Contemporary Perspective of Pedagogical Rhetoric in Higher Education Teaching – the Example of a Seminar

Agata Kiluk
University of Physical Education in Cracow

Summary
One of the goals of the information society is cooperation with the use of technical resources and information. The result of these changes is, among others, the process of relocation of knowledge indicated in literature. Knowledge is not associated with any element of the structure, but results from the process of cooperation. Therefore, the requirements regarding the effectiveness of the formulation and processing of knowledge are increasing.

The problem of not being mature enough to autonomously participate in the global exchange of information relates inter alia to students who engage in various social activities with the use of IT. In the case of university students, who have mature personalities and for whom self-reliance and problem solving orientation are of key importance, different rules of cooperation with lecturers are necessary. The uniqueness of a person’s situation in the knowledge society lies in the extent of the collection and processing of knowledge.

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One of the goals of the information society is cooperation with the use of technical resources and information. The result of these changes is, among others, the process of relocation of knowledge indicated in literature. Knowledge is not associated with any element of the structure, but results from the process of cooperation. This cooperation involves the exchange of knowledge, which is both the subject and method of operation. Knowledge of such processes is viewed both as the material and method of operation. Therefore, the requirements regarding the effectiveness of the formulation and processing of knowledge are increasing.

Information technologies provide tools for searching for and processing of knowledge and thus enhance operational efficiency and team collaboration. There is a widespread presumption that people who use information technology have developed the capacity of independent judgment, analysis of the content of communication and responsibility in reasoning. In this respect, technological resources of the information society are passive, because this matter is beyond the scope of tasks of information technology (IT). The problem of not being mature enough to autonomously participate in the global exchange of information relates inter alia to students who engage in various social activities with the use of IT.

Most of the students getting into different universities today are younger than computers. They prefer typing instead of writing on paper and reading from the computer screen instead of books. They consider the possibility of staying in touch with their loved ones an important achievement of modern technology. The phenomena of information noise overload, which occur along with these changes, put into the background the information content and the need to understand it (Foss S, 1989). The passive form of participation in communication reveals the real attitude of the participants subject to the influence of electronic media. The methods of influence involve instrumental techniques in which the recipients are treated like objects, and the goal is to create a situation conducive to the acceptance of the message without reflection.

In the case of electronic media, this is the result of pursuing the goal of collecting as many customers as possible, e.g. as the recipients of advertising content. In high school, in turn, it is a way of building relationships between an academic teacher and a student. In elementary or secondary school, pupils’ immaturity, age difference and the difference in competence between students and teachers inevitably makes the former inferior. But in the case of university students, who have mature personalities and for whom self-reliance and problem solving orientation are of key importance, different rules of cooperation with lecturers are necessary. The uniqueness of a person’s situation in the knowledge society lies in the extent of the collection and processing of knowledge. Each individual has to take a stance concerning the phenomenon of exchange of information. A modern human inevitably becomes a mass speaker (everybody writes.
blogs, but who reads them?) using a variety of techniques to promote their own views. Therefore, it is good to treat information technology and rhetoric as complementary elements of society based on knowledge, where IT is based on the assumption of those who exchange information and knowledge (which can be achieved by rhetoric) and gives the technical basis for the exchange of ideas in a reasonable and responsible manner (which is consistent with the assumptions of rhetoric).

University

New expectations, attitudes and ways of thinking characteristic of the information age require a response from the university. Integration of the achievements of information technologies and change in pedagogy is an essential step in the process of shaping the mind of the information age. If the university fails to respond to the needs arising from the need to adjust the methods of teaching to the possibilities offered by IT technologies, they will be of no benefit to education, and computers and all infrastructure will be an unnecessary expense. Therefore, the nature of educational relations should change, both in the classroom and the entire institution.

Academic teacher as a user of rhetoric

When speaking, a speaker – just like a lecturer – tries to achieve a certain objective, has a defined audience and adapts the message to their needs. Rhetoric helps achieve the goals, and the means is imparting information regardless of whether the text is spoken or typed. Rhetoric is seen as a toolbox helpful for those who want to pass the information or to defend their views. Rhetoric includes argumentation instruments, tools to build confidence in the speaker, and tools to control the speech. At the same time, the range of options makes it easy to match them to specific situations. But is rhetoric just beautiful language? The use of language is the art of conscious choices and rhetoric can assist in this effort in a constructive manner. Thus, the rhetoric of those who are proficient in this skill is perceived, not only as a technique, but also as a set of rules. It provides tools to reflect on the language. In this way, the importance of rhetoric extends from the improvement of communication (as a form of acquiring and expressing views) to the area of reflection on communication.

Does a contemporary university student develop the ability to study or just assimilates knowledge? Are there alternative methods of forming relations between the participants of the educational process?

Depending on the level at which rhetoric is used, there are two approaches. In the first, the emphasis is on the efficiency of conveying knowledge, while in the second, to be able to interact on the basis of exchange of knowledge. In the first approach, the central role is that of the teacher conveying knowledge and focusing on the elements that influence the effectiveness of persuasion.

The aim of such actions is to maximize the effectiveness of the presentation of knowledge, in which oratorical skills are used to defend the views presented. This model leads to students developing the attitudes that emphasize self-presentation and self-promotion. This type of transfer of information is closed, with pre-defined contents of the message, and its assumptions are similar to dialectical rhetoric. In the second approach, it is assumed that the aim of the course is to develop solutions based on the existing knowledge and information resources of the participants. For this purpose, it is necessary to allow all participants to present their views and influence the process. The result of the team’s work is not pre-defined and therefore requires an active attitude of all. What is desirable here is the awareness of aids to communication and communication skills. Participants are expected to display open-mindedness and critical thinking, to formulate proposals, and to cooperate in the pursuit of knowledge.

Rhetoric as the development of skills

In the original sense, the purpose of rhetoric was quite broad and included not only the ability to convey some knowledge, skills and perspective, but also the broader objective to improve the quality of social life. Rhetoric understood this way should not only prepare teachers to the task of knowledge transfer, but also prepare them to be a model for students, promoting attitudes useful for citizens of the knowledge society. Rhetoric is not the art of speaking, just to express one’s thoughts, but a way of forming methods of communication based on the ability of analysis, understanding and critical judgment of content shared with the environment.

Thanks to IT technologies, information society has the unique new opportunities to collect and process knowledge. Human activity is increasingly filled with the perception and creation of messages. This applies both to teachers and students. Modern information technologies shape human skills in a selective manner, emphasizing efficiency, streamlining tasks, modern forms of cooperation, and sharing information and expertise. At the same time, it is assumed that the citizens of the information society develop the capacity of independent judgment, analysis and accountability in reasoning, but the sources of these competencies are not identified. The role of universities is to complement this gap and promote attitudes based on existing and well-established science, such as rhetoric. Promoting such knowledge should consist of shaping behavior patterns: how to use the knowledge, what attitude toward information to express, how to participate in the processes of cooperation based on the exchange of knowledge. Rhetoric, in this sense, is not a set of techniques, but an expression of a certain attitude rationally characterized by critical thinking, understanding, and respect for the opinions of others[LeCourt D, 2004]. It is a desirable attitude in
young people, because it affects, not only the quality of the tasks performed individually or at the level of social discourse, but also the utilization of information technology and the potential opportunities of participation in the knowledge society. Deficiencies in this area and failure to develop certain patterns of behavior and attitudes may result in the exclusion of the perceptual phenomenon which results in reducing individuals to passive recipients, who are unable to actively participate in the processes of shaping the reality.

Seminar as an example of rhetorical space science

The word seminar (from Latin), means nursery for plants or trees. T. Kindeberg treats seminars as a place of formation, developing the ability to think creatively. She stresses that the skills acquired during the classes are developed in line with the objectives of higher education. Hence, she looks for the causes of the process of thinking „cultivation” which takes place during the seminar [Kindeberg2008].

In modern science, there is one-sided interest in the cause-and-effect relationship. Life sciences employ an arsenal of different criteria to help in the search for the „driving force”. Essentially, scientific effort reduces it to obtaining reproducible results to explain the phenomenon from the perspective of the cause-and-effect relationship. This trend is nothing new to researchers in the field of education.

Aristotle argued that the discovery of causes and their mutual relations is the key to understanding a phenomenon. The causes of the phenomenon should be sought in the internal relations between its elements. This demonstrates the complexity of the human phenomenon, which seems to be consistent with the experience of pedagogy. T. Kindeberg proposed an approach based on Aristotle’s theory of four causes: material cause; formal cause (the form of things); moving cause (the impact of forcing change); and final cause (the ultimate goal pursued by the phenomenon). To obtain knowledge about someone’s expectations and motivation, you need to examine the reasons for this phenomenon. Here the phenomenon is a seminar as a space for teaching. Using the concepts of education and analysis of the use of language, T. Kindeberg describes the four Aristotelian causes as follows:

- anticipatory experiences and judgments of a seminar participant,
- a form of expressing them by means of language and other media,
- intentions of the speaker / seminar participant,
- and the meaning and purpose of the process going on during the seminar [Kindeberg2006]

Teaching from the perspective of rhetorical teaching

The central assumption of pedagogy rhetoric concerns the relationship based on spoken communication. One element of this communication is emotions and feelings that are the reason why a person wants to learn from the other person. As noted by A. Rodziewicz, the culture of speech „requires thorough knowledge of the seed and the soil on which it is sowed, and then — according to Plato in Phaedrus — waiting for what is sowed finally matures.”

Feelings discussed in the paper, characterized by dynamics affecting the potential for dialogue in creating a situation conducive to the learning process. Aristotle calls this growth rate „energy”, which reflects the development of verbal communication. „Energy” is manifested as a feeling and affects the quality of dialogue through the level of involvement of both those who listen and those who speak. Seminar participants take active part in it; conversation leads to a relationship manifested in progress in knowledge acquisition. The possibility of progress and learning increase with the exchange of views and skills. The means of interaction is the language used to communicate thoughts. Thoughts spoken at a given moment have special significance and meaning. If their form resulting from the choice of words is not approved by other participants of the conversation, new forms of expressing thoughts are sought, but the topics discussed are continued. In this process of learning, the progress in the relationship gives rise to the sense of meaningful collaboration. The motivation here is the need to talk in order to define meanings; in this sense, the above process does not involve guessing a predefined solution or its correctness. Each person speaks with specific intentions, which are not known to the audience, and therefore cannot predict the impact of various statements on the course of conversation [McKerrowR.E,1989]. The difference in intent and how to read it creates a dynamic seminar; prior knowledge and intentions of the participants are the only contribution to the unknown outcome. The importance of the seminar does not lie in the result (which is not given) but in the sense of meaningfulness of the activity undertaken by the participants.

Dialogue is both a means and a goal of action based on the sense of significance of the topic which is currently undertaken. In this case, teaching is an expression of human will to attach importance to talking to other people. Dialogue is a form of activity closely associated with the present moment in the present, even though it is future-oriented [Andersen2000]. The participants’ sense of openness and progress results from the awareness of irrevocability of the changes caused by words spoken during the conversation. Words create new meanings affecting the awareness of all participants, providing the basis for the next steps. The open form of dialogue makes it different from dialectic rhetoric, which is closed by definition. The present combines prior knowledge useful in solving the problem and the future result achieved thanks to the human need to understand the meaning of the conversation. Waiting for the development of ideas through conversation is the only meaning of the conversation, and therefore learning through seminars should be focused on dialogue.
"Not ready" and "ready" skills

The content of a seminar can be likened to a maturing skill. For the participants of a seminar to start exchanging ideas, they must be convinced that their skills are needed and expected. Therefore, if one of participants closes the form of dialogue by signaling that the solution to the problem is already known, it can make the exchange of ideas disappear and stop the process of ripening of the pursued skill. A seminar is perceived as an arena of finding solutions through taking into account a broader spectrum of views and opinions, and thus through richer and more in-depth understanding of the problem presented to the group. H. G. Gadamer believes that the basic model of collaboration to understand the problem is dialogue or conversation. Conversation is not possible when one of the participants adopts a superior position and assumes that the views of the other side are wrong. This attitude condemns the person to being closed in the circle of their own prejudices [Gadamer 2006]. In fact, it is impossible to achieve understanding of the problem through dialogue if even one of the parties will not allow themselves to engage in a real conversation.

Seminar participants do not use dialogue to discuss things that are known. Once acquired, knowledge is the foundation for further work, reflected in the expressions used in the dialogue. The knowledge the participants of a seminar already have is built into its content and provides the basis for the questions asked and thoughts expressed during the seminar. The learning process during the seminar can be described in terms of expectations of broadening the scope of knowledge by learning new meanings.

Comparing the formula of maturing knowledge / cognitive dialogue with the formula of constructivist dialogue makes it possible to define the difference between them. The above diagram (Figure 1) illustrates making room for shared solutions by the interaction between knowledge of each participant of the seminar and shared knowledge based on the spiral model of knowledge extraction and reinternalization, SECI. The seminar offers all participants the same (shared) knowledge, maturing in the process of exchange of ideas and views, not favoring any of the people (despite the function they may have at the meeting). Expectations of all the participants and their need to acquire the pursued skills are the integrating factor. In the dialectical constructivist approach,
each of the participants gains something else from the dialogue – a different competence useful for private assessment of the knowledge he or she already has. This comparison indicates a significant difference of knowledge: ready (mature) in the cognitivist dialogue, and not ready, being an individual intermediate product of constructivist dialogue. In the second case, the intention of the participants is not so much to acquire new skills, but to assess the existing situation, and in the future, to improve immature knowledge. The SECI model presented above is one example of interest in sharing knowledge and the organization of information flow in other areas. Modern technology has a growing range of technical resources to help solve various problems. The question of the ability to use them is still open.

**Dialogue in teaching**

Rhetoric can be understood in many ways. On the one hand, it is a theoretical science, and on the other one, an art conveying some knowledge, skill, or point of view. Originally, this art was to serve a specific purpose, which was to improve the social life. This purpose, in the context of the challenges faced by information society, becomes valid again, but its significance is different. The reality of the era of IT forces you to use forms of cooperation that make it possible to solve problems beyond the capabilities and experience of individuals. The open form of dialogue focused on team problem solving by sharing knowledge and opinions, characteristic of the seminar, gives wide possibilities of group work. In contrast, advancements in technology are a legitimate way of removing geographical and organizational barriers. Rhetoric is seen as the ability to analyze, understand and critically judge the content. It should not only help lecturers convey knowledge, but also develop certain attitudes towards the media in students: attitudes useful both for skillful recipients and senders of information (which is characteristic of the IT revolution). In this sense, the task of a university teacher includes the organization of work to meet the challenges of modern times. One of the forms of teaching, utilizing emotional relationships between participants, is the dialogue during a seminar. Seminar is a social phenomenon in which the potential of teaching partly results from being open to knowledge contributed by the participants.

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