

“SUCH ELOQUENCE, SUCH FALSEHOOD”: REPETITION AND RECATEGORIZATION IN SPEECHES DELIVERED BY FERNANDO COLLOR

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- **ABSTRACT:** This article focuses on a specific type of repetition that turns out to be particularly frequent in the political speeches delivered by Fernando Collor de Mello during the 1989 presidential campaign in Brazil: syntactic parallelisms. By adopting a qualitative and interpretive perspective on the phenomenon, we use the framework of Conceptual Blending Theory (FAUCONNIER; TURNER, 2002) to investigate the functions of this strategy in a corpus constituted by the first three electoral programs aired by the candidate. Our analysis suggests that syntactic parallelisms play two important argumentative roles: on the one hand, they trigger a process of recategorization of conceptual/discursive entities; on the other hand, they allow the speaker to present the result of this process as backgrounded information, thus reducing the likelihood of rebuttal and making underlying ideology invisible. By using such cognitive lens to look into meaning-making processes, we show how the former president's performances manifest certain premises of mass communication, bringing closer together the fields of politics and entertainment.
- **KEYWORDS:** Political Discourse. Syntactic Parallelism. Conceptual Blending. Mass Media. Fernando Collor.

Introduction

In addition to their role as an emblem of the redemocratization process taking place after a long-lasting military regime, the 1989 Brazilian elections displayed a distinctive interactional trait: after a thirty-year hiatus, a now widespread means of mass communication, the television, would work as agent and vehicle of a monumental

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presidential campaign. At the time, Brazilian society was experimenting with new modes of communication and political marketing in the lines of what has conventionally been termed mass communication. In this paper, we investigate a persistent meaning-making mechanism in the discursive performance of Fernando Collor de Mello, the then-dominant presidential candidate.

At first unfamiliar to most voters and supported by an inexpressive political coalition, Fernando Collor succeeded in leading the voting polls since the very first months of his campaign. He was ultimately elected after the second electoral round. Collor remained president until 1992, when, faced with the parliamentary approval of an impeachment process, he chose to resign from his position.

As sustained by Biar (2007)¹, a quantitative scrutiny of Collor's electoral programmes quickly illuminates the pronouncedly repetitive structure of all his speeches. In this study, we shall zoom in on a specific kind of syntactic repetition. As we aim to demonstrate, this kind of repetition, materialized in a series of parallelistic syntactic forms, serves two significant argumentative functions: it operates the recategorization of certain conceptual/discursive entities; and it enables the result of this process to be presented as backgrounded data. In order to develop our analysis, we will resort to the theoretical framework of Conceptual Blending Theory (FAUCONNIER; TURNER, 2002), positioned within the broader enterprise of Cognitive Linguistics.

Our analytical corpus is composed of the three first electoral programmes aired by Fernando Collor along the first semester of 1989. Such programmes, with an average duration of one hour each, were produced by the candidate's political colligation (PNR-PTR-PSC-PST). They all present Collor as their protagonist. The programmes were initially recorded onto VHS tapes at the time of the campaign; they were then turned digital in 2006 for research purposes; and later transcribed according to a set of conventions adapted from interactional studies². Our choice of data is justified by the particular impact of these three programmes upon the sudden escalation of Collor's popularity. According to polling sources³, once the programmes had been broadcast, Collor's numbers, measured in terms of voting intentions, skyrocketed from 9% to 32%, thereby consolidating the prominence levels which later made him president.

The paper is organized as follows. The next two sections briefly review the relevant literature: while the second Section focuses on discursively oriented works on argumentation and repetition, the third Section turns to cognitivist studies which draw connections between argumentation and conceptual blending. The fourth Section

¹ The data discussed in this paper were previously analyzed in Biar (2007). Here, in the light of recent understandings on the topic of Conceptual Blending Theory, we proceed to a new analysis of one of the phenomena discussed in that occasion.

² Transcription conventions: word:: (prolonged sound); word- (abrupt interruption of utterance); WORD (emphasis upon syllable or word); word.. (pause lasting less than one second); word... (pause lasting more than one second); °word° (low volume); >word< (fast-paced speech); <word> (slow-paced speech).

³ IBOPE research, published in April 1989; IBOPE research, published in May 1989; Datafolha, IBOPE and Gallup research, published in June 1989.

then presents our analysis of the syntactic parallelisms in Fernando Collor's speeches. Finally, the fifth Section offers our final remarks.

Repetition in argumentative texts

In the 1990s, a few authors investigated the phenomenal growth of Fernando Collor's candidacy in terms of the marketing strategies adopted by the candidate throughout his campaign. According to Figueiredo et al. (1997), the 1989 elections produced unprecedented levels of engagement, on the part of the Brazilian scientific community, with the study of electoral campaigns as variables in the analysis of political outcomes. In a particularly well-known journalistic work, Conti (1999) highlighted Collor's campaign's accurate use of spectacularization as a weapon in this new era of televised politics.

Indeed, a far from negligible dimension of the so-called "Collor phenomenon" is the way his campaign successfully adapted to what is commonly known as mass culture – in other words, the new meaning-making and communication instruments aligned with the logic of market economy and of the characterization of populations from "developed" countries as "consuming publics" (to that respect, see, for instance, COSTA LIMA, 1990). In that sense, a number of *mass media*, the agents of such new forms of communication, attempt to encapsulate their offers and information into simple, quick, persistent and multimodal messages which can be assimilated as entertainment. From that perspective, the "Collor era" may be regarded as an efficient reaction to the overlapping of consumerism, entertainment, and politics.

Swiftness and multimodality might readily be seen as part and parcel of the contemporary landscape of mass communication. The same, however, cannot be said of traits like simplicity and persistence, the latter a recurring feature of markedly repetitive speeches, such as Fernando Collor's. Since Aristotle's rhetoric, it has been argued that preplanned public speeches tend to re-elaborate certain characteristics typically linked to "ordinary language". Oratory borrows what could otherwise be seen as impoverishing and tiresome and turns it into a tool for clarity and misleading spontaneity. In the process, syntactic inversions, long sentences and pronominalizations give way to repetition and reformulation.

Such is also the guiding thesis of classical interactional studies such as Tannen (1989) and Johnstone (1991). Tannen contends that strategies such as the use of repetition and parallelism in public discourse recreate the fluidity, the engagement and the drama of spontaneous conversation; reiteration also softens discourse's lexical density, i.e., the amount of new information, which in turn optimizes processing. Johnstone, on the other hand, offers a culturally informed explanation of the use of syntactic parallelisms in public Arabian argumentative speeches. According to her, repetitions which reinforce an idea are related to an inherent quality of argumentative practices within strongly hierarchized societies, traditionally grounded on religious foundations. In such groups,

rhetoric is based not on quintessentially Western arguments, but on the reiteration of one idea across a series of different images and formal structures. In the textual practices analyzed by Johnstone, stating something again, and again, and again would be enough for a truth effect to be produced. Besides, she regards the use of syntactic parallelisms as a productive resource for the reconstruction of semantic categories.

Following in Johnstone's footsteps, this article aims its attention at the argumentative force of syntactic parallelisms, with a particular emphasis upon the cognitive operation which triggers the categorization of conceptual/discursive entities. Yet there are a few divergences between this work and the others we have cited: (i) in case Johnstone's thesis might suggest a difference between Arabian and Western texts, we shall discuss an analogous function in Westernized political speeches, here epitomized by Collor's figure; (ii) we shall resort, as already stated, to a theoretical framework based on the theory of mental spaces; (iii) we shall argue that the categorization produced by such an operation typically presents itself as a piece of information shared by audience members, thus engendering a feeling of consent and broadening its persuasive appeal.

Conceptual blending in argumentative texts

The discovery of the cognitive operation known as *conceptual blending*, as well as of its regulating principles (FAUCONNIER; TURNER, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2008), has been a welcome byproduct of the research efforts developed around the Theory of Mental Spaces (FAUCONNIER, 1994, 1997; DANCYGIER; SWEETSER, 2005; OAKLEY; HOUGAARD, 2008). In a word, mental spaces are transitory cognitive structures, presumably associated with working memory (FAUCONNIER, 2010), which allow for the storing and manipulation of cognitive entities activated through linguistic and non-linguistic stimuli. Hence, a sentence like "In the picture of Dilma's inauguration, Temer does not seem happy⁴" will lead to the construction of two mental spaces: a Base Space (or Reality Space), in which Dilma Rousseff and Michel Temer are represented in the state they are in today (as ousted president and president-in-office, respectively), and a Picture Space, which contains representations of Dilma and Temer as they were being photographed (that is, in the condition of newly-elected president and vice-president, respectively). Crucially, the interpretation of the sentences presupposes that the reader/listener will establish links between the two mental spaces, allowing for the introduction of the idea that the "two Dilmás" and the "two Temers" are, in a particularly sensitive way, the same person.

One of the major discoveries made during the development of the Theory of Mental Spaces, and pioneeringly discussed in Fauconnier (1997, chapter 6), was that referents

⁴ Except in the case of explicitly named references, the sentences used for exemplification purposes in this section were made up by the authors, and are of their full responsibility. In this last case, we present contemporary adaptations, based on the current Brazilian political scenario, of classical examples from the cognitivist literature.

included in distinct mental spaces could be projected onto a same mental space, and thus, imaginatively integrated into a single scenario. This cognitive operation, known as *conceptual blending*, is illustrated in a sentence such as “If Fernandinho Beira-Mar were a member of PSDB, he would be free”. As readers can discern, the sentence not only triggers the creation of two mental spaces – one related to the Red Command criminal faction, in which the representation of Fernandinho Beira-Mar is located, and another related to the PSDB political party, which features representations of many well-known Brazilian politicians. It also activates the selective projection of elements from these two spaces onto a third one, known as blend space, in which Beira-Mar is represented as a politician whose filiation to PSDB secures his freedom.

To the extent that it accounts for the construction of imaginative scenarios and counterfactual worlds, it is hardly surprising that conceptual blending has been utilized in works dealing with literary, humoristic and persuasive texts. Pinheiro and Nascimento (2010), for instance, sustain that the conceptual compression effect generated by blending adds to the argumentative effectiveness of texts from different genres. Consider the following advertisement:

Figure 1 – Advertisement making use of conceptual blending



Source: campaignsoftheworld.com.

The image depicts a peculiar episode of sexual interplay: although there seem to be only two people involved, a profusion of arms is visible. The text clears up the mystery: by sleeping with someone, you are, indirectly, interacting with that person’s previous partners. Interestingly, the image constructs such interactions *as if* they were direct: if, in the real world, each individual is only indirectly related to his/her partner’s former partners, in the fictional (blended) universe created by the image, events unfold as though firsthand, unmediated contact with such previous partners were indeed possible. Pinheiro and Nascimento (2010) suggest that the compression of

several real scenarios (a series of individual sexual relations) into a single imaginary situation (a single relation with several partners) leads to the subjective experience of *global insight* (FAUCONNIER; TURNER, 2000, 2002), which allows readers to immediately and intuitively apprehend the contents of the ad. As a result, odds of a successful adoption of the campaign's recommendation ("Get tested for HIV") are increased.

Along the same lines, Coulson and Pascual (2006) resort to the apparatus of Conceptual Blending Theory to investigate texts circulated by "pro-life" North-American activists – individuals and organizations which oppose the legalization of abortion⁵. The researchers examine passages such as the following:

(2) If you were born after 1973, about 30% of your friends and relatives are missing. Since the Supreme Court approved legal abortions 30 years ago, nearly 1 of every 3 babies was aborted. That means 43 million US children, teens, and young adults are missing. While we know how all of them disappeared, we will never know what they had to offer. Life. See what we've been missing.

As outlined by the authors, the above text is part of a commercial developed by a non-profit organization named Virtue Media. The commercial features a woman who places a milk carton on the ground; the carton, it is revealed by a close-up, shows the picture of a missing child, accompanied by details such as the child's age, height, and last known whereabouts. It is only after the exhibition of this image that the voice over enunciates the words in (2).

According to Coulson and Pascual's (2006) analysis, the ad prompts the blending of elements pertaining to two distinct mental spaces: the real world, in which a number of fetuses have been aborted across decades (since 1973); and a counterfactual world, in which such fetuses were in fact born. The blending presupposes that each of the aborted fetuses (Mental Space 1, real world) is associated with the individual it would have grown up into had the abortion never taken place (Mental Space 2, counterfactual world). Once the link has been formed, the referents are projected onto the blend space, which culminates in the creation of a fictional world inhabited by "missing people"⁶. The authors maintain that the reframing of *aborted fetuses as missing people*, carried out by means of the blending process, is what renders the ad particularly effective, insofar as its designers are able to evoke "affective responses consistent with their argumentative goals" (COULSON; PASCUAL, 2006, p.155).

In line with the two studies briefly outlined above, this work resorts to Conceptual Blending Theory in order to investigate the persuasive allure of argumentative texts. Unlike such works, however, our analysis focuses on the cases in which the blending operation sets off a recategorization, i.e., in which it inserts certain conceptual/discursive entities into unexpected categories. We address such cases in the next section.

⁵ By virtue of a Supreme Court decision, abortion has been legal in the United States since 1973.

⁶ The ad is particularly skillful at exploring the semantics of the adjective *missing* ("unseen", "gone", "lost", "absent").

Data analysis: blending and recategorization in Fernando Collor's speeches

As is the case with most argumentative speeches delivered before vast audiences, the ones given by Collor and scrutinized in this study make use of an extensive array of repetition strategies. Having said that, for the purposes of this paper, we shall foreground but one of such techniques: the use of syntactic parallelism, defined as the juxtaposition of two or more grammatically (structurally) identical textual sequences. As we conceive it, syntactic parallelism does not necessarily include the reiteration of lexical material – it is solely defined as the partial or complete repetition of the structure of a clause or sentence.

A careful analysis reveals that Collor's discourse engages two kinds of parallelism. In the first one, elements pertaining to a same semantic category are juxtaposed within a shared syntactic structure, thus evoking the mere enumeration of relatable elements. This is exemplified in bold in (1):

- (1) (...) and to hear from politicians
what they have got to offer
for instance,
a solution **to health,**
to education,
to transport,
to nutrition,
to foreign debt,
to foreign debt,
to domestic debt,
to corruption,
to impunity...

In this paper, however, as announced in the introduction, it is our wish to lay emphasis on a second kind of parallelistic structure: one in which, by means of the juxtaposition of elements which share no obvious categorial correspondence, a process of recategorization is triggered. Consider the elements in bold in example (2):

- (2) [...] as long as we lack consolidated political parties,
committed political parties ((emphasis on gesticulation)),
which do... ((emphasis on gesticulation))
which exercise... ((emphasis on gesticulation)) the speech,
which during their campaigns,
with such eloquence,
with such falsehood, ((emphasis on gesticulation))
they make use of.

We contend that this type of syntactic parallelism fulfills two functions in the speeches under analysis: (i) it promotes the recategorization of conceptual/discursive entities and, simultaneously, (ii) it presents the result of that recategorization as backgrounded data. Arguably, the two functions stand in direct opposition to each other. On one side, the modification of an entity's categorial belonging is attempted; on the other side, the new classification is presented as consensual, or, at the very least, as having been previously established. Both functions increase the argumentative force of such texts.

In example (2), the eloquence of politicians “during their campaigns” is identified as a “falsehood”. A noteworthy description, first for not being obvious: not every eloquent speech is false (or deceitful), and not every deceitful speech is eloquent. In other words: neither is the property of ELOQUENCE imperative for the definition of the FALSEHOOD category, nor is the opposite true.

Yet the above passage defies such a logic to the extent that it seems to suggest that the eloquence of any given speech is admissible as external evidence of its inveracity. The interpretation of the passage assumes that listeners and readers will now apprehend the ELOQUENCE abstract entity as constitutive of the FALSEHOOD category.

By which means, however, is such a recategorization accomplished? To answer this question, it is useful to consider Fauconnier and Turner's (2002, chapter 8) analysis of sentences such as “Paul is the father of Sally” and “Vanity is the quicksand of reason”, both taken as manifestations of the grammatical structure now known as XYZ. To Fauconnier and Turner, examples such as these activate a process of conceptual blending, which begins by setting up two mental spaces: the first (Space 1) specifies particular entities (such as PAUL and SALLY), whereas the second (Space 2) predicts general roles (such as FATHER and DAUGHTER)⁷. Once such spaces have been established, roles and entities are correspondingly mapped and then projected onto the blend space. Interestingly, although the grammatical structure predicts but three explicit nominal elements (schematically referred to as X, Y and Z; for instance, “Paul”, “father” and “Sally”), the blending process it sets in motion involves four conceptual elements – the fourth element, W, being pragmatically inferred⁸. As a result of the blending process, the existence of a specific relation between X (e.g., “Paul”) and Z (e.g., “Sally”) emerges as part of the interpretive movement.

In this work, we would like to suggest that parallelistic syntactic structures, such as the one in (2), trigger a role-value compression process, via conceptual blending, akin to the one taking place in XYZ constructions. There are, however, two crucial differences: first, the syntactic parallelism specifies the existence of a class-member, hypernymic relation between the entities involved⁹; second, the syntactic parallelism

⁷ Please note that, in the second example, “quicksand” figuratively represents the role of *hidden obstacle on the road*.

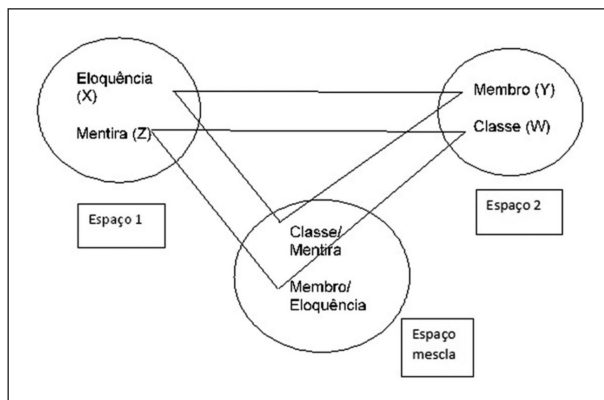
⁸ In “Paul is the father of Sally”, the W element, as already stated, is the role of DAUGHTER; in “Vanity is the quicksand of reason”, it is the role of the traveler.

⁹ As for the XYZ construction, this is certainly not mandatory (as shown in “Vanity is the quicksand of reason”), although it might sometimes happen (for instance, in a sentence like “The bee is the Einstein of insects”).

leads listeners/readers to *accommodate* the role-value compression by constructing it as a piece of pre-given information¹⁰.

Let us now turn to the highlighted excerpt in (2). At first, it is productive to stress the similarities between the processes it triggers and the ones typically associated with the XYZ construction. To accomplish that, let us consider the following representation of the blending process underlying the construction of meaning in (2):

Figure 2 – Representation of the conceptual blending of the parallelistic sequence in (2)



Source: author’s elaboration.

The above representation evinces the resemblance between the XYZ construction and the parallelistic syntactic structure. As shown in the diagram, the highlighted sequence in (2) also promotes the construction of two mental spaces, so that one of them represents particular entities (i.e., ELOQUENCE and FALSEHOOD) and the other one, general roles (i.e., CLASS and MEMBER). Additionally, the entities are once more linked to their respective roles – in other words, a correspondence is installed between elements pertaining to different mental spaces – and subsequently projected onto the blend space. Finally, the interpretation which emerges in the blend space is markedly analogous to the one usually associated with the XYZ construction. It consists of an understanding that the conceptual element X (in this case, ELOQUENCE) bears a specific relation to the conceptual element Z (in this case, FALSEHOOD).

If the “cognitive stunts” (FERRARI, 2012) underpinning meaning-making in (2) are conspicuously similar to the ones in XYZ constructions, the two linguistic forms are decidedly distinct. The most noticeable difference lies in the fact that this parallelistic structure predicts but two nominal elements, expressed by the variables

¹⁰ The notion of accommodation is used in the studies of presupposition to designate situations in which a piece of information is codified as backgrounded even though it is not a part of interlocutors’ knowledge (LAMBRECHT, 1994). The accommodation of presuppositions may be interactionally explored in different ways. We shall return to that point presently.

X and Z, whilst the XYZ construction, as its name indicates, requires the additional lexical specification of the Y element. We view that discrepancy as evidence that, in the case of parallelisms, it is the syntactic structure itself that serves as a cue to the construction of Space 2. In other words, the semantic coincidence is suggested by the formal coincidence: the listener/reader assumes¹¹ that the repetition of the formal pattern points to the construction of a mental space in which the roles CLASS and MEMBER ought to be represented. Certainly, if the contents of Space 2 are semantically, and not lexically, signaled, it follows that they are not amenable to alteration: the parallelistic syntax in focus evokes the representation of a hypernym-hyponym relation. Such is the backbone of the recategorization process activated by the construction: given the lack of any lexical representation of the Y element, the meaning arising in the blend space will always be that X *is a member of the class defined by Z*¹². We are hereby suggesting that, in example (2), the resulting interpretation is that *eloquence is a form of falsehood*¹³.

A further formal difference between the models is this: in the case of parallelistic structures, the nominal elements corresponding to X and Z do not occupy distinct syntactic positions and are not joined, directly or otherwise, by a copulative verb. This carries a crucial implication: if, in the case of the XYZ construction, the copulative verb is the linguistic cue triggering the projection between Spaces 1 and 2, in the case of the parallelistic structure the same task will fall to the reiteration of the syntactic pattern.

The fact that *the projection between Spaces 1 and 2* is not directly signaled by a lexical item, but indirectly inferred by means of the parallelistic structure, evinces another key feature of the construction: the fact that the recategorization it sets off is constructed as *presupposed*. What follows is that, from a pragmatic point of view, parallelistic sequences do not *predicate* the existence of a hypernymic relation between X and Z; they *presuppose* it.

Naturally, in an interactional situation such as the one in (2), the speaker does not need to assume his/her interlocutors to be familiar with the conceptualization of eloquence as a form of falsehood. Instead, it is that very categorial belonging that is rhetorically exploited and linguistically codified as backgrounded information. The choice affords an obvious rhetorical advantage: it shields the (new) categorization from rebuttals and counter-arguments, i.e., it prevents disputes around the meaning constructed (or rather, implied) by the parallelistic sequence. If the speaker had opted to straightforwardly predicate the existence of a necessary relation between X and Z (“the eloquence of politicians is a form of falsehood”), he would have created an interactional opening for the proposition to be negotiated – and possibly refused.

¹¹ Of course, this is not a conscious assumption, but something in the realm of implicit and procedural knowledge.

¹² In other words, the parallelistic structure does not exhibit an open slot for the instantiation of lexical items which could express different kinds of relation. This is a way in which the pattern we examine diverges from the XYZ construction analyzed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002): while the latter prompts the construction of *some kind of* construction between X and Z, the latter specifies the existence of a *member-class (hypernym-hyponym) relation* between X and Z.

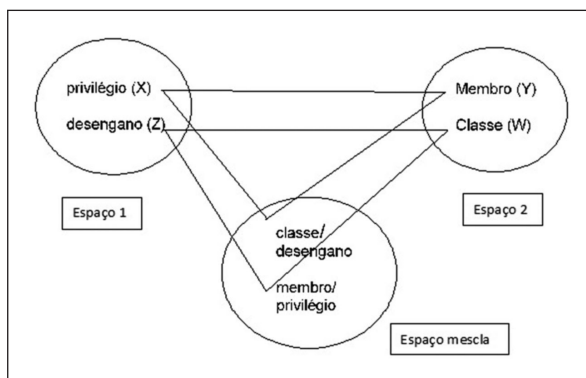
¹³ It is not our claim that this description thoroughly explains the processes and forms of knowledge mobilized for meaning-making in the highlighted passage in (2). It would also be crucial to consider our encyclopedic knowledge, according to which falsehood is a frequent, albeit not indispensable, feature of eloquent speeches.

Let us now turn to a similar example:

- (3) We must seek solidarity,
we must seek social justice,
as cornerstones of the edification of a new society,
a society in which there are fewer privileges,
a society in which there are fewer disappointments,
a society in which we can all live fraternally,
within the solidary spirit of Christianity and of the Christian Social Party.

In example (3), there are three parallel structures. In all of them, a noun phrase (“a society”) is modified by a relative clause. As we compare the first two structures, the commonalities between (3) and (2) stand out: once again, we see a parallelistic structure which can productively be taken as triggering recategorization via conceptual blending. In this case, Space 1 comprises the elements PRIVILEGES (X) and DISAPPOINTMENTS (Z), whereas Space 2 contains the referents activated by default by the parallelistic structure: MEMBER (Y) and CLASS (W). After the mapping of mental spaces and the selective projection of referents onto the blend space have been carried out, as shown in Figure 3, the resulting interpretation is that *privileges are a form of disappointment*.

Figure 3 – Representation of the first step of the conceptual blending process of the parallelistic sequence in (3)

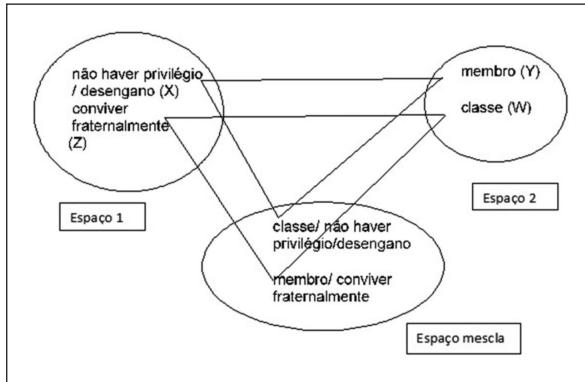


Source: author's elaboration.

Once again, it is important to note that the arranged categorization is not obvious: disappointment (disenchantment, frustration, chagrin) is not an indispensable property of the category defined as “privilege”. In truth, we could doubtless locate positive framings of PRIVILEGE in many different contexts. Here, however, the insertion of both names within the same parallelistic structure may be conducive to a negative framing, compelling readers to associate the idea of “privilege” with notions such as injustice and inequality.

Likewise, the third highlighted line in example (3) stands in parallelistic relation to the two preceding ones, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Representation of the second stage of the conceptual blending process of the parallelistic sequence in (3)



Source: author's elaboration.

In short, Figure 4 illustrates the second stage of the process of interpreting example (3). In technical terms, the combination of figures 3 and 4 constitutes what has been referred to in the literature as a “*megablend*”: a recursive blending in which the blend space (i.e., the *output*) of a given conceptual integration serves as the *input* of a subsequent integration. In this case, the blending process outlined in Figure 4 hinges upon the already executed conceptual fusion of the concepts of PRIVILEGE and DISAPPOINTMENT. It thus follows that a society without privileges/disappointments is a society in which people live fraternally.

Before we proceed to our concluding remarks, let us examine two more examples of similar recategorization processes:

- (4) The Brazilian state, ((Collor looks at the camera, which zooms in on him)) as we all know,
is colossal,
it's irrational,
and it's inefficient.

- (5) [...] and whoever wishes to assist us
in the reconstruction of Brazil under the principles **of efficiency,**
of morality,
of austerity,
of social justice.

Once again, in these two last examples, more than two elements participate in the parallelistic structure. In (4), a copulative verb is followed, in this order, by the adjectives “colossal”, “irrational”, and “inefficient”. Conversely, in (5), a post-modifier has its post-prepositional position respectively occupied by the noun phrases “efficiency”, “morality”, “austerity”, and “social justice”.

In regard to example (4), it is important to consider that the existence of a colossal state, i.e., of an extensive collection of services, activities and companies under governmental management, is not necessarily linked to IRRATIONALITY. Here, opinions typically representative of a neoliberal view of market economy are disguised as obvious facts; they are not nearly as unquestionable, however, to those who ascribe greater importance to the state’s regulatory role. Yet, by means of the parallelistic construction, listeners and readers are encouraged to hypernymically accommodate state intervention in the economy as part of the IRRATIONALITY category. The same principle applies to INEFFICIENCY, constructed as encompassing the state’s COLOSSAL stature. The final interpretation is that being colossal is tantamount to being irrational, and being colossal/irrational is tantamount to being inefficient.

Similarly, concerning example (5)¹⁴, we could question the idea that a government’s EFFICIENCY is *naturally* linked to the adoption of austerity measures – which, in economic terms, stands for the curbing of public expenditures on education, health, social security etc. It is the parallelistic structure which launches a mental operation positioning the adoption of moral, austere and fair policies as a kind of EFFICIENCY. While the three parallel terms participate in the member/class relation we are positing, it is particularly interesting that, in (5), a specific and controversial macroeconomic policy – AUSTERITY – is wrapped up with MORALITY and SOCIAL JUSTICE. Presented as they are, as a consensus around the notion of efficiency, the proposals remain closed to negotiation and further debate.

In summary, what the examples we have discussed – as well as many others from our corpus – illustrate is that this kind of syntactic parallelism may play a vital role in argumentative texts. In the end, it accomplishes two allegedly contradictory purposes: on the one hand, it introduces certain conceptual/discursive entities into a new category (e.g., eloquence as falsehood; privilege as disappointment; efficiency as austerity; a colossal state as irrationality); on the other hand, its formal structure allows for the construction of the final recategorized products as presupposed information. Both functions supply speeches with additional argumentative power. While recategorization conceptualizes a state of affairs in a particularly favorable manner (from the speaker’s viewpoint), the presupposition structure reduces the odds of that state of affairs being challenged.

¹⁴ In a previous section, we have maintained that a crucial element for the success of this rhetorical strategy is the absence of a copulative verb linking the hypernymic and hyponymic elements in the categorization. Note that example (4), despite including two copulative verbs, does not contradict such a generalization: the verbs are internal parts of the elements being associated – they do not fulfill the role of connecting such elements. To phrase it differently, the relationship implicitly executed, in (4), by the syntactic parallelism would only be made explicit by a formulation along these lines: *to be colossal is to be irrational*.

Final remarks

The mainstream literature on repetition has emphasized a set of properties which turn it into a particularly useful persuasion resource in oral texts. As such works have shown, the distribution of discursive material among a myriad of simple utterances, as well as their very reiteration across discourse, optimize processing and increase the odds of a favorable argumentative outcome (TANNEN, 1989; JONHSTONE, 1991).

In this paper, we hope to have contributed to that field of inquiry by laying emphasis on a specific kind of repetition, which we have named syntactic parallelism. We have argued that syntactic parallelisms display two additional rhetorically valuable features: the function of recategorization, and the possibility of codifying new information as presupposed. Moreover, we have attempted to describe the unconscious cognitive processes resulting in conceptual/discursive recategorization.

From an applied perspective, we hope that a cognitively oriented analysis may have helped us accentuate the strategic materialization, in Fernando Collor's performance, of the "make it easy" motto – an emblem of the quantitative logic informing mass communication, especially in times of redemocratization and intersection between the fields of politics and entertainment. Rather than offer a mere description of syntactic parallelisms as a stylistic resource, we have sought to demonstrate how such a resource is operationalized in political argumentation, and how it helps conceal ideological perspectives, create consensual implications, and circulate single-note discourses.

BIAR, L.; PINHEIRO, D. "Com tanta eloquência, com tanta mentira": repetição e recategorização em discursos de Fernando Collor. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.62, n.3, p.467-482, 2018.

- *RESUMO: No presente artigo, focalizamos um tipo específico de repetição saliente nos discursos políticos de campanha de Fernando Collor de Mello quando das eleições presidenciais de 1989: os paralelismos sintáticos. A partir de um olhar qualitativo e interpretativo para esse fenômeno, e apoiados pela Teoria da Mesclagem Conceptual (FAUCONNIER; TURNER, 2002), investigamos as funções dessa estratégia em um corpus constituído pelos três primeiros programas eleitorais levados ao ar pelo então candidato. Nossa análise sugere que os paralelismos sintáticos desempenham duas funções argumentativas importantes: de um lado, acionam um processo de recategorização de entidades conceptuais/discursivas; de outro, permitem apresentar o resultado desse processo como informação pressuposta, minimizando as chances de refutação e invisibilizando a perspectiva ideológica do que é dito. Essa lente cognitiva para os processos de construção de sentido nos permite mostrar os modos como a performance do ex-presidente atualiza certos lemas da comunicação de massa, aproximando os campos da política e do entretenimento.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discurso Político. Paralelismo Sintático. Mesclagem Conceptual. Comunicação de Massa. Fernando Collor.*

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