A Method for the Analysis of Argumentation in Interaction

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0. Introduction

This study represents an attempt to apply the ever growing knowledge of the nature of argumentation to real data. Specifically, it sets out to develop the many insights contained in the works of van Eemeren and Grootendorst into a method for analysing argumentation as it actually occurs in talk-in-interaction.

The material used for this study has been gleaned from the AKSAM corpus, collected by a team from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Stockholm University. This corpus consists of transcribed videorecorded four-party interactions held in Sweden and in Spain. The participants are university students of economy and business administration from both countries in their early 20’s; the Swedish participants have been selected on the basis of being formal L2 learners of Spanish. The recordings, 40 all in all with a total length of approximately 25 hours, are distributed between intracultural (Swedish and Spanish respectively) and intercultural interactions (in Spanish with Swedish and Spanish participants), and between two different activity types: simulated
negotiations and more spontaneous discussions (on any topic). No other than the four students taking part was present at the recordings, so as to prevent the participants from being overly influenced in their interactions. The recordings used for this study are all from the “spontaneous” group; the participants start discussing a more or less controversial topic given to them by the researcher(s), but are free to abandon that topic for another at any given point.¹

Although the corpus used for the analyses in this study is made up of multi-party conversations, it is my conviction that the method I propose is not dependent on there being specifically four participants. Dyads and triads could be equally well explored using the same tools. I further believe that monologic types of discourse are analysable within this framework as well; one support for that belief is that long stretches of talk by one single participant present no additional problem to the analyst, as can be appreciated from samples below.

The method presented in this paper builds on the model elaborated in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1983), albeit with some significant differences. These will be pointed out whenever it seems relevant. One major difference worth mentioning already at this early stage is that whereas van Eemeren & Grootendorst wrote their treaty from a speech act perspective, isolating and relating acts of argumentation, my focus has been redirected more towards the interaction in multi-party conversations, with a view to describe, for instance, the negotiation of opinions, meaning and identities. Linell (1996:135-144) argues that speech act theory fails to take into account the dialogistic properties of authentic discourse. One of these is that meaning (or ”meaningful actions”, Linell 1996:138) is created jointly, not only by the speaker (see page 1, footnote, for an example). Van

¹ During 1999, ten additional recordings were made with Swedish and Chilean participants, but these do not enter into this study.
Eemeren & Grootendorst incorporate aspects of interaction in their theory\(^2\), but the cooperativity of discourse is not one of them. Naturally affected by this, their theory nonetheless serves as an important antecedent.

In the following I will discuss four central features of the study of argumentation in interaction (sections 1-4). In section 1, I take an integrative approach towards argumentation, claiming that it is a central and constant feature of interaction. Then I turn to the cooperative aspect of argumentation, discussing the interactive “building” of argumentation patterns. In section 3 I focus on the concept of implicatures, and discuss their role in argumentation in multi-party conversations. In section 4, I propose a limited set of categories for the analysis of argumentation in interaction which I subsequently, in section 5, apply to a sample of real data.

1. Argumentation is a constant feature of interaction

In an article published a few years after the cited treaty, van Eemeren explains that the function of argumentation in interaction is that of a repair strategy:

In the speech event some communicative acts are linked, according to their interactional point, with certain communicative acts of the addressee, like advancing a point of view and accepting or rejecting it. In terms of structural dialogical organization, these communicative acts are then said to constitute an adjacency pair: standpoint/acceptance or standpoint/rejection, the former second pair part being a preferred response and the latter a dispreferred. If a dispreferred second pair part has come up or may be anticipated, a repair is

\(^2\) The "socialization" of arguments is one of the four main features of the study of argumentation in the theory of van Eemeren & Grootendorst (van Eemeren et al 1996:277).
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called for, which in the case of the rejection of a standpoint is most adequately supplied by argumentation to make the standpoint acceptable.

(van Eemeren 1987: 206)

It is appealing to treat argumentation in terms of adjacency pairs; with them, the analysis could be made by isolating pairs and relating them to the discussion as a whole. Undoubtedly, some parts of the discussion can be addressed using an adjacency pair perspective. However, it is difficult to accept the description of argumentation as a repair strategy, activated only when there is a need to build over breaches in the normal flow of conversation, i.e. when a standpoint has been rejected or can be anticipated to be so. This stand, in order to be realistic, would imply a very abstract view of repair as being a base unit around which discourses are created. The term ‘repair’, I argue, should be reserved for specific moves in conversational analysis, as illustrated by the participant Ulla in the sample below. Granted, any interactionally constructed discourse can be viewed as consisting at a deeper level of a long series of repairs, but this is bound to cause confusion as regards the levels of analysis.

(1) Setting: Monocultural discussion (Swedish).
Participants: Hildur, Jesper, Ulla, Annika.
Topic: The poor organization of a certain course given within the participants’ study programme.

3 Around the same time, Jacobs & Jackson (1982) were elaborating a similar model for the analysis of argumentation; one of the similarities stems from the speech act perspective adopted by both groups. Jacobs & Jackson, as a result, claim that human interaction as a rule system prefers agreement and that argumentation is an "expansion" (1982:223) of adjacency pairs destined to solve or overcome disagreement. Also Haverkate (1994:74) claims that the preferred second part of the adjacency pair ‘assertion - response to the assertion’ is the expression of agreement. He explains this from a politeness point-of-view: expressing disagreement constitutes a threat to the interlocutor’s positive face, and is therefore a dispreferred response.

4 Van Eemeren’s statement taken at face value would require a different response: disagreement is not always dispreferred - examples to the contrary can be found in descriptions of interactions in Western cultures as well as in non-Western ones (see Fant & Grindsted 1985 and Reisman 1974) for two such examples) -, and therefore it is misleading to define disagreement as a dispreferred response and
I think it better to describe argumentation in interaction not as a sub-activity, activated by the necessities of the moment, but as an essential part of interaction which is never “deactivated”\(^5\). It is constantly present, and even though van Eemeren also appears to refer to underlying anticipatory strategies, a rejection is far from always required for argumentation sequences to take place. Two examples:

i) In spontaneous conversation, even in very simple and short utterances, speakers correct themselves, explain their statements, argue for them, without rejection always being a factor. The speakers, as Ena in sample 2, are rather trying to state (and strengthen) their case, and explain him-/herself in as close an accordance with the idea (s)he wishes to express as possible.

(2) Setting: Intracultural discussion (Spanish).

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\(^5\) This idea is not necessarily new; already Gorgias, in Encomium of Helen, hinted at the possibility that rhetoric is a factor in every human encounter, i.e. that there is persuasive intent involved whenever humans interact (Wardy 1996:2). This claim is even stronger than ours, and was formulated within a different field of study; rhetoric in Gorgias’ terms, as well as in Aristotle’s, was the means of persuasion,
Participants: Ena, Betina, Marina, Blanca.

Topic: Methadone treatment, administered by a chemist’s, as a solution to the drug problem.

1. Ena: entonces ahora lo que están haciendo es que las diferentes farmacias e
   then now what they’re doing is that the different drugstores er
   adquieren la responsabilidad de-
   get the responsibility to-

2. no de desintoxicar drogadictos
   not to detoxicate drug addicts

3. pero sí de una serie de drogadictos
   but of a series of drug addicts

4. que unos determinados médicos les mandan,
   that some specific doctors send them,

[AKSAM #18; frames 8-10]

This, also, is argumentation, and similar sequences take place between speakers, where participant B helps participant A clarify a statement, for instance. Granted, when there is a conflict of opinion, the ultimate aim, for the most part, is to convince the interlocutor(s), but this is not the only interactive setting in which argumentation occurs (cf. Rivano Fischer 1999), nor is persuasion always the ultimate aim of argumentation; reaching a shared opinion, for instance, does not necessarily involve persuasion, and this is a major objective in the Swedish parts of our corpus\(^6\) (and elsewhere, as demonstrated by Bravo 1996, Fant 1989, Fant & Grindsted 1995, and by myself in the studies cited). And it certainly does not make argumentation a repair strategy. That is, never in any pragmatic sense.

\(^6\) Cf. my previous studies on cultural differences in argumentation (Gille in press, Gille forthc.) for a more detailed look at how the conversational objectives of Swedes and Spaniards determine their argumentation patterns.

whereas here argumentation is the negotiation of opinions (cf. also the discussion below on the aims of argumentation).
ii) A quite frequent “start“ of argumentation consists of speaker A asking speaker B of his/her opinion on a certain topic, or, as in sample 3, speaker A (Pia) requesting information from speaker B (Mario).

(3) Setting: Intercultural discussion.
Participants: Aida, Mario (Spaniards), Pia, Emil (Swedes).
Topic: The (non-) equality of the sexes in Spain as compared to in Sweden.

1. Pia: pero explica un poquito sobre la situación de la mujer en españa, entonces
   *but explain a bit about the situation for women in spain, then*

2. porque, (.5) bueno sabemos un poquito no?
   *because, (.5) well we know a little right?*

3. Emil: como no sabemos
   *as we don’t know*

4. Pia: pero no mucho
   *but not a lot*

5. Emil: no?
   *right?*

6. Mario: hombre supongo que s e:
   *man, I guess that I e:*

7. supongo que e: la situación de la mujer
   *I guess that e: the situation for women*

8. sobre todo en el campo laboral es muy distinta (.3)
   *especially in the workplace is very different (.3)*

9. hay una gran diferencia entre hombres y mujeres (.8)
   *there’s a big difference between men and women (.8)*

10. no sé (.3) en los cargos directivos
    *I don’t know (.3) in directorial positions*

11. y hay muchas secretarias administrativas
    *and there are a lot of female secretaries in administration*

12. o sea la mujer si que ha entrado (.3) a trabajar, (.3)
    *in other words women HAVE started (.3) working, (.3)*
After Pia has requested information on the women’s situation in Spanish society, Mario proceeds to supply her with that information; on lines 6-8 he expresses his opinion (‘the situation for the Spanish woman is very different to the one their Swedish counterparts live in, especially in the workplace’), on line 9 he presents an argument for it, on line 10 he exemplifies the argument (thereby specifying it), on line 11 he presents another argument for the initial opinion, and on lines 12-15 he, with Pia’s help, modifies the initial opinion. Even before anyone has entered into the discussion, Mario builds an argumentation pattern designed to support, specify, and modify his initial statement expressed on lines 6-8.

In conclusion, argumentation is best viewed as not being a repair structure. Rather, we as interactants may launch into argumentation at any given point of the interaction, and statements uttered without argumentative intent can later on be the subject of heavy debate. This is perhaps clearer in multi-party conversations than in any other setting.
2. Argumentation in interaction is constructed interactively turn by turn

Argumentation in interaction is predominantly cooperative in the sense that interactants build on - connect to - earlier statements, normally the latest one. The reason for this is that utterances are expected to be relevant in the immediate context. Grice termed this expectation the ‘principle of relevance’ (Grice 1975), and the easiest, less costly way of building a coherent, relevant discourse is to connect every new utterance to the immediately preceding one.

Linell & Gustafsson (1987) elaborate a taxonomy for classifying response properties of turns which includes the two features \([\pm \text{ local}]\) and \([\pm \text{ focal}]\). A local connection is one that is made to the most recent utterance, either to the same speaker’s last utterance, or within the interaction, or within a higher-order language game. Connecting focally means connecting to a central aspect of the utterance on which the new utterance builds. In keeping with what was said above, the natural connection would have the features \([+ \text{ local}, +\text{focal}]\).

Obviously, the speaker could, and on occasion does, turn to earlier statements which are not present in the immediate context, but this, I argue, constitutes a strategy, an active and “marked“ strategy. The “unmarked“ argumentation pattern is that in which an argument from speaker A is directed towards the immediately preceding opinion uttered by speaker B, or speaker A (cf. Gille, in press, for some preliminary statistics on local vs. non-local responses). This is the case to the extent

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7 Even though my analysis uses other units (the idea unit or turn unit, cf. Linell 1996, Ford & Thompson 1996, Gille forthc.), it is still useful to speak of turns or turns-at-talk in reference to the interaction between participants.

8 For an account on Initiative-Response Analysis, see Linell et al. (1988).
that any participant deviating from this strategy may be held accountable (Buttny 1993) for doing so. We find a special case of this in sample 4, where Pia connects non-locally. She seems aware of the expectation of relevance, however, or in any case she tries to create a local connection before introducing the new topic. Or, from another point of view, she accounts for the deviation from the current topic.

(4) Setting: Monocultural discussion (Swedish)
Participants: Jonna, Pia, Marja, Magda
Topic: — The reaction to the Swedish singer Ulf Lundell (*han (he)* on line 1) raising the Swedish flag during a concert as being an overly nationalistic action (lines 1-7);
— The different views the public holds towards the Swedish folk groups Garmarna (‘artistic’) and Nordman (‘commercial’), giving Garmarna a license to be traditional, in some sense (lines 8-14).

1. Magda: *ja han vill ju absolut inte framstå som nån nationalist eller nåt sånt,*
   *yeh he doesn’t at all want to be seen as a nationalist or something like that*
2. om man säger så
   *if you put it that way*
3. Jonna: *jag vet ju inte om man skrev de så*
   *i don’t know if they wrote it like that*
4. men de va ändå ö
   *but that was in any case er*
5. Magda: *jo men de är ju så,*
   *yeah but that’s the way it is, you know*
6. Jonna: *fanns ju antydningar om de ba för att (.2)*
   *there were allusions to it simply because (.2)*
7. Marja: *ja*
   *yes*
8. Pia: *jag tänkte som på de här med nationalmusik å: å: eller*
   *i was thinking about this thing with national music and: and: or*
Ulf Lundell raising the Swedish flag is the topic in the first part of the fragment; the participants argue against the idea that the singer had racist intentions in doing so. Then, on line 8, Pia initiates a new topic. Dealing as it does with music and nationalism, it is not completely out of place. Still, she needs to show how this new topic relates to the preceding discussion, and this is done by referring first to the immediately preceding discussion on Ulf Lundell and “national music“ (line 8), then by referring to an earlier discussion on traditional Swedish music and the popular music group Nordman (line 9). It is also significant that the utterance starts with *jag tänkte som på de här med* (I was thinking like about this thing with) (line 8), since this creates an appearance of relevance in the immediate context. Only after this initial strategy does she present the new topic (line 11). The whispered *nu vet ja inte* (now I don’t know), the smacking of the lips and the short pause also serve to ease the discussion into the new topic by moving the attention away from Jonna’s last statement.

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9 Part of that discussion is featured in sample 5.

10 Cf. Eriksson (1997:86-97) for an account on disjunctive markers which serve to mark the distance between the upcoming contribution and the preceding one. His analysis of sample 4 would probably differ
In conclusion, I have proposed that argumentation in interaction is a joint effort; it is constructed locally and cooperatively. The expectation of relevance in the immediate context places constraints on the kinds of arguments that are produced at any particular moment. This could be appreciated in sample 4, where a case of deviation from that particular expectation had to be accounted for.

3. Argumentation is to a large extent built on recoverable implicatures.

It is generally known that interactants rely heavily on implicatures and inferences. As for argumentation, this is very much the case. This is one of the more difficult aspects of interaction analysis, but it is by no means an impossible task. The immediate context, i.e. the interaction itself, gives us clues as to what is being implied and inferred.

Let’s turn to a sample from a Swedish discussion on nationalism and racism. The four participants have been in the same class in college for a couple of years, so they know each other rather well. It seems that the smaller the social distance, the higher the degree of implicatures. This, of course, is explained by the fact that when the social distance is greater, the interlocutors know each other less, and cannot rely on shared background knowledge to the same extent as when the social distance is smaller. Here, then, is a case of reduced social distance, and, subsequently, of a high degree of implicatures. (For the sake of clarity, a number of the feedback signals, all of which are very frequent in this conversation, have been removed.)

from mine.
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(5) Setting: Monocultural discussion (Swedish).
Participants: Pia, Jonna, Marja, Magda.
Topic: The allegedly exaggerated fear of nationalism among the Swedish people, which has led to a popular music duo (“Nordman”, referred to as då stackarna (those poor ones) on line 1) being called racist when what they really are, according to the participants, is nationalistic. (See also the comment to sample 4, a later part of the same conversation. There, Pia refers to this part of the discussion as a way of creating coherence while changing the topic.)

1. Marja: men då stackarna må-
   but those poor ones too-
2. såg ni deras intervjupå teve-
   did you see their interview on TV-
3. Pia: nej?
   no?
4. Jonna: nej
   no
5. Marja: dom har också blitt anklagade för rasism ju. (.3)
   they’ve also been accused of being racist, y’know. (.3)
6. Magda: ja ja läste en intervjuhar ja gjort
   yeah i read an interview i did
7. Jonna: för: bara för att dom: (.2)
   because simply because they: (.2)
8. Marja: sjunger folkmusik. (.2) ungefär. (.5)
   sing traditional swedish music. (.2) basically. (.5)
9. Jonna: ja dom e för patriotiska då eller?
   yeah they’re too patriotic then, aren’t they?
10. Marja: ja de har ju blitt så de e ju (     )
    yeah that’s what it’s become it’s (     )
11. svenska flaggan k vågar man ju knappt Vlsa längre ju. (.2)
    you don’t even dare to SHOW the swedish flag, y’know. (.2)

[AKSAM #3; frames 26-28]
In making explicit the argumentation featured in this excerpt, we get the following sequence:

* ‘It is wrong to accuse Nordman of being racist.’ (Marja, lines 1-2 & 5)
* ‘The allegations towards Nordman are extremely ill-founded.’ (Jonna, line 7 & Marja, line 8)
* ‘Nordman’s public image is patriotic, and they play traditional Swedish music; patriotism is often confused with racism. This is a bad thing.’ (Jonna, line 9)
* ‘The fear of racism has gotten out of hand. This is a bad thing.’ (Marja, lines 10-11)

As can be appreciated from this sequence, it is above all the personal opinions on the subject that do not get explicitised. One reason for this could be the potentially very delicate situation the interlocutors would find themselves in should someone disagree. The Swedish public has been sensitivised in a high degree in matters concerning nationalism and racism; if Marja’s last statement had been made explicit, she could conceivably have been accused of being a racist herself, and that is something she would want to avoid at almost any cost. Being less specific, speaking off-record, gives her the opportunity to avoid taking responsibility for the implied statement. This explanation finds additional support in the high priority given among Swedes to the search for consensus in conversation (cf. above, section 1).

Thus, the topic of the conversation sets its own limits, as does the interactional setting in its entirety, in this case inducing the participants to be as little specific as possible. Nevertheless, the implied statements are recoverable on the part of the participants, as the interactional excerpt demonstrates; the participants understand each other perfectly, even to the extent that they are able to build statements cooperatively (Jonna and Marja, lines 7-8). Furthermore, the negotiated meaning, the meaning given
to the utterances within the interaction (Thomas 1995, Fant 1996), can be described by the analyst, as the “explicitised” sequence demonstrates.

4. Argumentation can be described in terms of a limited set of categories. These are constellations of recognizable, verifiable features.

In order to describe argumentation in interaction, a set of categories is needed to account for the function of utterances in the interaction. These functions are highly context-dependent; any one utterance may have radically different functions in different contexts. An argument is an argument only in relation to another statement, not in itself. In keeping with that, and following the highly influential model presented by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1983), I claim that every utterance contains a statement (or, in the words of van Eemeren and Grootendorst, an ”expressed opinion”) that could be the subject of a dispute. Not every utterance is a statement, but it contains one, at least. For instance, an argument is multi-functional in that it first serves as an argument for (or against) a certain opinion, and then can be the subject of a dispute, its function thereby being converted into that of a statement. This is illustrated in figure 1, where INOP stands for “initial opinion”, ARGC for “counterargument” and SUOP for “subordinate opinion”. A1 refers to speaker A’s first utterance, B1 to speaker B’s first utterance, etc. In the first context, B’s utterance serves as a counterargument, in the second as a subordinate opinion to which a counterargument is addressed.
It would make for a rather clumsy description, however, to explicitly include these double functions in the analysis. Therefore, I assume that argument B can address argument A without postulating for the latter a level such as subordinate opinion A. In other words, instead of figure 1, we will get figure 2.11

In other words, I assume that every argument, in this case, contains an opinion, which in turn may be the subject of debate, although it doesn’t have to be (cf. van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1983:92ff.12).

11 The dialogue is a revised version of a discussion from John Steinbeck’s Tortilla Flat, in which the two friends Pablo and Pilon argue whether their mutual friend Danny should give the rich Mrs. Morales a box of candy so as to gain confidentiality with her and, ultimately, access to her wealth. The impoverished Pablo and Pilon, Pablo especially, are envious of Danny’s prospective affluence. The analysis is slightly simplified.

12 They write (1983:92): “Every argumentation advanced by the protagonist can in principle be challenged by the antagonist and thus give rise to a new discussion or subdiscussion, from which yet another new subdiscussion may flow, and so on.”
Let’s turn now to the categories I propose for the description of argumentation in interaction. These are eight in number and have the verifiable features presented in Table 1. (When the table reads “Expresses agreement”, one should understand it as ‘This statement expresses agreement with the opinion which it addresses; ”irr” signifies ‘irrelevant feature for the description of this specific category’.) The acronyms stand for Initial Opinion, Subordinate Opinion, Acceptance, Rejection, Proargument, Counterargument, Request for additional information, and Clarification. The last two are not argumentative elements, but they are necessary for the flow of the argumentation proper (cf. van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1983:77; Næss 1981:23-58).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Expresses agreement</th>
<th>Implies taking a stand</th>
<th>Introduces new topic</th>
<th>Introduces new information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INOP</td>
<td>irr.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUOP</td>
<td>irr.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>REQ</td>
<td>irr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLAR</td>
<td>irr.</td>
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<td>+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Distinctive features of the categories of analysis

5. Describing argumentation in interaction

In order to show how these categories are applied to the analysis, I will include a rather long sample of spontaneous talk, then analyse it within this framework. Lastly, I will discuss parts of the analysed sequence. The
sample included is the first minute of a discussion between Swedish speakers (cf. Rundström, this volume, for a contrastive study of Swedish and Spanish strategies for initiating a discussion).

(6) Setting: Monocultural discussion (Swedish).
Participants: Pia, Jonna, Marja, Magda.
Topic: The difficulty of discussing matters concerning freedom of speech and racism. (See also comments to samples 4 and 5, both later parts of this conversation.)

1. Marja: yttringsfrihet (.8)
   freedom of speech (.8)
2. Jonna: mm
3. Pia: mm (3.5)
4. Magda: ja tycker bara att det ämnet är så (.5) otroligt komplicerat
   i just feel that that topic is so (.5) incredibly complicated
5. Pia: mm ja tycker också de e fruktansvärt-
   mm i also think it’s horrible-
6. ja tänkte på de också (.3)
   i thought about that too (.3)
7. Jonna: har man- åsikter liksom
   sort of one has- an opinion
8. Magda: ja, (.3) klart man har åsikter
   yeah, (.3) of course one has an opinion
9. men alla åsikter leder in i nån återvändsgränd på nå sätt tycker ja
   but every opinion leads into a blind alley somehow i think
10. för hur man än: (1.5) börjar diskutera å e yttrandefrihet
    because no matter how you (1.5) start discussing freedom of speech
    å de hår me nazism å så hår,
    and this nazi thing and all that
11. så kommer man ju till den gränd återvändsgränd om man ska säga med
    you still end up in that alley blind alley if you will with
    demokraTIN (.3)
    democracy (.3)
12. jaha va har ja för rä-vad har man för rätt å förbjudas vissa saker då? (.5)
   okay so what right do i- what right do you have to ban certain things?
   (.5)
   exempel.
   for example.
13. ska man ha då en diktatur som bestämmer att den här (.5) åsikten är
   should we have a dictatorship that decides that this (.5) opinion is
   accepterad-
   accepted-
14. Jonna: så här får man göra
   this is how you can do
15. Magda: så här får man göra?
   this is how you can do?
16. Pia: plus de de handlar ju alltid om värDEringar liksom
   also it it’s always a question of values right
17. å värderingar förändras ju
   and values change as you know
18. Jonna: □ mm jovisst gör dom de
   mm of course they do
19. Pia: å sen (ifall) vi tycker att nånting är rätt iDAG behöver inte betyda att
   and then (if) we feel that something is right toDAY that doesn’t mean that
   (.5) det kommer å va rätt om: (.8) nåra år liksom?
   (.5) it will be right in: (.8) a couple of years you know?
20. Magda: nä även om man tycker att alla vettiga människor borde tycka att till
   no even if you feel that all sensible persons should think that for
   exempel nazism å sånt, det borde inte finnas, (.3)
   example nazism and such, that shouldn’t exist, (.3)
   but why should you on:ly (.3) ban THAT and no:t many OTHer things?
   egentligen. (.5)
   really. (.5)
22. eller liksom bara för att- DE e speciella märken
   or like just because- THOSE are special signs
23. iförej så vet ju alla vad de- (.5) står för
   okay, so everyone knows what they- (.5) stand for
This fragment shows typical traits of how Swedes initiate discussions on controversial topics (cf. Rundström, this volume). The topic given to the participants (from which they were at liberty to diverge) was the concept of freedom of speech, and if one should set a limit to it. In the months preceding the recording, there had been several pro-nazi manifestations in Sweden, and a new law had been passed, banning the use of ”political uniform”, as it was called. Pro-nazi symbols were the main target of the law, but it included, in principle, every kind of political symbol. This led to a heavy debate in Swedish press and among the public. Here, the participants avoid explicitly stating their views on the subject, and instead they argue against the initial, implicit, opinion put forward by the researchers in charge of the recording, i.e. that this matter was worth discussing. The whole sample revolves around this rather than around the actual concept of freedom of speech, and could be viewed as a preparatory sequence, where each participant has an opportunity to state how little they know about the topic, or how difficult it is to discuss. Only after this sequence can they start elaborating their opinions on the matter. The strategy is, thus, to make an account to be resorted to in the event that one could be viewed as having the ”wrong” opinion on the matter, a state which is dispreferred in this setting, where consensus is the primary conversational objective.

The argumentation analysis of sample 6 is presented below. “@” means ‘addressing’; ”2ARGC@1” should be read as ‘2, counterargument
addressing 1’ whereas ”7CLAR@6” is to be understood as ‘7, clarification of 6’.

Analysis of sample 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tag &amp; classification</th>
<th>Idea unit</th>
<th>Utterer, line number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1INOP</td>
<td><em>implicit statement:</em></td>
<td>(Researcher, line 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘it is worth the while to discuss freedom of speech’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ARGC@1</td>
<td>i just feel that that topic is so (.5) incredibly complicated</td>
<td>Magda, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3ACPT@2</td>
<td>mm i also think it’s horrible-</td>
<td>Pia, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4ARGC@2</td>
<td>sort of one has an opinion</td>
<td>Jonna, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5ACPT@4</td>
<td>yes, (.3) of course one has an opinion</td>
<td>Magda, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6ARGC@5</td>
<td>but every opinion leads into a blind alley somehow i think</td>
<td>Magda, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7CLAR@6</td>
<td>because no matter how you (1.5) start discussing freedom of speech and this nazi thing and all that you still end up in that alley blind alley if you will with democracy (.3)</td>
<td>Magda, 10f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8ARGP@7</td>
<td><em>implicit statement:</em></td>
<td>Magda, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘you have no right to prohibit this kind of things’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>okay so what right do i- what right do you have to ban certain things? (.5) for example.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9ARGP@8</td>
<td>should we have a dictatorship that decides that this (.5) opinion is accepted-</td>
<td>Magda, 13 &amp; 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>this is how you can do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10ARGP@8</td>
<td>also it’s always a questions of values right,</td>
<td>Pia, 16f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and values change as you know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11ACPT@10</td>
<td>mm of course they do</td>
<td>Jonna, 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A full analysis would account for both the on-line status (or speaker meaning) of an utterance and its negotiated meaning. Here, is it hard to ascribe meaning to Jonna’s idea unit *sort of one has an opinion* at the moment when it is produced. The negotiated meaning of the same idea unit, however, can be seen in Magda’s response to it; she takes it to be a counterargument to her own previous statement *i just feel that that topic is so (.5) incredibly complicated.*
In order to illustrate this kind of analysis, I have developed a graphic presentation. Below is the analysis of sample 6 in the form of a chart, or "tree" (graphic 1).

The chart indicates what kind of argumentation is being used, who is using it, what part of the previous argumentation it addresses, and which participant, and where in the interaction it occurs. In my opinion, the illustration is quite helpful in drawing attention to the overall patterning of the argumentation. Here, the self-linking (or "internal") character of the argumentation in the sample at hand can be clearly appreciated from the chart; the argumentation seems to cluster around one participant at a time (in this case Magda 5-9 and Johanna 14-18) with stretches of triadic interaction before and in between.14

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14 It is also significant, especially after further review of the discussion that follows this sample, that Marja is not participating, not even to express her agreement. Hers is a strategy of not cooperating, and when she does enter the discussion, it is to introduce a new topic.
The chart illustrates one of the central features of argumentation, the cooperative “building” of argumentation in the local context (as indicated in section 2 above). This is true of the segment as a whole, there are no significant deviations from the pattern in question. Undoubtedly, not every unit connects to the immediately preceding one, but two of those instances involve acceptances, which are predominantly responsive in character and therefore do not elicit responses to the same degree as the other types. Two other instances involve clarifications, where the speaker feels it is
necessary to specify what she has just said before elaborating her argumentation. The final instance, Pia’s proargument at 10, is designed to support, along with Magda’s argument at 9, the statement in 8. It would be misleading to term this connection as non-local. Throughout the sample there is never more than one idea unit between an addressing unit and the unit it addresses.

While the kind of chart presented above serves well to indicate the overall patterning of argumentation, it cannot, for obvious reasons, indicate the exact strategy used by a speaker at a given moment. There are many kinds of counterarguments, for instance; in any case they can be presented in many ways. To give one example, Magda’s counterargument at 13 above (reprinted as sample 7 below) is a pseudo-agreement; while presenting an argument against Pia’s statement, it does not confront it. Betina’s counterargument in sample 8 however, confronts Ena’s statement. A graph such as mine does not include linguistic resources; subsequently it cannot describe the whole event. An illustration cannot replace the source material without putting a certain slant on it. In indicating the general and overall building of argumentation, however, I have found it quite useful.

(7) Setting: Monocultural discussion (Swedish).
Participants: Jonna, Pia, Marja, Magda.
Topic: See comments to sample 6.

1. Pia: åsen (ifall) vi tycker att nånting är rätt iDAG behöver inte betyda att
   and then (if) we feel that something is right toDAY that doesn’t mean that
   (.5) det kommer å va rätt om: (.8) nåra år liksom?
   (.5) it will be right in: (.8) a couple of years you know?

2. Magda: nä även om man tycker att alla vettiga människor borde tycka att till
   no even if you feel that all sensible persons should think that for
   exempel nazism å sånt, det borde inte finnas, (.3)
   example nazism and such, that shouldn’t exist, (.3)
6. Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to situate the study of argumentation within a framework developed specifically for the description of talk-in-interaction and discourse. Building on important advances made by van Eemeren & Grootendorst, I proposed four essential aspects of argumentation in interaction. Firstly, I argued for a view of argumentation as a constant, never deactivated, feature of interaction. Then I highlighted the cooperativity of argumentation, the joint construction of argumentative discourse between participants in an interaction, claiming that the principle of relevance was a strong force in determining the patterning of
argumentation. As a third essential feature I discussed the role of implicatures and inferences in argumentation, asserting that these serve fundamental purposes in argumentation and that the meanings they are assigned within the interaction are recoverable. Then, I proposed four binary distinctions of recognizable features which yielded eight categories appropriate for the description of argumentation in interaction. In the final section, I first tested the applicability of these categories by applying them to a sample of authentic talk-in-interaction, and then introduced a graphic representation of the analysis, designed to reflect the overall patterning of argumentation.

Transcription conventions

15 These conventions follow Fant, this volume, with only slight modifications.

References


Johan Gille


