can be hardly said to be of equal status, for example the notion of proximisation can well be realised by assertive speech acts.

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