

RESEARCH ARTICLE

WWW.PEGEGOG.NET

The Concept of Argumentation and Its Conceptual Problematics in the Work of Saber al-Habasha: A Study of the Book

Dr. Mariem Benayache

Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel, Algeria

Email: meriem.benayache@univ-jijel.dz

Received: 21/06/2025 Accepted: 02/11/2025 Published: 06/01/2026

Abstract:

This research paper attempts to trace the term "argumentation" in the work of Saber al-Habasha, and that in his book "Pragmatics and Argumentation Approaches and Texts" and monitor its concept through pages of the book; which attempted taking into considerations and details and particulars of this term, and presenting status of argumentation and argumentative discourse in rhetoric and pragmatics, and attempt to uncover features of argumentation in some ancient rhetorical texts.

And in order to regulate this term and remove haziness from its concept, we followed terminological study characterized by objectivity and comprehensiveness, and integrality; and that in order to grasp it and clarify it more.

Keywords: term, argumentation, Saber al-Habasha, pragmatics and argumentation.

Introduction:

The topic of "argumentation" – as being a branch of discourse analysis – has received numerous studies beginning from ancient criticism and rhetoric, and I mean by that rhetoric in the era of Greeks (among the

Sophists, Plato, and Aristotle) and ancient Arab critics (among al-Jahiz, al-Sakaki, and al-Qartajanni), until modern and contemporary rhetoric, and modern and contemporary criticism, due to its active role in process of communication, in addition to its ability of persuasion and conviction and influence on the other party/receiver.

Saber al-Habasha dealt with the term argumentation in his book "Pragmatics and Argumentation Approaches and Texts", and it is subject and field of this research paper, which works on highlighting concept of argumentation – in his work - and its historical transformations, and development of its meanings, passing through its types, and its objectives reaching to its pitfalls; and that in order to good grasp of features of this term laden with meanings; especially since Saber al-Habasha attempted to renew our vision of rhetorical heritage, rhetoric has become basket of heritage in many modernists today.

First: In the Concept of Argumentation

1- Linguistically:

Arabic linguistic dictionaries dealt with wide, and multiple definitions for the term "argumentation", as it came in Mukhtar al-Sihah: "(al-Hujjah) is proof (and he argued with him so

he won) from chapter of return i.e. he overcame him with proof" (Al-Razi, 1986, p. 52)

In addition to that we find in Lisan al-Arab: "al-Hujjah: proof; and it is said al-hujjah is what is repelled by opponent(...) and he argued with him he argues with him arguing: he overcame him on his proof(...) and he used the thing as proof: he took it as argument" (Ibn Manzur, n.d., p. 779) ; that is he established proof with evidence to defend himself.

As it came in Muhit al-Muhit: "al-hujjah proof(...) and it is said al-hujjah is synonym for evidence it is said to it that because it is intended and aimed or is intended by it the right sought" (Al-Bustani, 1987, p. 149), so evidence and proof are one thing for one purpose.

Previous linguistic concepts share in one idea, its meaning that argumentation is dialogue with evidences and proofs; in order to convince the other or remove confusion about a subject, as it is synonymous with concept of dialectic.

As for in Western dictionaries, we find dialectic Argumenter means "defending an objection or thesis by means of arguments, or presenting opposing viewpoint accompanied by arguments" (Le Grand Robert, 1989, p. 535) ; so dialectic is based in Western culture on argumentation, which helps to adopt clear scientific idea.

And it came in "Cambridge" dictionary that "argumentation is the argument that justifies or justifies your support or opposition to an idea" (Cambridge Advanced Learner's, 2004, p. 56) , and it is concept close to previous concept, except that this concept adopted term of dialectic instead of term argumentation.

Concepts of Arabic linguistic dictionaries, share with Western dictionaries; in that argumentation carries concept of presenting and displaying ideas put forward in clear and precise

manner, in order to convince and influence the receiver.

2- Terminologically:

• Argumentation Among Ancient Rhetoricians and Critics:

A- Among the West:

The concept of argumentation knew discrepancy among ancient Western researchers, beginning from "Sophists" to "Plato" followed by "Aristotle", so Sophist argumentation was based on ideological backgrounds, to pass their personal interests, so "Sophists were not seeking only to defend truth and justice, and values, and true knowledge; but their only concern was to resort to fallacious persuasive reasoning in order to achieve material and moral gains, and serve narrow personal interest" (Hamadawi, 2020) ; however this act is inconsistent with semantic loads of this name - that is the name of Sophistry - which refer to elevation and height, and wisdom,... what pushed "Plato" to attack them and their ideas inconsistent with truth and good, which he calls for in his ideal republic, "and Plato devoted to confronting those argumentative practices two dialogues namely (Gorgias) and (Phaedrus), he criticized sophistic rhetoric in general manner, and relied in his criticism on one strategy he named Hisham al-Rifi 'strategy of exposure'" (Al-Talabah, 2008, p. 27) ; that is he attempted to uncover fallacies of Sophists in their use of concept of argumentation, and their linguistic manipulations serving them and their hidden suppressed issues.

It appears through "Plato's" revolution against Sophists, that he opposed their ideas and resorted to balance of truth and falsehood, without deepening in concept of argumentation in itself, so he "was concerned only with ethical argumentation, and it is argumentation we can

describe as idealistic and has been criticized and surpassed long ago by his student Aristotle, and recently by most pioneers of contemporary rhetoric, especially Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca" (Al-Talabah, 2008, p. 31), his concentration on one aspect in argumentation made him subject to criticism, and criticism beginning from his student, so Aristotle differed from his teacher in his vision of concept of argumentation so he deviated from his idealistic ethical concept, to logical rational dialectical argumentation, related to rhetoric.

So we find Aristotle in his book "Rhetoric" has alerted and emphasized "through his linguistic rhetorical research to important issue from issues of meaning closely related to argumentation, and that is deepening and management in rules of semantic interpretation to achieve argumentative purposes. Because interpretation(...) is in reality argumentative process of extreme depth, requires arming with several cognitive mechanisms interpreters are enabled by them to exploit what is in language from semantic relations, and from ensuring harmony of meanings and results and images presented in critical texts creative and artistic in general" (Al-Talabah, 2008, pp. 35-36) , so "Aristotle" attempted to connect argumentation and interpretation for their inseparability in mechanisms of study and research, and made interpretation more specialized and deeper.

And then Western environment witnessed discord in concept of argumentation, and its intentions, it oscillated between its concentration on material aspect then on ethical aspect, then on real aspect and what is meant by it - and it is rhetorical communicative aspect - so we witnessed "argumentation of fallacy" among Sophists and "ethical argumentation" among Plato, and "dialectical argumentation" among Aristotle.

B- Among Arabs:

The term argumentation was mentioned at times and dialectic at other times with different meanings in Quranic discourse, so we find His saying: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best" (Holy Quran, An-Nahl: 125) , so Allah Almighty calls to good praised dialectic in this noble verse, and came opposite to that in His saying: "And those who disbelieve argue in falsehood to refute the truth thereby, and they have taken My verses and that of which they were warned as ridicule" (Holy Quran, Al-Kahf: 56), and also His saying: "Have you not considered the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord" (Holy Quran, Al-Baqarah: 258), and here changed and transformed positive meaning of term dialectic to negative meaning, so dialectic carries two concepts, first is meant by it truth, while second is meant by it falsehood.

As for in ancient critical rhetorical discourse, we find "al-Jahiz" has dealt in his book "Al-Bayan wa-al-Tabyin" –section of eloquence- with concept of argumentation, so he said in it: "First eloquence is gathering of eloquence tool and that is that orator be steady resolute calm limbs little gaze careful in choice of words, does not speak to master of nation or kings with speech of marketplace, and be in his powers surplus of management in every class" (Al-Jahiz, n.d., p. 92) , al-Jahiz speaks of tools and conditions of persuasion, represented in good choice of words denoting and suggestive appropriate for occasion, to establish argumentative persuasive discourse.

As we find "Abu Hilal al-Askari" has gone deeper in concept of argumentation, through linking it with poetry considering it receptacle of argumentation in his book "The Two Arts", so he says: "And it is that which possesses what hearts

turn away by it and comforts hearts that are lonely and by it softens literary nature that is intractable and achieves by it the need and argument is established by it" (Al-Askari, 2006, p. 49) , so through poetry argument is established, and arguments are classified according to their functions, according to their occasions.

And at "Hazim al-Qartajanni" we find him brought concept of argumentation in his book "Criterion of Eloquent and Lamp of Literary Men" so he says in it: "Since every speech admits truth and falsehood, either it comes on manner of reporting and narration, or it comes on manner of argumentation and reasoning" (Al-Qartajanni, 2008, p. 55) , al-Qartajanni classified argumentation as kind from kinds of speech, which admits truth or falsehood - as we saw previously in noble Quranic verses - so it is truth intended by it good, or falsehood intended by it harm.

Through previous definitions we find that concept of argumentation in Arab environment came under synonymous terms, and they are: argumentation, proof, dialectic, persuasion,...

• **Argumentation Among Modern and Contemporary Rhetoricians and Critics:**

A- Among the West:

The concept of argumentation crystallized and matured with "Chaïm Perelman", who established modern or contemporary argumentation, accompanying changes of environment and time, so he says about it: "study of techniques of discourse which would lead minds to accept the theses presented to them or increase degree of acceptance" (Sulla, n.d., p. 299) , so he linked between argumentation and its function represented in convincing other party, through power of presentation, and fluidity of ideas put forward and their

smoothness, which pushes receiver to acceptance and submission, and subjugation willingly.

This and "Meyer" defined argumentation by saying: "Argumentation is study of relation between explicit and implicit of speech" (Sulla, 2001, p. 37) ; so argumentation according to "Meyer" works on extracting implicit implicit discourse in speech, and clarifying it by explanation and detail and proving it by conclusive argument, and certain proof.

And not far from these two sayings what "Olivier Reboul" declared in his saying: "Every discourse convinces by pleasure and excitement supported by argumentation" (Roboul, 2005, p. 22) ; and he here emphasizes role of argumentation in convincing other, and adds that aesthetic and artistic require likewise in arguments and proofs for persuasion.

B- Among Arabs:

Modern Arab rhetoric accompanied data of modernist era, and went drawing from sources of knowledge, by researchers specialized in argumentative theory, so they translated and read Western texts, and excavated in Arab heritage; in order to engage in argumentation with modern contemporary vision, so we find among them "Taha Abd al-Rahman" who took wide steps in this field, and dealt with argumentation in more than one place, such as what came in his book "The Tongue and the Balance": "that the principle in multiplication of discourse is its argumentative character, based on that there is no discourse without argumentation" (Taha Abdul Rahman, 1998, p. 213) ; so he negates existence of discourse without argumentation, because it is active and required element in every discourse.

We find likewise "Saber al-Habasha" who engaged in argumentation, and attempted to establish his concept with deep and bold vision,

through comprehensive vision that read long history of rhetoric in its Arab and Western context, and this is what we will witness in his book: "Pragmatics and Argumentation Approaches and Texts".

Second: The Concept of Argumentation in Saber al-Habasha's Work

"Saber al-Habasha" dealt in his book "Pragmatics and Argumentation Approaches and Texts" with term of argumentation as being main subject from subjects of pragmatics, what made him engage in it, attempting to comprehend it, so he says in this regard: "This research addresses status of argumentation in pragmatics, as being one of most important pillars of pragmatics alongside theory of linguistic acts, and we have prepared for discussion of argumentation in pragmatics by defining 'New Rhetoric' in way that distinguishes it from modern rhetoric" (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 15) , so he defines it based on its function in rhetorical communicative discourse aimed at passing message between two parallel lines they are: sender and receiver; in order for effectiveness of this discourse and achieving its communicative function, so he says in this regard: "Argumentation in its ordinary meaning method of presenting arguments and introducing them, and it targets influencing listener, so discourse becomes thus effective operative and this is first criterion for realization of argumentative feature, except that it is not sufficient criterion; as one must not neglect nature of listener(...) so success of discourse lies in extent of its appropriateness to listener and extent of ability of argumentative techniques used to convince him, in addition to investing psychological state in recipient in order to achieve desired influence in him" (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 21) ; so argumentation stands on extent of ability of receiver or recipient or listener in understanding message directed to him, and his

conviction with it, and this depends on style of sender or speaker who excels in presenting his argumentative style through techniques that influence this listener, and make him desire not aversion.

On the opposite side he presents technical argumentation more specialized, through his saying: "As for argumentation in technical meaning, it denotes specific type of relations deposited in discourse and included in language, within semantic contents. And basic characteristic of argumentative relation is to be gradational(...) or measurable by degrees, that is to be connecting between scales" (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 21), technical argumentation differs from its counterpart ordinary argumentation, in that technical argumentation relies on methods more specialized and capable of moving discourses, and their semantic contents, and extracting argumentative relations through measuring them by argumentative scale.

And between argumentation and receiver he says that: "Argumentation in its connection with receiver leads to happening of some act or preparing for it and then examination of different argumentative discourses will be research in core of speech acts and their contextual purposes, and relation of connection between sayings which belong to linguistic and argumentative structure, and argumentation will be framed by formal linguistic characteristic and not by informational content of saying which connects saying with occasion" (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 47) , so argumentation is product of speech acts and active element in linguistic structure, works on attracting attention of receiver and influencing him in his sayings, and his acts.

In relation of argumentation to rhetoric, he says: "Argumentation is not science/art paralleling rhetoric but it is arsenal of styles and

tools that are borrowed from rhetoric (and from others, such as logic and ordinary language...) and therefore it is easy to speak of integration of argumentation with rhetoric in many styles, and since field of argumentation is probable and uncertain and expected, it was in interest of argumentative discourse to strengthen its thesis by relying on rhetorical and expressive styles that show meaning in clearer way and more impressive in soul" (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 50) ; so between argumentation and rhetoric is relation of containment or relation of part to whole, being argumentation function from functions of rhetoric, relies on transmitted evidence or supporting witnesses - these evidence non-certain assumptions- with help of rhetorical styles to establish ideas, and remove confusion from mind of receiver, this is what pushes Saber al-Habasha to say that "argumentation is sought by its proof or persuasion, and is not directed except in psychological social context. If proof occurs in abstract way in independence from every context except context of system and was correct or wrong, conforming to rules of reasoning in system or not conforming, so argumentation stands on useful or non-useful arguments, strong or weak, conforming to discourse which it is directed to" (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 69) ; that is persuasion is dependent on context in which discourse to be passed to receiver exists, so it is unreasonable to speak about possibility of cure from Corona virus in midst of Corona patients in China, even by bringing most conclusive and persuasive evidence, while it is possible to speak about it in Algeria considering it free from virus, and evidence and proofs will be more persuasive (example about beginning of spread of Corona virus in China January 2020).

And he tells us about relation of argumentation to rhetoric and dialectic, so he says: "that argumentation is considered common

denominator between dialectic and rhetoric as was concerned with argumentation as being 'dialogue' and as being linguistic subject standing by itself" (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 142) , and that according to most Western researchers, who emphasized independence of argumentation as being special linguistic subject, and on other hand shares its characteristics of dialectic and rhetoric.

And it can be said that concept of argumentation in "Saber al-Habasha's" work - considering it independent science from science of rhetoric, it has its tools and mechanisms that help it in entering text and reading it scientific reading- has taken concept approaching what came in ancient rhetorical texts in their vision of this concept, and differs from them only in manner of presenting his ideas.

Third: Types of Argumentation

Saber al-Habasha pointed to two types of argumentation – and that according to Ducrot, distinguishing two meanings for word arguments- they are:

1- The Standard/Ordinary Meaning of Argumentation:

It is represented in manner, of presenting argumentative ideas, which are transferred to receiver, or listener, except that it neglects psychological state of recipient, which is considered necessary factor in process of communication through facilitating this process, and making recipient/addressee subject to sender and his ideas, and this is what ordinary argumentation excluded, and therefore desired influence is not achieved; because argumentative feature is achieved based on conviction of listener and his response to discourse. (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 21)

2- Technical Meaning of Argumentation:

It denotes special type in linguistic discourse, which is based on criteria and relations measurable by degrees called concepts of argumentative scale. (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 21)

And argumentative scale can be defined as "a set non-empty of sayings, provided with ordering relation" (Taha Abdul Rahman, 1998, p. 277) ; so argumentative scale reflects plurality of arguments that empty into one meaning.

Fourth: Objectives of Argumentation

The objective of argumentation – according to Saber al-Habasha- is "in influencing audience and first criterion by which we measure discourse is its efficacy, yet it is not sufficient criterion because we cannot neglect quality of audience which discourse is directed to. We can distinguish between discourses of politician and lawyer and scholar and speaker(...) and philosopher, not only by its subjects but we distinguish them also and especially by audience to which those discourses are directed" (Taha Abdul Rahman, 1998, p. 70) , so argumentative theory focuses utmost focus on extent of response of listener to ideas of speaker or talker, and his conviction and submission to them, through using argumentative techniques and methods, with alerting to field surrounding communicative process, so for every occasion there is discourse, and for every discourse special audience, and continues in same idea so he says: "and in reality, effectiveness of argumentation is according to its appropriateness to audience, and according to techniques used. For persuasion listener specific mechanisms are used that do not suit for persuading universal audience. And rational argumentation is characterized by being capable of persuading universal audience" (Al-Habasha, 2008, p. 70) , so he emphasizes necessity of

compatibility of discourse quality with audience, because inability of speaker to control discourse before specific audience will necessarily lead to confusion of communicative process, and will fade brilliance of arguments however conclusive, so objective of argumentation is influence and persuasion, according to criteria that help it on response of receiver.

Fifth: Pitfalls of Argumentation

Speaker may fall into numerous pitfalls, among them inability to prove his viewpoint, or inability to use real arguments that are compatible with context of discourse, so that leads to rejection by other party of ideas presented to him, Saber al-Habasha says in this regard: "As for unpardonable error in argumentation, it is begging the question, and it is linking your argumentation with thesis you think is valid but listener does not incline to it. That effort of argumentation all remains futile, and discourse falls as if it is picture we want to hang on nail was not well fixed on wall" (Al-Habasha, 2008, pp. 70-71) , and here explicit reference to importance of argumentation in communicative discourse that pushes receiver to submission to ideas presented to him, and in case of weakness of arguments this discourse will take divergent course.

Conclusion:

After standing at term of argumentation in Saber al-Habasha's work in his book "Pragmatics and Argumentation Approaches and Texts" it is possible to extract several results most important of them:

- Saber al-Habasha indicated to concept of argumentation as being main chapter in pragmatic subjects, and attempted to approach theories of argumentation.

- He focused on objectives of argumentation, given its great importance in success of process of discourse, or lack of it.
- The book included terminological reading in most important Western concepts of argumentation, especially in Ducrot, who determined two meanings for word argumentation, they are: ordinary argumentation, and technical argumentation .
- He dealt with error that can be fallen into by speaker, and was represented in his non-consideration of requirements of situation, and therefore inability of speaker in conveying his arguments to listener.

References:

The Holy Quran

1. Abu Hilal al-Askari. (2006). Kitab al-Sina'atayn [Book of the Two Arts]. Dar al-Asriyya, Beirut.
2. Abu Uthman Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz. (n.d.). Al-Bayan wa-al-Tabyin [Clarity and Elucidation]. Dar al-Fikr.
3. Al-Bustani, B. (1987). Muhit al-Muhit [The Ocean of the Ocean]. Maktabat Lubnan, Beirut.
4. Al-Habasha, S. (2008). Al-Tadawuliyya wa-al-Hajaj Madakhil wa-Nusus [Pragmatics and Argumentation: Approaches and Texts]. Safhat lil-Dirasat wa-al-Nashr, Damascus.
5. Al-Qartajanni, A. H. (2008). Manhaj al-Bulagha' wa-Siraj al-Udaba' [Pathway of the Eloquent and Lamp of the Literati]. Dar al-Arabiyya lil-Kitab, Tunis.
6. Al-Razi, M. S. (1986). Mukhtar al-Sihah [Choice of Correct Words]. Da'irah al-Ma'ajim, Maktabat Lubnan, Beirut.
7. Al-Talabah, M. S. (2008). Al-Hajaj fi al-Balagha al-Mu'asira [Argumentation in Contemporary Rhetoric]. Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid al-Muttahida, Beirut.
8. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. (2004). Cambridge University Press.
9. Hamadawi, J. (2020, February 27). Hajaj al-taghlit 'ind al-safsatiyyin [Sophistic Fallacious Argumentation]. Al-Muthaqaf. <https://www.almothaqaf.com/a/b/12-1/933437>
10. Ibn Manzur. (n.d.). Lisan al-Arab [The Tongue of the Arabs]. Dar al-Ma'arif.
11. Le Grand Robert: Dictionnaire de la langue français. (1989). L'édition, Paris.
12. Roboul, O. (2005). Hal yumkin an yujad hajaj ghayr balaghi? [Can Non-Rhetorical Argumentation Exist?]. In Muhammad al-'Umari (Trans.), Al-Balagha al-jadida bayna al-takhyil wa-al-tadawul [New Rhetoric between Imagination and Pragmatics]. Ifriqiya al-Sharq, Casablanca, Morocco.
13. Sulla, A. (n.d.). Al-Hajaj: utruhu wa-muntalaqatuhi

[Argumentation: Its Framework and Starting Points]. In the collective book: Aham nazariyyat al-hajaj fi al-taqalid al-gharbiyya [Most Important Theories of Argumentation in Western Traditions].

14. Sulla, A. (2001). Al-Hajaj fi al-Qur'an al-Karim [Argumentation in the Holy Quran]. Publications of Faculty of Letters, Manouba, Tunisia.
15. Taha Abdul Rahman. (1998). Al-Lisan wa-al-Mizan aw al-Takathur al-'Aqli [The Tongue and the Balance or Intellectual Multiplication]. Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi.