

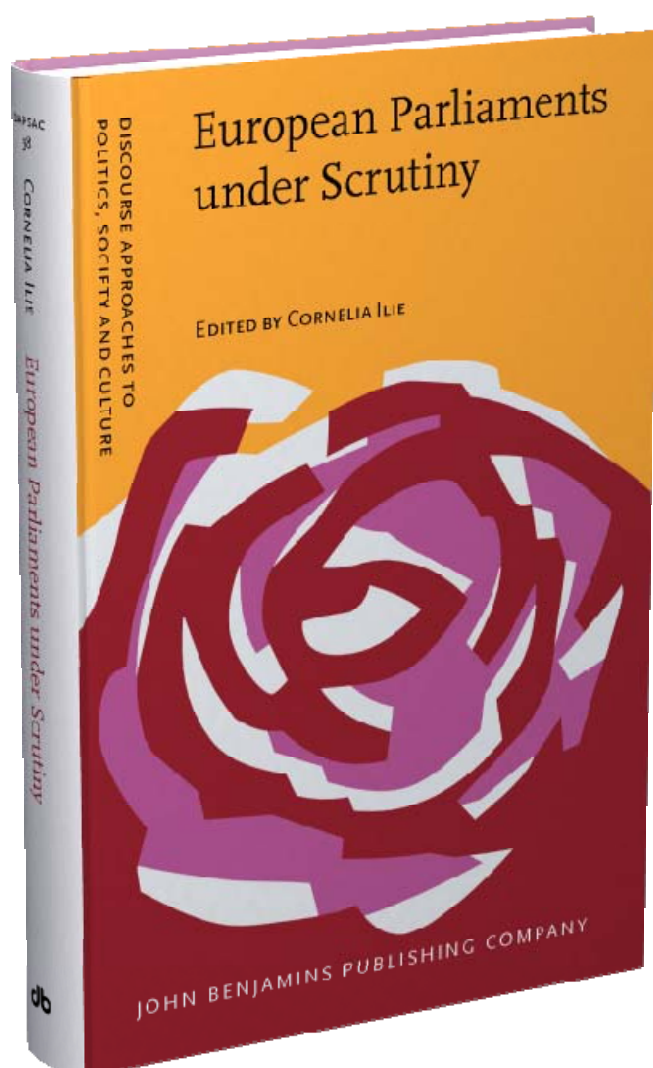
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS UNDER SCRUTINITY

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Abstract: *This article aims to present the book European Parliaments under Scrutiny, edited by professor Cornelia Ilie, PhD (Malmö University, Sweden / European Society for Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Dialogue).*

Keywords: *European Parliament, identity, parliamentary confrontation, parliamentary rhetoric and argumentation.*



1. INTRODUCTION

European Parliaments under Scrutiny is a collection of 11 studies examining an array of systematic investigations of distinctive interactional aspects of political activity in the parliamentary institution. These studies rely on diverse discursive scenarios when evaluating politicians' interactions and when appraising the outcomes emerging from these interactions. With expert editorial insight, Ilie has structured the volume in four principal sections, preceded by a comprehensive **Introduction**.

2. STUDIES

Part 1 is dedicated to presentations about **parliamentary roles and identities**. Teun van Dijk's article - *Political identities in parliamentary debates* – focuses on the British and Spanish Parliaments and explores discursive expressions of political identity during

parliamentary debates, as well as the social and political identities of the speakers. The theory of context models used in this analysis allows for a variety of concepts of identities denoting a speaker category; thus, during communicative events, context models 'mould' and complement the more contextual, interactional identities of the speakers. This explains how it is possible that, at one given time, one leader can embody "multiple political identities," such as that of a politician, an MP and/or a leader of a political party, etc. Cornelia Ilie's study - *Identity co-construction in parliamentary discourse practices* - identifies several essential aspects defining the driving forces of parliamentary interaction and the co-construction of participants' identities. Correlating pragmatic and rhetorical devices, the analysis outlines forms of argumentation between MPs and concentrates on three primary facets of parliamentary interaction: parliamentary confrontation (through adversarial interchange), parliamentary identities (through a consistent process of co-construction), and parliamentary positionings (through legitimate procedures and actions as well as linguistic devices). Maria Aldina Marques's article - *The Public and private sphere in parliamentary debate. The Construction of the addresser in the Portuguese Parliament* - uses deictic markers to demonstrate that the first person pronoun (singular and plural) contributes significantly to the interactional dynamics in the Portuguese Parliament and constitutes a structural indicator during the Interpellation to the Government session.

Part 2 contains analyses of *ritualised strategies of parliamentary confrontation*. Donatella Antelmi and Francesca Santulli's contribution - *The presentation of a new Government to Parliament from ritual to personalization. A case study from Italy* - approaches two speeches delivered by two Italian Prime Ministers, Romano Prodi and Silvio Berlusconi, belonging to opposite party coalitions, in an attempt to investigate the similarities and differences in argumentation and discourse strategies. Elisabeth Zima, Geert Brône and Kurt Feytaerts' contribution - *Patterns of interaction in Austrian*

parliamentary debates: On the pragmasemantics of unauthorized interruptive comments - presents findings of a study on the "pragmasemantics of unauthorized interruptive comments" taking place in the Austrian Parliament (Austrian National Council). Using relevant quantitative data and Du Bois's cognitive-functional model of dialogic syntax in correlation with the concept of resonance, the authors demonstrate that interruptive comments are primarily confrontational. Clara-Ubalina Lorda Mur's study - *The Government control function of the French Assembly in Questions au gouvernement* - explores MPs' discourses during the session of Questions au gouvernement in the French Assembly; for this analysis, the discourses selected belong to MPs of the party in office and to MPs in the opposition parties. The article identifies common discursive and linguistic features as well as distinct, specific ones recognizable in both categories of MPs.

In Part 3 the contributions explore *procedural, discursive and rhetorical particularities of post-Communist parliaments*. The chapter unfolds with Cornelia Ilie's study entitled *Managing dissent and interpersonal relations in the Romanian parliamentary discourse*. This minute analysis addresses interactional features of parliamentary discourse in the Romanian Parliament. Positioning the Parliament's activity in the post-Communist realities of the country, Ilie analyzes 'hedging' as a pivotal device for accommodating interpersonal communication and for averting confrontational situations among MPs. Cezar M. Ornatowski's article - *Parliamentary discourse and political transition: The case of the Polish Parliament after 1989* - positions the Polish parliamentary discourse in a similar, post-Communist context and focuses on changes in several types of behaviour contributing to the interactional control in the Polish Sejm: interruptions, turn-taking, applause, and humour, during the post-1989 period. In her section entitled *Czech parliamentary discourse. Parliamentary interactions and the construction of the addressee*, Yordanka Madzharova Bruteig juxtaposes characteristics of the Czech

parliamentary discourse during two important periods in the Czech history: the Communist regime (study samples from 1948-1953) and the early 1990s. The findings demonstrate significant differences in the parliamentary discourse specific to these two periods as a result of the political changes which occurred in the country, changes identifiable in Parliament in the construction of the addressee, levels of linguistic formality, or professional political communication.

To conclude, Part 4 presents two *contrastive studies of parliamentary rhetoric and argumentation*. By using the pragma-dialectical method of Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 1992), H. José Plug's contribution – *Ad hominem arguments in Dutch and European Parliaments: Strategic manoeuvring in an institutional context* - analyzes MPs' and MEPs' argumentative moves during debates in the Dutch and European parliaments in an attempt to establish when and how politicians operate strategically when devising personal attacks on their opponents. Isabel Íñigo-Mora's study – *Rhetorical strategies in the British and Spanish Parliaments* - employs the Discursive Psychology approach (Edwards and Potter

1992) in order to examine British and Spanish parliamentary practices during Question Time on the same topic of the Iraqi conflict. The aim of the analysis is to identify rhetorical strategies used by MPs in the two parliaments to address “objectively” the same event. The findings demonstrate that, albeit some similarities exist between the two parliamentary discourse practices, the differences between them are more numerous.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The book comprises an excellent selection of discursive investigations that correlate their findings with thorough conceptual clarifications and engaging illustrations and corpus samples. *European Parliaments under Scrutiny* is a fundamental reading and a rich source of parliamentary corpus-based analyses for audiences interested in political and social studies, linguistics, language and rhetoric.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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