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Speech Act Conditions as Tools for Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse

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ABSTRACT: According to the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation, for analysing argumentative discourse, a normative reconstruction is required which encompasses four kinds of transformations. It is explained in this paper how speech act conditions can play a part in carrying out such a reconstruction. It is argued that integrating Searlean insights concerning speech acts with Gricean insights concerning conversational maxims can provide us with the necessary tools. For this, the standard theory of speech acts has to be amended in several respects and the conversational maxims have to be translated into speech act conditions. Making use of the rules for communication thus arrived at, and starting from the distribution of speech acts in a critical discussion as specified in the pragma-dialectical model, it is then demonstrated how indirect speech acts are to be transformed when reconstructing argumentative discourse.

KEY WORDS: argumentation, argumentative discourse, conversational maxims, critical discussion, indirect speech act, normative reconstruction, pragma-dialectical, rules for communication, speech act conditions.

1. A PRAGMA-DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO ARGUMENTATIVE DISCOURSE

In order to be able to develop adequate tools for analysing argumentative discourse, a consistent and coherent research programme is needed which encompasses five components. The Amsterdam Research Group for Argumentation (ARGA) proposes a pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation analysis in which these five components are incorporated. In this article we shall explain this approach with regard to the reconstruction of argumentative discourse.

In answering the crucial question as to when it is reasonable to regard an argumentation as acceptable, in the first, philosophical, component of the research programme, we take a *critical-rationalist* stance. In the second, theoretical, component, in moulding this philosophical concept of reasonableness into a particular model, we commit ourselves to a *pragma-dialectical* theory of argumentation. In the third, reconstructive, compo-

ment, we try to get a better grasp of argumentative discourse by opting for a *resolution-oriented* reconstruction. By systematically exploring the various forms of argumentative reality, in the fourth, empirical, component, we aim for a *convincingness-centered* description of argumentative discourse which clarifies to what extent our resolution-oriented reconstruction is empirically supported. In the fifth, practical, component, we try to integrate the various findings of the previous components in a *reflective-minded* practice which improves argumentative discourse in various contexts and settings.¹

Since the idea of having a regulated critical discussion, in our philosophy of argumentation, is considered as the basic principle of reasonableness, the formulation of instrumental discussion rules is required.² The dialectical aspect of these rules consists in there being two parties which attempt to resolve a difference of opinion in a discussion by means of a methodical exchange of moves, whereas the pragmatic aspect is represented by the description of these moves as speech acts.

Putting forward an argument is the most crucial of these moves. However, defining argumentation, just like that, as a speech act, creates in at least three respects a clash with Searle's standard theory.

First, unlike in such speech acts as asserting, requesting, and promising, in argumentation more than one proposition is always involved. Sometimes it looks as if there is only one proposition, but on closer inspection it turns out that in such cases one or more other propositions — which are genuine parts of the argumentation — have been left unstated.³

Second, unlike Searle's prototypes, the utterance of an argumentation, as a speech act, always has a dual illocutionary or — as we prefer to call it — *communicative* force: besides functioning as argumentation, it is also an assertion, a question, a form of advice, a proposal, or whatever.

Third, unlike most of the speech acts discussed by Searle, argumentation cannot stand by itself, but is always in a particular way linked to another speech act. This other speech act expresses a standpoint. If this specific relation is absent, referring to the speech act as argumentation is not justified.⁴

In order to solve the problems caused by these three differences, the standard theory of speech acts needs to be modified in such a way that it also becomes applicable to units larger than single speech acts. This can be achieved by making a distinction between communicative forces at the sentence level on the one hand and communicative forces at some 'higher' textual level on the other.⁵ It is only at the textual level that the utterance of a speech act can have the communicative force of argumentation. The difference between speech acts at the sentence level and at the textual level can be expressed by referring to *elementary* speech acts in the former case and to *complex* speech acts in the latter.⁶

The complex speech act of argumentation is aimed at convincing

another person of the acceptability of a standpoint. But what is meant by that? One possible interpretation would be: attempting to evoke in that person the 'feeling' of being convinced. However, perceiving 'being convinced' as an internal mental state threatens the externalization which is aimed for in our approach. This can be avoided by externalizing *convinced* as being prepared to express acceptance of the standpoint defended by the argumentation. Acceptance can be part of controllable and rule-governed behaviour, which is not the case with being convinced in the internal sense.

Treating the acceptance of a standpoint by another person in this way means that the acceptance can be seen as a perlocutionary or — as we prefer to call it — *interactional* effect of the complex speech act of argumentation. In the standard theory of speech acts, interactional effects constitute a category both diffuse and diverse: all kinds of possible consequences of speech acts fall under the general heading of perlocutions (opening a window, quitting smoking, getting frightened, et cetera).⁷ In our opinion, it is necessary to make a distinction between the different kinds of effects upon the listener (or reader) which can be brought about by speech acts. With regard to the acceptance of argumentation one should concentrate on the interactional acceptance effects which are intended by the speaker (1), which require recognition of the complex speech act as argumentation (2), and which depend on rational considerations by the listener (3). Undoubtedly, many other consequences can also occur subsequently, but these are beyond our scope.

These observations confirm that it is necessary to modify the standard theory of speech acts in several respects. In the standard theory both *recognizability* and *correctness* conditions are formulated, but they are not clearly distinguished as such. Furthermore, it is also necessary to differentiate between the correctness of a speech act from the *speaker's* point of view and its correctness from the *listener's* point of view. Seen from the first perspective, for example, it is sufficient that the speaker who makes a proposal believes that his proposition is in the interest of the listener, but seen from the second perspective, for a 'happy' proposal, it is also required that the listener thinks likewise. Only if this is actually the case, can the proposal be a correct one to him. So the conditions for correctness have to be formulated from both a speaker's perspective and a listener's perspective (and the same applies, by the way, to the recognizability conditions).

2. DISTRIBUTION OF SPEECH ACTS IN CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS

In order to be able to resolve a dispute by means of argumentation, the language users involved must observe certain rules. As far as their con-

tributions are in accordance with such rules for reasonable discussions, the discourse can be referred to as a *critical discussion*.

A critical discussion passes through four discussion stages: the confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding stage.

In the *confrontation* stage the dispute is externalized: it becomes clear that there is a standpoint which gives rise to doubt or contradiction, so that a difference of opinion arises.⁸

In the *opening* stage the participants agree on the manner in which the discussion is to be conducted: they have to determine whether there is sufficient common ground to serve as a starting point. Only if there is such a shared point of departure, does it make sense to undertake an attempt to eliminate differences of opinion by means of argumentation.

In the *argumentation* stage — as is obvious from the term — argumentation is advanced and reacted to. By definition, the purpose of putting forward arguments is to overcome possible doubts with respect to the standpoint. And by reacting to the arguments, it can be made clear that this attempt has not yet succeeded in a fully satisfactory way.

Finally, in the *concluding* stage the result of the discussion is established. It is only if both parties agree on this that the dispute can really be regarded as having been resolved.

In *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions* (1984) we developed a model which explains which rules apply to the distribution of the speech acts in the various stages in the resolution of a dispute. As an ideal model it reproduces only the aspects which are relevant for this. It provides a set of tools for analysing argumentative discourse and makes it possible to determine to what extent practice corresponds to the ideal. In this respect, the model not only links theory to practice, but also combines normative and descriptive aspects.

The rules of the model specify what types of speech acts the participants in a critical discussion have to perform at the four stages in order to contribute to the resolution of the dispute. The rules prescribe at what stage of the discussion the discussants are entitled, or indeed obliged, to perform a particular speech act.⁹

Starting from Searle's taxonomy of speech acts,¹⁰ it can be said that all kinds of *assertives* can be used to express standpoints and argumentation, and to establish the results of the discussion. The use of *directives* is restricted to challenging somebody to defend his standpoint and requesting him to put forward argumentation in support of it. *Commissives* are used to accept (or not accept) a standpoint or argumentation and to agree upon the division of dialectical roles in the discussion and upon the discussion rules. Finally, *language usage declaratives* such as defining, precizing, amplifying, and explicitizing, can be helpful in avoiding a variety of misunderstandings. It should be noted that other types of declaratives and all expressives are not listed in the model, because they don't contribute directly to the resolution of a dispute.¹¹

3. INTEGRATION OF SEARLEAN AND GRICEAN INSIGHTS

The descriptive conditions for performing elementary and complex speech acts in argumentative discourse are closely connected with all kinds of general rules which govern everyday conversation, such as Grice's maxims, and the rules for turn-taking as described by conversation-analysts.¹² Our normative rules for critical discussions can be seen as dialectical regulations of the rules that already apply in ordinary discourse.¹³ In order to relate the normative rules for the performance of speech acts in critical discussions with the general rules which govern ordinary discourse, the speech act conditions must be formulated in a way that reveals the similarities between these conditions and conversational rules, say, Grice's maxims.¹⁴

In order to be able to integrate these two, we first redefine the Gricean Co-operative Principle into the more general and succinctly phrased *Principle of Communication* that language users be *clear, honest, efficient, and to the point*. This Principle of Communication summarizes the general rules which speakers and writers observe and which listeners and readers expect them to observe, when communicating.¹⁵

Starting from the Principle of Communication we describe, as an alternative to the Gricean maxims of Manner, Quality, Quantity, and Relation, the general rules which govern communication as follows:

- (1) Perform no *incomprehensible* speech acts,
- (2) Perform no *insincere* speech acts,
- (3) Perform no *unnecessary* speech acts,
- (4) Perform no *pointless* speech acts,
- (5) Perform no new speech acts that are *not an appropriate sequel or reaction* to preceding speech acts.

The *first* rule implements the communication requirement 'Be clear'. It corresponds to the recognizability conditions for the performance of speech acts: the propositional content condition and the essential condition.

In order to be clear, the speaker (or writer) must formulate the speech act that he wishes to perform in such a way that the listener (or reader) is able to recognize its communicative force and to establish what propositions are expressed in it. This does not mean that he must be perfectly explicit, but it does mean that he is not allowed to make it impossible, or almost impossible, for the recipient to arrive at a correct interpretation.

The *second* rule implements the communication requirement 'Be honest'. It corresponds to a part of the conditions for correctness in the performance of the speech act: the responsibility conditions. It might be useful to note here that we renamed Searle's 'sincerity conditions',

responsibility conditions, in order to achieve the externalization we aim for, and to clarify what kind of commitments a speaker undertakes by performing a certain speech act, irrespective of the mental state he is in.

The implication of the honesty requirement is that the speaker may be held responsible for having undertaken the commitments which are associated with the speech act concerned. If he performs a directive ('Close the window'), he may be held responsible for wanting the listener to perform the action referred to in the directive, if he performs an assertive ('It is raining'), for believing that the proposition expressed is true, and so on.

The *third* and the *fourth* rules implement the communication requirement 'Be efficient'. They correspond to another part of the conditions for correctness in the performance of the speech act: the preparatory conditions. The implication of the efficiency requirement is that a correct performance of the speech act must not be either unnecessary or pointless.

For example, the performance of the complex speech act of argumentation is unnecessary if the speaker assumes that the listener is already convinced of the standpoint being defended (the first preparatory condition). And the performance is pointless if he assumes in advance that his argumentation will under no circumstances lead the listener to an acceptance of his standpoint (the second and third preparatory conditions).

The *fifth* rule implements the communication requirement 'Keep to the point'. It does not correspond to any speech act condition: nor does it refer to the performance of an individual speech act, whether elementary or complex, but is concerned with the relation between different speech acts. The question here is whether, in the verbal and non-verbal contexts, the performance of a particular speech act is a relevant addition to the speech acts already performed.

Thus, the relevance requirement 'Keep to the point' relates to the sequence of speech acts and the function of a speech act in a particular speech event. As regards sequences of speech acts, it is possible that the communicative roles of speaker and listener do not change, so that the language user who performs one speech act will also perform the next. But it is also possible that these roles *do* change, so that the language user who is the speaker for one speech act is the listener for the next. If the communicative roles remain the same, the next speech act is a sequel to its predecessor; if they change, it is a reaction to it.

To fulfil the requirement 'Keep to the point' a sequel of speech acts or a reaction to a speech act must be appropriate. Precisely what comprises an appropriate sequel or an appropriate reaction is difficult to define in general terms. However, it is possible to explain what this amounts to. Every speech act seeks to achieve the communicative effect that the listener understands it, and the interactional effect that he accepts it. So the performance of a speech act expressing the fact that another speech

act has been understood or accepted will be a relevant reaction. The same applies, of course, to the expression of non-understanding or non-acceptance. Giving reasons as to why something is or is not accepted is also relevant. Of course, an appropriate reaction is not necessarily a fitting reaction, let alone the reaction that most closely meets the speaker's wishes or expectations.

It is more difficult to say what comprises an appropriate sequel to a speech act of one's own. Here we must draw on information about the verbal and non-verbal contexts of the speech act. In some contexts the pattern of speech acts is fairly rigid, making it reasonably obvious what options are open. As has been shown by conversation analysts, giving reasons for a standpoint is considered to be a perfectly normal 'repair' of an offence, whether real or anticipated, to the 'preference for agreement' in ordinary discourse. In the case of an argumentative discourse a pragmatic dialectical ideal model can be a useful starting point for determining what is and what is not an appropriate sequel.

Our rules of communication correspond to a large extent to Grice's maxims, but the maxims are now formulated as rules for the performance of speech acts. Our first rule corresponds roughly to Searle's propositional content condition and the essential condition. Our second rule corresponds to his sincerity condition, our third and fourth rules correspond to his preparatory condition, whereas our fifth rule does not have a counterpart in his conditions.

The integration of Gricean maxims with Searlean speech act conditions has some important advantages. Compared to the maxims, these rules are more specific as a consequence of their connection with the Searlean conditions, and they are more general because they are no longer restricted to assertions, as they are with Grice. Furthermore, it has now been shown that the conditions for different speech acts in fact are specifications of more general rules of communication.

Our synthesis of Searlean and Gricean insights also reveals the heterogeneous character of the original speech act conditions. Searle does not differentiate between their importance, but as we have said before, in our revised version of his theory we thought it necessary to make a distinction between the propositional content and essential conditions on the one hand, and the sincerity and preparatory conditions on the other. The need for this can be demonstrated by looking at the consequences of a violation of the various conditions. In the case of violation of the first two, no recognizable speech act has been performed, whereas in the case of violation of the second two, though the performance of the speech act is not quite successful, or 'happy' in the full sense, a recognizable speech act *is* performed.

This crucial difference can be accounted for by realizing that there is a correspondence between the propositional content condition and the

essential condition on the one hand, and Grice's maxim of Manner ('Be perspicuous') and our first rule of communication ('Perform no incomprehensible speech acts') on the other. Violating these two conditions damages the recognizability of a speech act, whereas violating one of the two others affects its correctness because of insincerity, inefficiency, or irrelevance. In order to express this difference terminologically, we refer to the first two as *conditions for recognizability*, and to the second two as *conditions for correctness*.¹⁶

4. NORMATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF CONVERSATIONAL ARGUMENT

By integrating Searlean and Gricean insights into our rules for communication, we think an important step has been made towards a comprehensive theory of everyday communication and interaction.¹⁷ These rules can be of use in the analysis of argumentative discourse which requires a normative reconstruction of this discourse. What do we mean by such a normative reconstruction of conversational argument?

In a normative reconstruction a calculated merger of the normative and the descriptive is aimed for which offers us a chance of sensibly joining together the philosophical 'ideal' with the practical 'real'. The reconstruction should reflect both the peculiarities of the reality from which it started and those of the ideal model which served as a framework for analysis.

Linguistic usage can, as we all know, serve more than one goal at the same time. The argumentative function will not always be the main one of these. Therefore, it is first necessary to establish to what extent the 'speech event' as it unfolds in practice, is — wholly or partly — argumentative. Carrying out such an analysis makes sense only with respect to (parts of) discourse which can indeed be considered argumentative. Moreover, some (parts of) discourses will be closer to the ideal than others. Depending on the discourse at stake, the reconstruction which is required in the analysis can be more or less radical.

A normative reconstruction has great advantages in terms of surveyability and discernment, especially in more complex discourse. If the reconstruction takes place within the theoretical framework of an ideal model in which all relevant aspects of a critical discussion are incorporated, then it will serve to make the things we are looking for in the analysis more clearly visible. The ideal model must explain which operations are required, what they entail, and when and why they must be carried out.¹⁸

Our pragma-dialectical ideal model serves as a heuristic tool for a systematic resolution-oriented reconstruction of the various relevant speech acts and stages in an argumentative discourse.¹⁹ A resolution-oriented reconstruction is asked for because, first and foremost, we would

like to know which elements in the discourse play a part in the process of resolving the dispute concerned. This means that in our analysis we must try to detect the resolution-relevant speech acts and stages in the discourse and reconstruct their exact role in a critical discussion.²⁰

A dialectical analysis of an argumentative discourse provides us with an analytical survey of:

- (1) the points at issue,
- (2) the positions that the parties concerned adopt with respect to these points,
- (3) the explicit and implicit arguments that the parties adduce for their standpoints,
- (4) the structure of the argumentation which has been put forward.

Identifying the points at issue entails determining the propositions with respect to which standpoints are adopted and called into question. Identifying the positions of the parties in the discussion amounts to determining who plays the part of the protagonist and who takes the role of the antagonist. Identifying the arguments often requires recognizing implicit arguments. This can even be more problematical if indirect argumentation is involved. Establishing the structure of the argumentation entails determining how the arguments put forward relate to one another in their support of the standpoint.²¹

5. DIALECTICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The operations which are necessary for a normative reconstruction require the carrying out of four dialectical transformations: deletion, addition, permutation, and substitution.²²

The dialectical transformation of *deletion* entails a selection of elements from the original discourse that are immediately relevant to the process of resolving the dispute: elements that are irrelevant for this purpose, such as elaborations, clarifications, anecdotes, and side-lines, are omitted. Any repetitions that occur in the text, even if slightly differently worded, are also omitted.

The dialectical transformation of *addition* entails a process of completion which consists of the supplementation of those elements immediately relevant to the resolution of the dispute but left unexpressed in the original discourse: unexpressed premisses, unexpressed conclusions and other unexpressed elements in the various stages of discussion. Only elements that are instrumental for achieving the resolution of the dispute are made explicit.

The dialectical transformation of *permutation* entails the ordering or rearranging of elements in the original text in such a way that the dialectical process of resolving the dispute is made as clear as possible: the various stages in the resolution process must be distinguished, and at the same time the overlap between different stages and the anticipation of steps to come, or a reference back to steps already dealt with, must be readjusted. Those parts of the confrontation stage, for example, which are postponed to the argumentation or even the concluding stage must be put in their dialectically 'ideal' place.

The dialectical transformation of *substitution* entails an attempt to produce a clear and explicit presentation of elements fulfilling a dialectical function in the text. It also entails a uniform notation for elements which fulfil the same function. For example, some elements may function as arguments, although they are formulated as rhetorical questions. Other elements fulfil an identical, say argumentative, function, but are phrased differently. The formulations of ordinary language should be replaced by theoretically-defined standard-phrases.

6. THE INTERPRETATION OF INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS

Speech act theory can be of great help in deciding when it is justified to carry out the four dialectical transformations.²³ We will demonstrate this for the dialectical transformation of substitution. In the analysis we shall concentrate on the normative reconstruction of indirect speech acts in argumentative discourse.

In speech act theory it is a recognized fact that in ordinary discourse the communicative force of a speech act is, as a rule, not expressed explicitly. This does not normally present much of a problem.

Indirectness is a special case of implicitness. In practice, listeners are almost always perfectly well able to establish, on the basis of what the speaker has advanced in a particular context, which indirect speech act has been performed (if this is not the case, there is no point in performing it).

However, unlike language users who communicate person to person, the analyst of an argumentative discourse does not always have sufficient insight into all the contextual factors that may play a part in the interpretation of indirect language use. This may make it difficult for him to say exactly how an indirect speech act can be inferred from the implicit speech act actually performed. In accounting for a certain interpretation, the general rules of communication just discussed may be useful.

With indirect speech acts, the literal interpretation of the implicit speech act performed involves some violation of a rule of communication. This violation may be rectified by interpreting the utterance concerned as

an indirect speech act. With the help of the rules of communication, it can also be shown what kind of connection there is between the indirect speech act and the literal utterance. Thus, the rules make it possible both to establish that the literal interpretation of the utterance is not the only or final interpretation, and to infer the correct interpretation from the literal one.

In interpreting indirect language use, the premiss is that the speaker wishes to continue to observe the Principle of Communication and hence wishes in principle to adhere to all the rules of communication, so that any violation of these rules must be regarded only as an *apparent* violation which is undone as soon as the correct interpretation is placed on the utterance.

In every utterance that is interpreted as an indirect speech act it must be possible to indicate which rule of communication would be broken if the utterance were to be interpreted solely in a literal way. It must also be possible to make it clear that the violation concerned can be remedied by interpreting the utterance as an indirect speech act. The inference of indirect speech acts can always be accounted for by a fixed scheme of analytical steps. The only thing that varies is the exact rule that is violated and the kind of link between the literal utterance and the indirect speech act.

For the interpretation of the utterance 'Can you get a move on?' as an indirect speech act, for example, the inference scheme should include the following steps.

- (1) The speaker has uttered a sentence: 'Can you get a move on?'.
- (2) In view of the literal meaning of the utterance, the speaker has thereby performed *speech act 1*, with *communicative force 1* and *propositional content 1*. Here his utterance is, literally speaking, a request for information about the physical abilities of the listener.
- (3) Given the context, *speech act 1* is a violation of a rule of communication. In a situation in which questioner and listener know each other well and know that there is no reason to doubt the listener's physical abilities, a literal interpretation presupposes a violation of rule 3 ('Perform no unnecessary speech acts'). Because the speaker may be assumed to be *au fait* with the listener's physical condition, in this interpretation, he would ask a question to which he already knows the answer. This means that his speech act is unnecessary if this literal interpretation is all there is.
- (4) Given the context, *speech act 2* observes the rule which seemed to be offended and all the other rules. If the utterance is interpreted as a request to get a move on, this at once undoes the violation of rule 3. Unless some other rule is broken, it may be assumed in this case that the utterance is an indirect request.
- (5) The connection between *speech act 1*, *speech act 2* and the context can be drawn by means of one or more of the rules of communication. In

this case rule 4 ('Perform no pointless speech acts') enables us to link the literal utterance to the indirect speech act. A preparatory condition for the request necessary to ensure that sufficient haste is made to arrive somewhere on time is that the speaker assumes that the listener is in a position to accede to the request. For example, if he knows in advance that this is not the case, he is performing a pointless speech act and violates rule 4. By asking 'Can you get a move on?', he ensures that with his indirect request he will not be violating rule 4.

(6) Therefore: *speech act 2* is a correct interpretation of the utterance. This means in this case that 'Can you get a move on?' may be interpreted as an indirect request to move on.

In indirect speech acts, the context can play a role that is to a greater or lesser extent important. In some cases the inference cannot take place without referring to the context, in others it can. As we have explained elsewhere, in order to interpret an indirect utterance in an 'undefined' context more 'conventionalization' of the utterance involved is required, whereas in a more 'defined' context weaker forms of 'conventionalization' suffice. Apart from that, the difference between 'propositional' and 'communicative' indirectness, which can also occur in combination, should be taken into account. In the more conventionalized request 'Can you get a move on?' communicative indirectness is at stake, whereas in 'The coast is clear', in a well-defined context meaning 'Go ahead', propositional indirectness also plays a part in interpreting the literal statement as an exhortation.²⁴

7. THE SUBSTITUTION OF INDIRECT ARGUMENTS AND STANDPOINTS

In argumentative discourse indirectness can occur in various ways. To give just one example:

'Let's take a cab. You don't want to be late for the show, do you?'

Carrying out a resolution-oriented normative reconstruction, we would indeed say that we have argumentation here. But where is the standpoint and where is the argument? The standpoint is to be found in the first sentence, and the argument in the second. However, the first sentence clearly has the communicative force of a proposal, and the second of a question. How can we justify the carrying out of the dialectical transformation of substitution which transforms the first utterance into a standpoint and the second utterance into an argument? Performing a proposal presupposes that the speaker himself believes it to be a *good* proposal. According to the preparatory conditions for the performance of a proposal, the speaker also wants it to be accepted by the listener, otherwise

his proposal would be pointless, and this would constitute a violation of rule 4.

This means that the Communication Principle underlying the communication rules as specified by the speech act conditions has to be complemented by an Interaction Principle ('Perform no speech acts which are not correct and which are not acceptable to the listener') which can account for the fact that in performing a speech act, the speaker is not only supposed to believe that it is correct from his own point of view, but also that it is acceptable to the listener to whom the speech act is addressed. Otherwise, what it means to give a reason in support of a proposal would remain unexplained, as happens in the example.²⁵

One way to get the proposal accepted by the listener would be to show that it is in his best interest. By asking rhetorically whether the listener wants to be late for the show, the speaker indirectly provides a possibly conclusive reason for the listener: he surely knows very well that the listener does *not* want to be late (at the same time it is understood that not taking a cab would cause this unwanted effect).²⁶ By adding the rhetorical question to his proposal, the speaker tries to resolve a potential dispute with the listener in advance.

This explains how the speaker's proposal can be transformed into the standpoint that it is wise to take a cab, and his rhetorical question into the argumentation that otherwise they will be late for the show (which is undesirable). Although more could be said about this reconstruction, it suffices to show the merits of a speech act perspective in helping to get the transformation of substitution carried out properly.

It should be noted, however, that there is an important difference between the reconstruction of the standpoint on the one hand and the reconstruction of the argumentation on the other. In the first case, the utterance of the speech act does not have two communicative forces: it is, firstly and lastly, a proposal. In the second case, the utterance of the speech act *does* have two forces: its primary force is assertive ('If we don't take a cab, we will be late for the show — and you don't want to be late'), and its secondary force is directive (asking a question). Only in the second case can reference be made to an indirect speech act in the strict sense.²⁷

There is also a difference in the degree of conventionalization between the two cases. A rhetorical question is highly conventionalized, whereas the 'indirectness' of the proposal is not: it is only given a well-defined context that it is possible to detect the 'indirectness' and find the correct interpretation accordingly.

8. CONCLUSION

An important advantage of a speech act approach in reconstructing

argumentative discourse is that it does justice to the fact that standpoints and arguments do not always consist of assertive statements. Arguments can be presented by means of all kinds of speech acts and they can pertain to all kinds of speech acts that function as standpoints.²⁸

This is really a big step forward compared to the view which restricts argumentation to assertions which can be considered true or false.²⁹ A speech act perspective not only shows that this is inadequate, but it can also systematically account for the diversity in the kinds of speech acts that can function as standpoints and arguments. This is shown in the normative reconstruction of argumentative discourse. In this way, a pragma-dialectical analysis provides a clearer insight into what is going on in the argumentative discourse as seen from a resolution-oriented perspective.

NOTES

¹ Cf. van Eemeren (1987a) and Grootendorst (1987).

² Cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1988).

³ The unstated parts of an argumentation can be referred to as 'unexpressed premisses'. Cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 119–149).

⁴ Of course, there can be other candidates: explanations, amplifications, elucidations, but not argumentation.

⁵ Cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst, where related views are also discussed (1984: 33–39).

⁶ For practical purposes we do not go into the exact relationship between sentences and propositions now. We just equate speech acts consisting of the expression of one proposition with one-sentence speech acts.

⁷ Cf. Searle's description of perlocutionary acts (1970: 25).

⁸ In practice, the difference of opinion can be expressed explicitly, but may also remain implicit, in which case the discussion or discursive text is based on the anticipation of a possible difference of opinion.

⁹ The rules are introduced and discussed in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 151–175). A simplified version, specially adapted to the analysis of fallacies is presented in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1987) and in *Argumentation, Communication and Fallacies* (to be published).

¹⁰ Cf. Searle (1979: 1–29).

¹¹ The distribution of the various types of speech acts in the stages of a critical discussion is discussed in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 95–118). Here we also introduced the notion of language usage declaratives (1984: 109–110).

¹² The conversational maxims are introduced in Grice (1975), the rules for turn-taking are discussed in Levinson (1983) and Edmondson (1981).

¹³ Of course this is a simplification, but it draws attention to the fact that proposing normative rules for critical discussions has more ties with reality than some people think. To give an example, one could refer to the similarities between the starting point in the ideal model that the participants in a critical discussion are striving for the resolution of a dispute on the one hand, and the commonly accepted conversational fact that in ordinary conversation there is a preference for agreement among the interlocutors.

¹⁴ Cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst, *Argumentation, Communication and Fallacies* (to be published).

¹⁵ In practice, of course, it is not at all uncommon for one of the rules of communication to be broken, but this does not necessarily mean that the Principle of Communication has been abandoned altogether. If this is the case, however, then the person doing so is *reneging* on a basic convention to which all the members of the community to which he belongs subscribe, and he thereby interferes with the communication. Assuming that it is not clear that he is not in full control of his actions (he may be drunk for example), or that he cannot be held responsible for them, he will have to account for this action or be faced with sanctions which may vary from an irritated reaction to a complete breaking off of the contact.

¹⁶ Cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 41).

¹⁷ All kinds of concepts from conversation and discourse analysis have to be incorporated in the theoretical framework. Up to now, many conversation-analysts have shown some reluctance to make use of speech act theory, or for that matter any other theoretical framework. As a consequence, conversation analysis lacks a firm theoretical foundation. This lends an *ad hoc* character to most of its results and makes them less interesting. It also makes it more difficult to carry out the required integration. The notion of 'adjacency pair', for instance, could gain from incorporating theoretical insights from speech act theory. Not only should speech act theory become more conversation-oriented, but conversation analysis should also become more speech act-oriented.

¹⁸ We call these operations dialectical transformations. Cf. van Eemeren (1986), (1987b) and van Eemeren and Grootendorst, *Argumentation, Communication and Fallacies* (to be published). An approach which is in several respects akin to ours is developed in the many interesting articles of Jackson and Jacobs (e.g., 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983).

¹⁹ Unlike in the resolution-centered reconstruction which takes place in the dialectical analysis, in the audience-centered reconstruction of a rhetorical analysis, the transformations are motivated by an epistemo-rhetorical ideal. However, a consistent apparatus for rhetorical analysis, providing us with all the necessary tools for transformation, is, in spite of the long-standing tradition of this form of analysis, not yet available. Moreover, neither the need for this nor the impact on the normative aspect of the analysis is generally recognized.

²⁰ A normative reconstruction in the dialectical sense represents a specific angle of approach which can be illuminating and which, seen from the dialectical perspective, is also the most appropriate. Naturally, other angles of approach are also possible. A Freudian psychological analysis would undoubtedly be able to produce yet other interesting results. Things that appear as relevant from one angle remain out of sight when regarded from another. However, one angle of approach need not necessarily preclude another.

²¹ All elements of an analytical survey are of direct relevance to the evaluation of the argumentative discourse. If it is unclear what standpoint is being defended, there is no way of telling whether the argumentation that has been advanced is conclusive. And if more than one standpoint is being defended, it must be perfectly clear which language users are acting as the protagonist of which standpoint and exactly who is the source of the various argumentations that have been advanced in the defense of each standpoint. Otherwise, for example, it will be impossible to tell whether the various argumentations for the same standpoint actually constitute a coherent whole. Adequate evaluation of the argumentative discourse is also made more difficult where, as a result of implicitness or indirectness, arguments or unexpressed premisses are overlooked.

²² Cf. van Eemeren (1986 and 1987b), and van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 'The analysis and evaluation of discursive texts' (to be published).

²³ Elsewhere we have demonstrated this for the dialectical transformation of addition with regard to such implicit elements as unexpressed premisses. Cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1982, 1983, 1984) and *Argumentation, Communication and Fallacies* (to be published).

²⁴ Cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst, *Argumentation, Communication and Fallacies* (to be published).

²⁵ As a rule, every speech act presupposes its own acceptability. The Interaction Principle enables us to explain why speakers, even when the listener doesn't ask for it, take the effort to establish the acceptability of their speech acts by putting forward direct or indirect arguments. The Interaction Principle reflects in its formulation Sperber and Wilson's Principle of Relevance: 'Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance' (1986: 158). There are important differences, however. Firstly, the Interaction Principle is more general than the Principle of Relevance — even if relevance is taken in its broadest sense — and, secondly, it is formulated in terms of speech act theory, whereas Sperber and Wilson make it their business to reject speech act theory completely (1986: 243—254).

²⁶ The sentence in parentheses refers to the unexpressed premiss in the argumentation.

²⁷ Cf. Searle (1979: 30—57).

²⁸ Cf. also Jackson (1985) and van Eemeren (1986).

²⁹ As a matter of fact, one of Austin's reasons for developing a theory of speech acts refers to the simplistic dichotomy between truth-functional statements and non-truth-functional statements made by logical positivists. According to Austin, performative utterances are both non-truth-functional and non-metaphysical.

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