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IRONICAL DEVICES IN ROMANIAN AND BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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Abstract: *The present paper intends to apply the fencing game model of irony proposed by Anolli, Infantino and Ciceri (2001). The research consists in the comparative approach of some ironical devices from parliamentary debates in Romanian and British politics since 2008 until present. The aim of the article is to analyse how irony is accomplished in interaction, namely construction and usage. Irony is easily recognisable and it is used as a criticism and as an attack. Here, irony is not considered a simple comment or utterance, but also consists of a complex communicative interaction influenced by different factors.*

Keywords: *irony, interlocutors, parliamentary debates, ambiguity.*

1. Introduction

There have been proposed several theories to define *irony* and to explain its use, during the years. Colston and Gibbs advanced the idea that "irony can not be characterized simply as having positive or negative social impact, but can serve multiple communicative purposes, depending on the social context and aims of the conversational participants" (Gibbs, Colston, 2001: 188). Therefore, irony is often defined as "the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning" (Attardo, 2000: 794). Irony is ambiguous, indirect and implicit. There are different opinions about this; some linguists say that the implicit meaning neglects the literal one, whilst some other linguists affirm that both the literal and implicit meanings coexist: "the ironic meaning is not simply the unsaid meaning, and the unsaid is not always a simple inversion or the opposite of the said" (Hutcheon, 1994: 12-13).

The ironic discourse gives the hearer to understand something else that the speaker directly says. Thus, irony is a linguistic and rhetorical means by which one gives the hearer to understand the opposite of what he/ she actually utters. An ironical phrase or utterance allows speaker to hide oneself behind its opaque meaning and to take refuge in the literal meaning of expression. When interpretating an ironical utterance one must not first analyse the linguistic meaning and then the communicative intention (the ironic meaning). For the interpretation of an utterance as being ironical no cognitive effort is necessary. The real meaning of the ironical utterance given by the speaker is significant. For the ironic effect being complete, the receiver of the message must see the opposition between *what is said* and *what is meant*. Therefore, several important features of the ironical discourse can be identified: deliberate ambiguity, dissembled aspect of the message, imperative intonation. However, irony can be considered not only a comment or a

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remark that limits itself at the linguistic level of communication, but also a complex communicative interaction between interlocutors dependings on different social limits and communicative opportunities. The ironical communication is *miscommunication*, i.e. a kind of communication that does not express itself straight-forwardly. On the one hand, *it shows what it hides*, and on the other hand, *it hides what it says*. Thus, by his ironical interventions, the speaker may choose to remain opaque.

A necessary condition in understanding irony is common knowledge, which helps to remove ambiguity. As an example, in parliamentary debates, so as the ironic effect may appear, the participants must build their discourse so that the addressee is able to recognize the irony on the basis of mutual shared knowledge. Moreover, in political debates, irony seems to function as a criticism, above all. The aggressiveness of the criticism in parliamentary debates varies from a culture to another.

An important aspect of these debates is that the speakers try to present the opponents in a negative light. Interlocutors use different rhetorical strategies, especially "constraint" strategies whose purpose is to increase both the speaker's communicative rights and the addressee's obligations. Irony is important for interlocutors to determine their place both in the social sphere and at the interactional level. By means of an ironic utterance, the speaker may protect oneself behind its opaque meaning. Irony implies a sort of complicity between the two sides of the ironic communication (speaker and addressee), because they require sharing primary and secondary communicative levels. Thus, an ironic remark is one that selects the addressee, because both speaker and the addressee share a specific knowledge background and reference to a certain context. Ironic communication must be an enigma only for people who cannot understand its meaning. Hence, it becomes an exclusion strategy, making the difference between those people who should understand and those who are supposed to be prevented from understanding more than the literal meaning. The included texts belong to the institutional domain.

All the data in this article can be identified as workplace communication. By workplace communication, I mean different communicative situations that take place in the same organisation or public institution.

2. The *fencing game* Model of Irony

The Italian linguistic researchers, Anolli, Infantino and Ciceri have proposed this model of irony in 2001, in the article "*You're a Real Genius!: Irony as a Miscommunication Design*". They are drawing attention rather to the ironic situation than to the linguistic level of irony. The ironic situation must be understood as "a class of interactive episodes in which an ironic comment is generated at the best local solution between communicators given certain contextual constraints and opportunities" (Anolli, Infantino, Ciceri, 2001: 152). Irony can be included in the relational strategies class, because speakers adapt their verbal and nonverbal characteristics in accordance with each communicative situation, achieving their goal and, and at the same time, respecting social standards.

Within the *fencing game* model, the communicative situation consists of a script with four stages: the assumptions, the focal event, the dialogic comment and the ironic effect. The *assumptions* represent the common knowledge of interlocutors. Both speaker and addressee have to share these assumptions in order to

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understand the ironic message and, thus, the ironic effect occurs. The *focal event* launches the planning of the ironic utterance (figures of speech, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, contextual references adapted to the situation). These two phases form the inductor elements and the antecedent of ironic communication.

The *dialogic comment* consists actually in the ironic utterance as an expression of a certain communicative intention by the speaker. The dialogic comment is the means by which the speaker may criticise, praise, mock or amuse. The last stage of the ironic situation is the *ironic effect*, which arises from the dialogic comment and represents the manner the utterance is interpreted by the addressee. The interpretation of the ironic utterance is not the charge of the speaker, but of the interlocutor. The *fencing game* model describes three possible *countermoves* that may appear in ironic discourse:

Misunderstanding appears when the hearer does not perceive the ironic meaning because of different causes (speaker's lack of communicative competence, hearer's lack of attention, noises and so on); thus, there occurs only the linguistic level of communication, the semantic one not being taken into consideration.

Denying: the addressee understands the ironic meaning, but he chooses to remain at the linguistic level of interpretation. He selects *the pretense*, considering that he is not willing to take part in a possible conflict situation.

Touché: when the aim of the ironic message is achieved; the addressee recognizes the irony and admits he/ she has been "touched": he/ she may smile, or may counterattack.

Within the *fencing game* model of irony, the semantic inversion in the ironic comment brings with it the matter of distinction between the literal meaning and the figurative one.

3. Analysis of Ironical Sequences

I will analyse some devices that are the basis of producing irony in political discourse in the institution of British and Romanian Parliament. The political discourse is generally understood as a phenomenon which incorporates election speeches and meetings, political T.V. programmes, interviews given by the officials regarding public interest issues, press conferences or motion debates. In the following analyses, I present instances of irony as a direct threat. These can be divided into two groups: irony as defence and irony as attack. In addition, I also discuss a case in which irony can be interpreted as a kind of friendly humour. The data for analysis consists of fragments from four transcripts of parliamentary debates in Romanian and British politics, meaning they are face-to-face interactions.

(1) EN Mr. Djanogly: Is the Minister honestly saying that the creation of the new laws is a success?

Mr. McFadden: I am referring to the document that we are debating. If the hon. Gentleman finds the concept difficult, let me explain it to him in simple terms. […] If he still has the difficulty with that, I can explain it again, but I believe that I have done it two or three times now.

Mr. Djanogly *rose* —

Mr. McFadden: I do not want to have another exchange with the hon. Gentleman on the matter, because I am not sure that it would add to the sum of knowledge held by either of us.

RO Domnul Djanogly: Domnul ministru crede sincer că procesul creării noilor legi constituie un succes?

Domnul McFadden: Eu mă refer la documentul asupra căruia dezbatem. Dacă distinsul domn găseşte conceptul dificil, permiteți-mi să i-l explic în termeni simpli.

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[…] Dacă încă va avea dificultăți în înțelegerea lui, aş putea să explic din nou, dar cred că am făcut-o deja de două sau de trei ori.

Domnul Djanogly *se ridică*—

Domnul McFadden: Nu doresc să am un alt schimb de replici cu distinsul domn asupra acestui subiect, deoarece nu cred că acest lucru ne va îmbogăți cunoştințele.

(www.parliament.uk, House of Commons, *Insolvency and Second Chances*, March 2008, site accessed on May 11th, 2010)

The first British fragment is extracted from an article published on March, 2008. The topic is the issue of insolvency and second chances by the European Committee in the House of Commons. The conversation is held between Mr. Pat McFadden, the Minister for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs and Mr. Jonathan Djanogly, member of the Conservative Party, from Huntingdon. The entire debate emphasizes the importance of different entrepreneurs and businesses to the achievement of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. They analyse the laws on business failure in the constituent parts of the UK.

Here, Djanogly uses the word *honestly* when the questioner is not actually seeking information, but already has an opinion about the issue and expresses it. He poses a question which is an effort to decide the course of the communication. Mr. McFadden suggests that his interlocutor does not know the details about the new law of business failure; according to the fencing game model of irony, this is *the assumption* of the ironic situation. The planning of the ironic utterance starts with the utterance"Let me explain", whose meaning is repeated a little bit later: "I can explain it again" (*the focal event*). Mr. McFadden mentions these words although he has discussed the issue two times before. He even emphasises this idea with "I believe I have done it two or three times now", frontally addressed to his interlocutor. This statement exemplifies the third stage of Anolli, Infantino and Ciceri's model, namely the *dialogic comment*. McFadden gives the impression he will respond to the question, but he avoids answering it. It is known that both prosodic elements and exaggeration mark irony in the text. This leads to the fourth stage, illustated by Mr. Djanogly's intervention acknowledging himself as *touché* by the *ironic effect*. He understands the ironic meaning and selects himself to be the next speaker, but he is not permitted by his interlocutor, who continues to speak. The irony is increased by the *semantic inversion* in the last statement from the analysed statement, converting the linguistic meaning: "I am not sure that it would add to the sum of knowledge held by either of us", transparently inferring the idea that his colleague lacks knowledge. Instead of this, he might have asserted "I am sure that we would not add anything to the sum of knowledge held by either of us" in order to transmit a clear message. The preferred action in daily conversations is the answer to a question, but in debates with opponents and in political speeches another answer is specific: not answering to the question or to the ironic comment. A constraint strategy is ignoring the discussion line established by the interlocutor. Therefore, McFadden rejects his interlocutor's interventions or possible interventions and insists on his communication line, continuing the conversation at the metacommunicative level: *I do not want to have another exchange with the hon. Gentleman on the matter.*

(2) EN John Howell (Henley): I totally agree with my hon. Friend that the use of "improper" in the bill brings in—

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The Chair: Order, I should have said, "I call John Howell"—I apologise. The Chair does not often apologise.

RO John Howell (Henley): Sunt întru totul de acord cu distinsul meu coleg că folosirea termenului „impropriu" în textul proiectului de lege aduce—

Preşedintele: Linişte, ar fi trebuit să spun, „Îi dau cuvântul lui John Howell"—îmi cer scuze. Preşedintele nu se scuză adesea.

(www.parliament.uk, House of Commons, Public Bill Committee, *Bribery Bill*, March 2010, site accessed on May 9th, 2010)

The second British fragment is taken from the Bribery Bill on corruption and bribery, held by the Public Bill Committee, in the House of Commons on March 2010. In the extract above, the topic is the discussion upon the ambiguous definition of the term "to bribe". Prior to this extract, a member of the Committee has understood the word as "improper", given the definition from the Compact Oxford English Dictionary, definition previously uttered in the entire text of the article. Then he states: "My concern is that […] we are left with the rather vague terms of *improper* and *impropriety*".

In the fragment, John Howell says that the term mentioned above brings in a weak connotation for such an important matter as corruption and bribery. Mr. Howell's intervention, which appears to be an interruption, consists in *the assumption* of this ironic situation. The next step, *the focal event*, is represented by the Chairman's utterance: "I should have said, "I call John Howell"—I apologise"; it is followed by the second part of his turn: "The Chair does not often apologise", *the dialogic comment* itself. Moreover, in this case, the irony is kind, more a sort of a friendly humor. It can also be observed that the Chairman self-selects to be the next speaker, overlapping his interlocutor's turn. Since he makes fun of himself, *the ironic effect* cannot be clearly noticed; we only can suppose the reactions of his own words: the preferred response to this dialogic comment might be a smile or a giggle.

(3) EN Mr. Hain: […] Currently over £29 million of applications from over 375 companies in Wales are in the process of active consideration— again, support that Tory cuts would axe. I give way to the ax person.

Mrs. Gillian: I have to say, Mr. Caton, that I always try to temper my remarks and not reduce them to personal attacks, wherever possible.

RO Domnul Hain: […] În prezent, peste 29 de milioane lire sunt alocate cererilor de la 375 de companii din Țara Galilor—din nou o dovadă a faptului că cei din Partidul Conservator vor să se descotorosească de plan. Îi dau cuvântul călăului.

Doamna Gillan: Trebuie să spun domnule Caton, că eu mereu încerc să-mi temperez remarcile şi, pe cât posibil, să nu le reduc la atacuri personale.

(www.parliament.uk, House of Commons, Welsh Grand Committee, *Legislative Programme and Government Expenditure*, December 2009, site accessed on May 11th , 2010)

The fragment above is an extract from the debate upon the Legislative Programme and Government Expenditure in December 2009. The sitting was held in the House of Commons and it was chaired by Mr. Martin Caton. I chose for analysis an ironic communicative episode which belongs to Peter Hain, member of Labour Party and until 11th of May 2010, the Secretary of State for Wales and to Cheryl

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Gillan from the Conservative Party, who has become the Secretary of State for Wales on 12th of May 2010. The two members of Parliament dominate the whole debate, addressing to each other acid, even offensive words.

The topic of the above mentioned turns is the access of companies for finances(the assump- tion). Peter Hain observes that from 500 million of pounds that are provided, only 29 millions are available for applications from 375 of companies in Wales (the focal event). He blames his interlocutor by means of ironic utterances like: again, support that Tory cuts would axe, and then referring to his colleague (from Tory): I give way to the axe person. Hain suggests that Cheryl GIllan tries to get rid of the finances plan (the dialogic comment). It is clear that Hain banters the Conservative Party, including his interlocutor, whom he names the axe person. Each communicative situation when Hain and Gillan interact, Gillan responds to ironic remarks with irony. Here she ignores Hain and addresses herself to the Chairman: "I have to say, Mr. Caton, that I always try to temper my remarks and not to reduce them to personal attacks, wherever possible" (the ironic effect). Thus, the addressee of the ironic message perceives irony and interprets it, declaring herself as touché and retorting to sarcastic irony coming from her interlocutor. Gillan seems to be irritated by Hain's remark. She makes a comparison between herself and Hain, trying to put him in a negative light, because she thinks her colleague's remarks are personal and they are pointless in such a professional frame.

(4) RO Domnul Costache Mircea: Există această procedură: se sesizează justiția, face un dosar pe care-l ține undeva, pe sub „posteriorul" unui şef DNA, ascuns cu grijă, care nu va ieşi niciodată la iveală şi nu se va da niciodată publicității în ce stadiu este şi ce finalitate are, iar comisia de anchetă, stabilită cu votul
plenului, a muncit luni de zile degeaba. Să nu se întâmple la fel şi cu comisia de anchetă în problema „Afacerii Bordei", căreia unii îi spun „Afacerea Bordel", pentru că este vorba de caractere compromise
total, care mai dau şi lecții de moralitate publică în fiecare zi națiunii.

EN Mr. Costache Mircea: There exists this procedure: The Ministry of Justice takes notice, they write a file that is kept somewhere, under a National Anticorruption Directorate superior's "back", careful hidden and it will never be shown or published as it is and with its' finality, and the committee of inquiry which is stipulated by the plenum's vote, the Ministry would have been working for months in vain. It might happen the same with the committee of inquiry in the Bordei affair, which others call "the brothel affair", because it is about totally discredited people, who give lessons of moral conduct each day.

(www.cdep.ro, Joint Sittings of the
Chamber of Deputies an the Senate,
March 2008, site accessed on May 11th, 2010)

The first Romanian extract is taken from the joint sittings of the two chambers of the Romanian Parliament; the topic for discussion is the debate upon the organisation of a common commission of inquiry regarding the Bordei affair; the Bordei Park is one of Bucharest's most important and large parks and it was closed in order to become a private property. The fragment consists of a part of a statement uttered by Mr. Costache Mircea, member of the Chamber of Deputies.

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Mr. Mircea starts his intervention in the sittings with the idea that the justice in Romania is corrupted, because it does not publish important facts from different illegal affairs. He states that the case of Bordei Park might be in danger (*the assumption* of the ironic utterance). *The focal event* is represented by the following utterance: "They write a file that is kept somewhere [...] careful hidden and it will never be shown or published". Then it occurs the „bantering" type of irony, through *the dialogic comment*: „a file that is kept [...] under a National Anticorruption Directorate superior's "back"; the term "back" has a negative connotation. Yet, "the Bordei affair", which others call "the brothel affair", because it is about totally discredited people, who give lessons of moral conduct each day", reveals o mocking attitude towards the entire situation and the public people involved. The speaker criticises people who give lessons of morality to others, while they are totally corrupt. In Romanian, the terms „bordei" and „bordel" differ in the final letter, so that they permit the speaker to replace the word, „bordei", with „bordel" – brothel, so as to express the bad condition of the Romanian justice. Because the addressee's reaction is not directly showed, *the ironic effect* is not linguistically expressed. The preferred response of the audience may be a giggle.

(5) RO Domnul Marin Almăjanu: Iar ca „tortul educației" să fie presărat cu „intenții sclipitoare", doamna ministru Andronescu consideră că profesorii şi-au umplut suficient rafturile bibliotecilor şi nu mai au nevoie de suta de euro pentru cărțile necesare perfecționării şi nici decontarea navetei nu mai este de actualitate, atât pentru profesori, cât şi pentru elevi pentru că, în timpul crizei, cei din mediul rural ar face mai bine să stea acasă.

EN Mr. Marin Almăjanu: And so that the "education cake" be strewn with "brilliant intentions", the Minister Antonescu considers that teachers have stocked their book shelves and they do not need that hundred of euro promised for books necessary in improving their knowledge and the discount for running to and from somewhere is not topical anymore, both for teachers and students, because during the economical crisis, those who come from the countryside should better stay at home.

(www.cdep.ro, Joint Sittings of the Chamber of Deputies, March 2009 site accessed on May 12th, 2010)

The second Romanian extract is taken from Mr. Marin Almăjanu's declaration about the situation in the education system. It is a fragment uttered in the Chamber of Deputies on March 2009. The speaker is intrigued by the Minister's measures and he criticises them.

"The brilliant intentions" make the subject for *assumption*. Obviously the phrase holds an ironic meaning; this can be easily observed because of the inverted commas which cancel the literal meaning and reinterprets it. Thus, the literal, positive meaning becomes figurative, negative. *The focal event* is represented by another ironic phrase, "the education cake", as if the speaker, by means of a sarcastic form of irony, wanted to create the image of a present for both students and teachers. Therefore, the linguistic level is replaced by the semantic one. Furthermore, even the verb "to strew" contains ironical marks, together with the phrase "the brilliant intentions": *the "education cake" be strewn with "brilliant intentions"*.

The speaker continues the ironic situation with its third stage, *the dialogic comment*: "Minister Andronescu considers

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that teachers have stocked their book shelves and they do not need the hundred of Euros promised", "both teachers and students who come from countryside, should better stay at home". Mr. Almăjanu infers the idea that there is no point in being disgusted, because the Minister seems not to be interested in their reactions or to give up the already taken decisions. Almăjanu criticises the promises made at the beginning of the Minister's electoral mandate (money for specialty books and discount for running to and from somewhere for both teachers and students), promises that have been ignored or forgotten. As in the 5th fragment the ironic message -receiver's response is not expressed, but it can be foreseen. The preferred answer is a smile or applause.

(6) RO Domnul Iuliu Nosa: În urma alegerilor parlamentare din noiembrie 2008 şi intrarea la guvernare a PSD şi PD-L, preşedintele Traian Băsescu declara sus şi tare că el este artizanul acestei guvernări şi doar datorită lui a fost posibilă coaliţia dintre PSD şi PD-L. Tot atunci afirma, aproape patetic, că această guvernare a fost o soluţie de compromis, deci că nu prea iubeşte PSD-ul, dar şi-a sacrificat sentimentele pentru binele României. Frumoase cuvinte, aproape că ne dădeau lacrimile la auzul lor. Nu doresc, nici pe departe, să fiu ironic, dar după acele declaraţii sforăitoare, poate că mulţi români au sperat ca liniştea să se aştearnă peste plaiurile mioritice. Cu atât mai mult cu cât alegătorii erau deja suprasaturaţi de circul politic care a durat patru ani, pe timpul guvernărilor PNL-PD şi apoi PNL. Erau sătui de bileţelele dintre Băsescu şi Tăriceanu, de disputele prin telefon...

EN Mr. Iuliu Nosa: After the elections in November 2008, when the executive power resumes to PDS and PD-L, the president Băsescu strongly stated that he is the mastermind of the government and it was him that made possible the coalition between PSD and PD-L. On the same occasion, he stated, in a high-flown speech, that this administration was a midway solution, although he is not much fond of PSD, he did his best for the Romanians' welfare. Nice words, we almost burst into tears. Far be it from be that I should be ironic, but after these demagogical statements, a lot of Romanians might have hoped that political calmness would come about on their picturesque country. Even more so that electors were already fed up with the disagreement in the political arena that lasted for four years during the PSD and PD-L administration. The Romanians had enough of the notes that went between Băsescu and Tăriceanu, by disagreements on the phone…

(www.cdep.ro, Joint Sittings of the Chamber of Deputies, *Political statements and interventions of deputies*, March 2009, site accessed on May 12th , 2010)

The source of the excerpt is the same as the previous, the political statements from the Chamber of Deputies, held on March 17th 2009. The speech is held by Mr. Iuliu Nosa, deputy representing PSD, is meaningfully entitled 'Traian Basescu states one thing and does another'. The title represents the focal event for ironic communication, because it announces the process of planning and preparation for the ironic utterance and its topic.

Nosa examines the Romanian political situation, being ironic about the flaws of the leading party, pointing out the 'culprit' in this context (*the assumption*): the president during the recording of the speech, Traian Băsescu. The deputy criticises (*the dialogic comment*) the lack

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of consistency and honesty in Romanian politics, subsequently Traian Băsescu's, who, according to Nosa, would use any means of keeping the power, even midway solutions (such as an alliance between PD-L with PSD he would not usually tolerate): *the president Băsescu strongly stated that he is the mastermind of the government and it was him that made possible the coalition between PSD and PD-L. On the same occasion, he stated, in a high-flown speech, that this administration was a midway solution, although he is not much fond of PSD, he did his best for the Romanians' welfare.* Another issue to be criticised is the pathos and the artificiality of the president's speeches which has a strong impression on his electors, especially those who are outsiders to the Romanian politics: *nice words, we almost burst into tears.* In order to make a strong impression on the audience a strategy might be to use expressions such as *picturesque lands* which evoke the Romanian cultural features (the specific Romanian sacred universe), whose peace is threatened by some political statements: *after these demagogical statements, a lot of Romanians might have hoped that political calmness would come about on their picturesque country.* In conclusion, Nosa refers to an older political scandal so called 'the scandal of the pink notes', in which Elena Udrea publicly accuses the prime minister Tăriceanu to have sent the president a note in which she requested him to analyse the Rompetrol situation, a company run at that time by Dinu Patriciu, who was a member of PNL led by Tăriceanu: *that electors were already fed up with the disagreement in the political arena that lasted for four years during the PSD and PD-L administration. The Romanians had enough of the notes that went between Băsescu and Tăriceanu, by disagreements on the phone…* Nosa criticises and makes ironic remarks about the situations in which the politicians get themselves into due to the corruption they resort to as a means of survival in the political arena. The addressee's reaction to the ironic message is not conveyed (*the ironic effect*).

4. Conclusions

During the research, specific features for both British and Romanian parliamentary debates have been noticed. On the one hand, there was a more frequent use of socratic and sarcastic irony (Anolli, Intantino, Ciceri, 2001: 143) in British culture; through sarcastic irony the speaker blames the interlocutor by praising words (blame by praise). Instead, socratic irony is a polite and elegant way of communication; this is suitable for debates and discussions without compromising oneself. On the other side, there is the distinctive Romanian way of expressing irony, where impoliteness has its particular place. The irony is a flouting one, that attacks through hurtful methods of speech. This is a violent way of expressing irony, but which helps to relax the communicative environment. In both cultures, self-control is very important for the speaker because it helps him/ her to hold the power in communication and to get to the ironic effect he/ she intended; interlocutors have to be emotionally detached from events. Also, it's worth mentioning the fact that in the British Parliament, debates are more lively and animated than those held in the Romanian Parliament. The members of the Parliament in the UK interact more often with each other, they even overlap each other in the verbal exchanges and they are known to be polite in different social interactions. On the other hand, the communicative situations between the members of the Romanian parliament appear to be rather rude and violent in

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many situations. The debates are built up in such manner that the speaker can holdthe floor, and his or her interlocutors cannot always break in on the conversation.

In the majority of analysed cases when the ironic effect has been accomplished, irony is sarcastic (even bantering sometimes, in the Romanian analysed extracts), but occasionally it acquires a form of friendly humour. Different from the ironic script proposed by Anolli, Infantino and Ciceri (2001), in this paper there are examples where the last stage of the ironic situation (the ironic effect) cannot be identified, due to the absence of the addressee of the ironic message. Moreover, there are fragments where the addressee or the participants to ironists' interventions have perceived the message, but they preferred not to express their reaction about them. Some theories suggest that pretense is the key of the ironic process. Many forms of indirect, figurative language, including exaggeratios and incomplete statements are part of this process. Stressing the irony, both in thinking, in planning, and in talking, rises some interesting cases of miscommunication (such as the British examples, because they have verbal exchanges). Frequently, people interpret as irony what other people say, although this meaning may not be intended by the speaker.

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