

Chapter 2

Communicative Intentions and Commitments

The problem of analyzing straw man fallacies depends on how a position is attributed to the speaker, namely on how his words are reported or quoted. The strategy of straw man is essentially grounded on the notion of reporting a position. However, from an argumentative point of view, a position is a commitment (Hamblin 1970; Walton and Krabbe 1995), i.e. a proposition for which the speaker is held responsible and that he is expected to defend in case it is challenged, questioned, or criticized.

The crucial issue we take into account is the notion of commitment, and more precisely the relationship between commitments and utterances. Speakers can be held responsible for what their utterances mean; however, how to establish the meaning of an utterance and its communicative intention is controversial. The starting point is the notion of action, an event for which the speaker is responsible inasmuch as he intended it. The concepts of speech act and communicative intention become of fundamental importance when we need to determine what the speaker can be held committed to. The question that we address here is whether the notion of speech act and the analysis and classifications of illocutionary forces developed in pragmatics is sufficient for describing how a participant to a dialogue intends to contribute to the conversation.

This issue is essentially related to related problems of interpretation and misinterpretation. The possibility and the problem of distorting or misrepresenting another's view are inherently dependent on the divergence between the speaker's utterance and the hearer's reconstruction thereof (Capone 2013b; Kecskes 2008, 2010b, 2013). As Kecskes put it (Kecskes 2010b, p. 69):

Their different prior experiences, their different evaluations of the actual situational context, their dynamically changing intentions and individual degrees of salience result in a personalized process of production and comprehension; as a result, there may be no single point in the recovery process at which speaker's utterances exactly matches hearer's implicatures. This is because both speaker's production and hearer's interpretation are 'contaminated' by individualized pragmatic elements.

The divergence between the speaker's intention conveyed by his utterance and the interpreter's reconstruction thereof has two sides. On the one hand, it is the root of the difference between a report – or a quotation – and the speaker's original quoted material. On the other hand, this difference cannot be taken for granted as essential; otherwise, communication would be impossible, let alone reporting another's words or positions. Interpretation concerns a communicative intention expressed through an utterance: "speaker meaning is a matter of overtly showing an object, overtly showing a state of affairs, or overtly showing one's commitment – both the modality of that commitment and its content" (Green 2007, p. 74). The interpretation and the attribution of a communicative intention to an utterance is a process (usually automatic) that, however, needs to be represented in terms of reasoning and arguments when it is challenged. What interpretation prevails in a disputed case is matter of analyzing the reasoning in support of the conflicting views and establishing the strongest or the only reasonable one.

This chapter will address the notion of commitment, and analyze how it is related to the speaker's intentions and to the interpretation of an utterance. The purpose is to outline the various approaches to commitments, acts and intentions in dialogue, in order to provide a theoretical background for our analysis.

2.1 The Speaker's Meaning and His Commitments

A fundamental issue in the analysis of quotations and reports is the attribution of commitments. Quotes or reports are meta-representations, namely representations of the meaning expressed by other utterances (Morency et al. 2008, p. 206), which are used by the quoter for different purposes. Because they are meta-representations, they convey a relation between the Original Speaker and "what he said" (or in case of indirect reports, what the reporting party has reconstructed). In both cases, the crucial issue is to determine what the original speaker can be held accountable for from a dialogical point of view. In other words, it is crucial to establish the original speaker's responsibility towards his utterance, namely his commitments, the "public" attitude towards what he has communicated (Beysade and Marandin 2009; Morency et al. 2008). The fundamental problem with quotations and more importantly with reports is to reconstruct the speaker's commitments considering the only evidence that is available, namely his utterances (Boulat 2016, p. 31). For this reason, the process aimed at attributing (or reconstructing) the speaker's commitments is dependent on the interpretive process aimed at retrieving what the speaker communicated.

The notion of commitment has been widely used in philosophy of language (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), linguistics (Ducrot 1972, 1984; Ifantidou 2001; Nølke 1994; Sperber and Wilson 1986), and argumentation theory (Walton and Krabbe 1995) (for a survey, see Coltier et al. 2009; De Brabanter and Dendale 2008; Boulat 2016). In speech act theory, commitment has received interrelated but distinct meanings:

- (a) A restrictive non-technical meaning, referring to the description of the illocutionary point of the commissive speech acts, resulting in binding the speaker to carrying out certain future actions (Austin 1962, p. 150; Searle 1969, p. 58; Searle and Vanderveken 1985, pp. 13–14).
- (b) A broader non-technical meaning, referring to the obligations on the speaker's future conduction resulting from the performance (and uptake) of a speech act (Austin 1962, p. 153). As Austin put it, stating that “the cat is on the mat commits me to saying or stating ‘The mat is underneath the cat’ just as much as the performative ‘I define X as Y’ (in the *fiat* sense say) commits me to using those terms in special ways in future discourse, and we can see how this is connected with such acts as promising” (Austin 1962, p. 136).¹
- (c) A broader, technical meaning of illocutionary commitment, set out by Searle and Vanderveken, who distinguished between strong and weak commitments (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, p. 24). On their view, an utterance commits the speaker not only to the illocution, but also to its (preparatory, sincerity...) conditions (*strong* commitment: it is impossible to perform $F_1(P)$ in a context of utterance without also performing $F_2(Q)$) and possible entailments (*weak* commitment: the speaker is committed to an illocutionary act $F(P)$ by way of performing certain illocutionary acts $F_1(P_1)$, ..., $F_n(P_n)$, although he does not perform $F(P)$ and is not committed to its performance) (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, pp. 23–24). As they put it, “As a general definition we can say that *an illocutionary act of the form $F_1(P_1)$ commits the speaker to an illocutionary act $F_2(P_2)$ iff in the successful performance of $F_1(P_1)$:*
- I. The speaker achieves (strong) or is committed (weak) to the illocutionary point of F_2 on P_2 with the required mode of achievement and degree of strength of F_2 .
 - II. He is committed to all of the preparatory conditions of $F_2(P_2)$ and to the propositional presuppositions.
 - III. He commits himself to having the psychological state specified by the sincerity conditions of $F_2(P_2)$ with the required degree of strength.
 - IV. P_2 satisfies the propositional content of F_2 with respect to the context of utterance (Searle 1985, p. 24).

These accounts share some crucial features and shed light on some specific characteristics of commitments. First, Austin pointed out how commitments can be considered as kinds of promises (De Brabanter and Dendale 2008; Walton and Krabbe 1995), binding the speaker to a certain course of action. Second, the object of this kind of obligation can be different. As Searle and Vanderveken pointed out, a speaker is not only committed to the illocution, but also to the preparatory conditions, the sincerity conditions, the propositional content, and the presuppositions. Thus, on their view commitments include also psychological states such as belief,

¹ Searle did not exclude this broader meaning, stating that we use expressions such as “I promise” to emphasize the degree of our commitment when performing speech acts that are not commissive (Searle 1969, p. 58).

which the speaker is bound to hold publicly in virtue of his performing an illocution (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, p. 19). Third, commitments result from the performance of various types of speech acts, different from assertions or promises. Gazdar in particular developed this idea and investigated the effects of a speech act on the commitments of the participants to a dialogue. As he put it (Gazdar 1981, pp. 68–69):

A speech act is a function from contexts to contexts. Thus, an assertion that Φ is a function that changes a context in which the speaker is not committed to justifiable true belief in Φ into a context he is so committed. A promise that Φ is a function that changes a context in which the speaker is not committed to bringing Φ into one in which he is so committed. A permission to Φ is a function that changes a context in which Φ is prohibited into one in which Φ is permissible.

On this view, speech acts can be analyzed considering their effects on the conversational situation, namely the conversational context. Commitments can represent these types of effects, which in turn affect the possible actions (and more specifically dialogical moves) that the interlocutors can perform.

A last characteristic of commitments is underscored by Searle and Vanderveken, who distinguish between “strong” and “weak” commitments. They include, in the first category, commitments to the presuppositions (including propositional, preparatory, and sincerity conditions) of a speech act, namely commitments on which the felicity of the speech act depends. They classify, in the second category, commitments to illocutionary acts incurred *by* performing other, distinct illocutionary acts. They provide as an example a *modus ponens*; however, they do not specify whether such weak commitments result only from entailments or also from other defeasible inferences, including implicatures. This issue was addressed by Soames, who underscored how commitments can result from both what is asserted and what is “conveyed” (by implicatures). According to him, in both cases of asserting p and that of merely intending to convey p , “the speaker undertakes a commitment to p , in the sense of endorsing p as something to be accepted by members of the conversation, of being responsible to defend p , and of being accountable if p turns out to be false” (Soames 2002, p. 72). However, he points out a crucial difference between what is asserted by an utterance and what is merely conveyed, or implied: the speaker is more strongly committed to what is asserted than to what is merely implied or suggested (Soames 2002, p. 85).

2.2 Commitments in Dialogue

In philosophy of language, the analysis of commitments has focused mostly on their relationship with speech acts. In argumentation theory, commitments are the basic concept in the areas of research on formal dialogues (Prakken 2006), dialogue games (Bench-Capon et al. 1991; Ginzburg 1994, 1996; Walton 1984), and fallacies (Walton 1989). The starting point of this approach is Hamblin’s model (Hamblin 1970, Chapter 8). On this view, commitments represent what the participant in a

dialogue is held responsible for (i.e. what he is held to support in case it is challenged, and cannot contradict without retracting it):

- (d) Commitment is defined according to the type of object it results from (a proposition) and the rules it shall comply with (establishing the partial strategies, i.e. the possible actions that can be performed without incurring sanctions), namely the rules of dialogue. In this perspective, a propositional commitment is (1) a kind of action commitment whose (2) partial strategies assign dialogical actions that (3) center on one proposition (or a formulation thereof) (from Walton and Krabbe 1995, pp. 23–24).

In the perspective of dialogue games, the interlocutors keep record of their commitments (gameboards or commitment stores) (Ginzburg 1994, 1996). Speech acts are proposals for updating the commitment store with their illocutionary information, which can be accepted (thus updating directly the dark-side commitment store), rejected, or questioned. This idea of dialogical commitment is grounded on two principles: dialogical consistency and dialogical rules (or sanctions).

A speaker is expected (in virtue of social conventions) or obliged (based on dialogical rules) to maintain a consistent store of statements representing his previous and new commitments. This store represents “a kind of persona of beliefs: it need not correspond with his real beliefs, but it will operate, in general, approximately as if it did” (Hamblin 1970, p. 237). Commitments are dialogical as they bind dialogical actors (the speaker and the interlocutor) to obligations within a dialogical world, which can then correspond or not to the real world (Ducrot 1984, p. 79). For example, asserting that p binds the speaker to defend p or not to deny p , but this does not mean that the speaker believes that p is true. Similarly, the speaker can commit himself or commit the hearer to perform action a , and within the dialogical world the speaker or the hearer have an obligation to perform a . In this sense, commitments are only indirectly related to beliefs. A speaker can be committed to a proposition without believing that it is true; so he can also commit someone else (presenting a proposition as commonly accepted) even though he cannot know whether it is actually believed or not (Beysade and Marandin 2009). Moreover, commitments can be demanded, attributed, or rejected, and the speaker can distinguish between assertions aimed at calling for the speaker’s commitments (orders) from the ones aimed at committing the speaker only (expressives, commissives) (Beysade and Marandin 2006). In this sense, a commitment is not necessarily a belief; rather, it can be justified in terms of belief, or it can be a sign of belief.

The rules of a dialogue (which can be a formal dialogue or a dialogue occurring within any institutional setting, such as a legal cross examination, a medical interview, but also a dialogue among friends or colleagues) establish the type of consistency is expected and the sanctions for failing to comply with it (De Brabanter and Dendale 2008). In some types of dialogue, inconsistencies can result in quitting or losing the dialogue; in others, the inconsistent speaker can be subject to criticism or loss of face (for example, an inconsistent witness would be considered as unreliable); in more flexible contexts, inconsistencies can lead to further meta-dialogues aimed at establishing the “real” commitments.

This basic picture of the argumentative approach to commitments becomes more complex when a crucial dimension of real dialogues is taken into account in the formal models of dialogues, namely the background knowledge. Walton and Krabbe developed their approach to dialogues introducing two extremely relevant notions, namely the distinction between the object of a commitment and the ways of incurring it, and the differentiation between explicit (light-side) and implicit (dark-side) commitments.

According to Walton and Krabbe, commitments are dialogical obligations to act in a certain fashion. As Gazdar pointed out (Gazdar 1981), commitments can bind the speaker or the hearer to an action that can be dialogical (defend a viewpoint) or extra-dialogical (carry out an action). In any case, these obligations can be expressed as propositions, but their source can be different. Commitments can result from various dialogical behaviors, including various types of speech acts (Walton and Krabbe 1995, p. 32):

- A. By social position:
 - AI. By affiliation.
 - AII. By relationships
- B. By the subject's own action:
 - BI. By a (direct or indirect) speech act:
 - BI1. In dialogue:
 - (a) by asserting a proposition
 - (b) by conceding a proposition
 - (c) by other speech acts in dialogue; e.g. by asking a question one may get committed to its presuppositions
 - BI2. Not in dialogue; e.g. promises, oaths, etc.
 - BII. Other actions by the subject; e.g. making a decisive moral personal choice.
- C. By the actions of actors other than the subject:
 - CI. By a (direct or indirect) speech act:
 - CI1. In dialogue:
 - (a) by being questioned
 - (b) by being challenged
 - (c) by other speech acts in dialogue
 - CI2. Not in dialogue; e.g., someone makes a promise on behalf of the subject or someone orders the subject to do so and so.
 - CII. Other actions by others.

We need to point out two aspects of this approach to commitment: the shift from illocutionary forces to dialogical purposes and the role of common ground. The first

issue concerns the source of commitments. Commitments result from various types of speech acts, both direct and indirect. This aspect, however, shifts the problem of determining commitments from illocutionary acts to the interpretation of communicative (interactional) purposes. What matters, in this sense, is not what type of illocutionary force is associated presumptively with the utterance type; commitments are related to what the utterance can be aimed at doing in dialogue. This problem will be analyzed in Sects. 2.5 and 2.6 below, when the analysis of indirect speech acts will be taken into account.

The second issue concerns implicit commitments. Commitments result from both direct and indirect speech act, but also from many other actions interlocutors carry out during and before the dialogue. On this view, commitments result from various sources and speech acts represent only one of them. A participant in a dialogue cannot be considered as a blank slate. On the contrary, since dialogues occur in a context and between human beings, the interlocutors carry with them commitments to propositions that are the result of his previous interactions, actions, choices, or simply by belonging to a group (affiliation) or interacting within a specific institutional context (relationships) (Kecskes and Zhang 2009). This idea leads to the crucial distinction between light-side and dark-side commitments, which opens the analysis of the dialogical obligations to the dialogical context intended as the set of propositions (information) that the interlocutor is or can be presumed to hold and be bound to maintain. We will investigate the issue of implicit commitments in the next section.

2.3 Implicit Commitments and Common Ground

The distinction between explicit and implicit commitments was clearly drawn by Walton and Krabbe, who distinguished between dark-side (or implicit) and light-side (or explicit) commitments (Walton and Krabbe 1995, p. 186). While the latter ones are the result of the performance or the acceptance of a speech act performed in a dialogue (Hamblin 1970, p. 264; Mackenzie and Staines 1999, p. 17), dark-side commitments result from the common ground, a set of propositions that the interlocutors consider to be shared and not subject to further discussion (Walton 1985, 1987). While light-side commitments can be challenged directly (by questioning or refusing the interlocutor's stated content, or simply by not accepting it explicitly), dark-side commitments are presented, or rather presumed, as propositions upon which the parties to a dialogue to have already agreed (Walton and Krabbe 1995, p. 182). For this reason, a meta-dialogue or meta-dialogical move is needed for retracting such commitments in which the interlocutor needs to show why he cannot accept the dark-side commitment.

The argumentative approach to commitment points out a dimension that is of crucial importance for the studies in philosophy of language, namely the issue of common ground. The relationship between commitments and background knowledge is twofold. On the one hand, speech acts (or discourse moves) update the

interlocutors' implicit commitments, namely the set of propositions that can be taken for granted as accepted. On the other hand, common ground is crucial for interpreting speech acts, including their explicatures and implicatures. The literature on dialogue games has investigated in depth the problem of background commitments (also called common or shared ground) by developing models of formal dialogues based on Stalnaker's idea of common ground (Beysade and Marandin 2006; Ginzburg 1994, 1996).

According to Stalnaker, a dialogue cannot be investigated independent of its context. On the one hand, speech acts are understood in terms of the way they are intended to affect the context, namely the information shared by the interlocutors. On the other hand, it is possible to interpret a speech act (and the effects it is intended to carry out) only by considering the context in which it is performed (Stalnaker 1998). For example, an assertion such as "Trump is not going to win" can be understood only by considering a set of information that is taken for granted (Trump is running for president; there are political elections in the United States; etc.), which are necessary for understanding the content of a speech act. Moreover, the interpretation of this speech act can be possible only by taking into account the dialogical setting, the previous assertions, the interlocutors' views on, or interests in politics, etc. (Stalnaker 1978, 1998, 2002). All the information that is relevant to the interpretation of a speech act is the common ground (context) and is presumed to be shared by the interlocutors, and in fact accepted by them (i.e. treated as not controversial or true) (Stalnaker 1984, pp. 79–80). Clearly it is not necessary that it is actually shared; it is simply treated (presumed) as shared by performing the speech act (Stalnaker 1978, p. 8). An assertion, according to Stalnaker, is thus "a proposal to alter the context by adding the information that is the content of the assertion to the body of information that defines the context, or equivalently, by eliminating from the context set – the set of possible worlds available for speakers to distinguish between – those possible worlds in which the proposition expressed in the assertion is false" (Stalnaker 1998, p. 6).

Common ground can be conceived as a set of dark-side commitments that are presumed to be shared by the interlocutors. We need to clarify what "to presume" means when referred to background knowledge. Stalnaker's account is "a representation from the point of view of one of the participants in the context of what is common to all [...]. If certain information is necessary to determine the content of some speech act, then appropriate speech requires that the information be presumed to be shared information at the time at which that speech act is to be interpreted" (Stalnaker 1998, pp. 7–8). This approach to background commitments takes into account the speaker's position and the constraints that a speech act imposes on the context. If we want to analyze actual conversations, we need to consider also the interlocutor's perspective, and the fact that the "dark-side commitment store" may vary from one participant to another (Clark and Schaefer 1989, p. 260). This may result in different interpretations of the same speech act, which can lead to the speaker and the hearer holding, attributing, or presuming distinct commitments.

2.4 The Problems of Commitment Attribution in Quotations

As mentioned above, the attribution of commitments is strictly related to interpretation. In order to hold the interlocutor committed to a proposition representing his dialogical obligations, his utterance needs to be interpreted, in other words, a communicative (interactional) intention needs to be attributed to it. Moreover, the speaker is held responsible for (committed to) his dark-side commitments, namely what belongs to the “common ground.” These two aspects are crucially interrelated, as interpretation depends on what is shared, or what is presumed to be shared by the interlocutors. The issue of attributing commitments becomes even more problematic when we take into account the hearer’s perspective, and most importantly the hearer’s dark-side commitments (or background knowledge) as potentially distinct from the speaker’s. This issue is crucial when an utterance is quoted or reported to a third party, as the readers’ or hearers’ context (the background knowledge) used for interpreting it can be radically different from the one in which the utterance was performed (Cohn 1993; Franklin and Bussell 1983; Kecskes 2008). As Kecskes put it (Kecskes 2013, p. 136; 135):

[...] we have to be careful about how we understand “quoting out of context.” What this refers to is quoting out of *the actual situational context* in which the given linguistic expression has been used. This does not mean that there is no context, because the linguistic expression, if “quoted out of context,” will create a context itself. This context, however, will not necessarily match the original situational context. In fact, the problem usually is that the expression or utterance creates its own context. [...].

Language encodes prior contexts and is used to make sense of actual situational contexts, so language is never context-free.

For this reason, we need to address the problem of interpretation in quotations and more specifically the interpretive levels that are involved in it.

The act of quoting consists of an utterance that represents (depicts) another utterance (the original utterance) (Meibauer 2014; Recanati 2010, p. 224). The representation of an utterance, however, involves two interrelated and theoretically distinct dimensions, namely (1) the attribution of a communicative intention (which will be used as strictly meaning the communicative purpose or illocutionary intention of an utterance, see Bach and Harnish 1979, pp.12–13); and (2) the determination of the speaker’s meaning, namely identifying the commitments based on what is said or what is communicated. This distinction and the relationship between these two levels can be explained using the following examples.

The first case, drawn from a TV series, represents a dialogue between a group of knights from Camelot (Haugh 2015, p. 54).

Case 2.1 Some Water

Elyan: Alright. Who drank all my water?

Gwaine: ((burps))

Arthur: I believe you have your answer.

Gwaine: *You said I could have some.*

Elyan: I said you could have some. I didn't say you drink every last drop!

Gwaine: I was thirsty.

In this case, Gwaine indirectly reports Elyan's words, but attribute to the latter a commitment (you could have the water) that he did not intend. Elyan, in fact, corrects the interpretation of the quotation and points out that "some water" needs to be interpreted standardly as implicating "not all" based on the heuristics called "Q principle" (say as much as you can) (Horn 1984). Clearly, this generalized *implicatum* is defeasible (Atlas and Levinson 1981; Levinson 2000, p. 39). Depending on the context, the speaker may have instead relied on a contrary heuristic principle (the R principle, "say no more than you must") leading to the *implicatum* that "some" inasmuch as a stereotypical permission, was intended to mean, "all/as much as you want" (Carston 1998; Ducrot 1972; Green 1995; Horn 1984; Levinson 2000). This excerpt points out the relationship between commitments and implicatures and raises the issue of how to draw the line between what a speaker said and what can be implied from it.

The relationship between what a speaker said and what he can be held accountable for (what he can be said to have subscribed to) can be more complex. While in Case 2.1 above the problem is to interpret what the speaker communicates based on the available presumptions (or what is relevant in the given context), in Case 2.2 below reporting an utterance involves a more complex reconstruction of the speaker's communicative intention. This example, adapted from (Recanati 2000, p. 48), concerns the indirect report of a sarcastic utterance:

Case 2.2 The Lovely Weather

For example, suppose that, misled by unreliable weather reports, A and B are caught in the middle of a storm. B reports to C, who is at home, A's utterance.

A: The weather is indeed lovely.

1. B to C: A says that the weather is indeed lovely.
2. B to C: A claims that the weather is lovely.
3. B to C: A is complaining that the weather is bad, contrary to what the weather reports said.

Here we distinguish three cases of indirect report. In 1, B is reporting A's words verbatim, but by not providing the context and the background information, makes A's utterance pragmatically ambiguous. In 2, B reports A's assertion, and by not providing the background and contextual information, he leads C to interpreting the report as serious. In 3, B does not report the words verbatim; instead, he provides an interpretation of A's utterance and informs C of the background information (Camp 2006, p. 285). This case shows how the communicative intention can be retrieved presumptively (considering a stereotypical context in which an assertion is meant to inform the interlocutor) or by means of a more complex pattern of reasoning (which takes into account various contextual factors).

The problem of non-serious utterances and the reconstruction of the meaning and the speaker's commitments can become serious, as in the following case² taken from Trump's rally in Ashburn, Virginia. Trump addressed a woman holding a baby that was crying during the speech:

Case 2.3 Trump's Love for Children

"Don't worry about that baby. I love babies," Trump said, sarcastically, after hearing the baby crying during his speech. "Don't worry about it. I love babies. I hear that baby crying, I like it. What a baby. What a beautiful baby. Don't worry, don't worry. The mom's running around like — don't worry about it, you know. It's young and beautiful and healthy and that's what we want." But when the young mom didn't take the hint that Trump wanted her to leave, he told her more directly. "Actually, I was only kidding, you can get the baby out of here," the Republican nominee said to laughter and applause. "That's all right. Don't worry. I think she really believed me that I love having a baby crying while I'm speaking. That's OK. People don't understand. That's OK."

Here Trump reports his own utterance, which the mother interprets as serious. Trump engages in a discussion on how his utterance should be interpreted and reported: is it an invitation not to worry, or is the utterance an order to leave? The difference with the non-serious case of the lovely weather is that in this exchange Trump becomes strongly committed to attacking the woman and kicking her out of his rally, as the news reported.

The fourth case involves the relationship between the reconstruction of the communicative (illocutionary) intention (in the sense of Bach and Harnish 1979) and implicit meaning, more specifically, implicatures. In the following famous exchange between a sea-captain and his first mate (Bell 1997, p. 36; Fischer 1970, p. 272), the problem of interpretation and reporting emerges clearly:

Case 2.4 Drunkard Captain

The captain wrote in the ship's log: "The first-mate was drunk all day." When the first-mate read the log, he confronted the captain. The captain replied: "Well, it was true, wasn't it?" The following day the first-mate, whose normal duties include writing up the ship's log, got his revenge. He wrote in the ship's log: "The captain was sober all day." When he read the log-entry, the captain was furious at the implication in the first-mate's words that he was not normally sober. When confronted by the captain, the first-mate, referring to his literal meaning rather than the invited inference of his statement, replied: "Well, it was true, wasn't it?"

This case shows the problem of attributing implicit commitments, which is directly related to reporting a communicative intention that is drawn from an implicature. How can the captain report the first-mate's utterance? Clearly, "the goal of the interaction, namely, the invited inference that the captain is normally drunk, is clear" (Bell 1997, p. 41). This dialogue points out the distinction between the speaker's commitments (the ones allegedly corresponding to his intentions), and the ones that are reasonably attributed to him. If commitments result from the performance and uptake of a speech act, and more precisely from the actions it performs in a context

²Bassett, B. (2016, August 2). Donald Trump insults women four times in four days. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/KxQdxO> (Accessed on 12 October 2016).

(Levinson 1983, p. 291; Mey 2001, p. 163) (its communicative (interactive) goal), it is hard to deny that the first mate intended to accuse the captain of being drunk every day except the present one. However, considered out-of-context, the first mate's utterance can be reported as merely committing him to the truth of the proposition that the captain was sober that day.

The last example involves not only the relationship between utterances and communicative actions and goals, but also the relationship between communicative purposes and the interpretation of lexical items. The excerpt is drawn from is a real case of defamation law concerning the quotation and interpretation of some utterances reported by a local newspaper of Greenbelt, Maryland. At public meetings before the City Council, Mr. Bresler, a prominent real estate developer and state legislator, vigorously discussed the city building plan with other Council members. The Council tried to acquire land owned by Mr. Bresler to build a school; Mr. Bresler tried to defend his interests (secure some variances for some land he owned). The discussion became heated and Mr. Bresler's negotiating behavior was criticized. Such discussions were then reported by the newspaper. The case is summarized as follows (*Greenbelt Pub. Assn. v. Bresler*, 398 U.S. 6, 16 1970):

Case 2.5 Blackmail

In publishing in their newspaper full accounts of the meetings, petitioners reported that various citizens had characterized respondent's negotiating position as "blackmail." Respondent, concededly a "public figure," brought this libel action against petitioners for publishing the reports notwithstanding their knowledge that he had not committed the crime of blackmail.

Original quote from the journal:

"'It seems that this is a slight case of blackmail,' commented Mrs. Marjorie Bergemann on Monday night, and the word was echoed by many speakers from the audience."

"Councilman David Champion, however, denied that it was 'blackmail,' explaining that he would rather 'refer to it (i.e., the negotiations) as a two-way street.'"

This case is more complex as it involves the interpretation of a quote. Mr. Bresler interprets the quotations (in particular, the first one reported) out of context, and relies on the presumptive association between utterance type (assertive) and the communicative purpose (informing the audience of a fact). The Court (upholding the journalists' position) instead interprets the quotation within its communicative setting, and concludes that the utterance was intended to vent emotions (insulting or attacking Mr. Bresler) rather than accuse him of a crime. In this sense, the interpretation of the communicative purpose affects the interpretation of the semantic content of the utterance: "blackmail" is read metaphorically as an attack and not literally as a crime of threatening the victim with a view to extorting money or goods.

These examples raise some issues concerning the relationship between an utterance, its context, and the commitments that can be attributed to the original speaker. More specifically, in order to understand what commitments can be attributed to a speaker, it is necessary to address the following problems:

1. How to represent the speaker's (and more precisely the original speaker's) communicative goal and how to relate it to his utterance;
2. How to take into account the distinction between what a speaker says explicitly and what he does not say, but merely implicates;
3. How to account for the difference in commitment to various types of content, namely explicatures, presuppositions, entailments, and implicatures.

The crucial point to discuss is the first one, as only after determining what counts as a communicative goal is it possible to investigate the other related concerns.

2.5 Utterances, Speech Acts, and Communicative Purposes

As mentioned in the sections above, commitments involve interpretation, and interpretation involves the reconstruction of the communicative purpose of an utterance, namely “what utterances contribute to the interactions in which they occur” (Capone 2005; Geis 1995, p. 10; Kecskes 2010a; Mey 2001, Chapter 8). What counts as a commitment of the speaker or the hearer needs to be drawn from what his utterance *in context* is aimed to do, namely how it can affect the interaction and the conversational situation. In order to analyze how communicative purposes can be attributed to utterances, and consequently how commitments are assigned to the speakers, we need to discuss the relationship between utterances and speech acts.

The responsibility that we ascribe to the speaker is essentially related to the objectified or communicated intentions (Morency et al. 2008) we can attribute to him by his uttering a sentence in context. The commitments result from the action that the speaker performs by way of provoking a specific event, namely uttering a sentence (Kissine 2013, p. 15; Searle 2001, p. 52). This event is thus constitutive of the action, and cannot be separated from the intention (Davidson 2001). For this reason, illocutionary acts are distinguished from perlocutionary acts (or events), i.e. events or acts that result from the performance of illocutionary acts, but that are performed by means and not by way of uttering a sentence. For example, the effect of persuading someone can be an (intentional) effect of an assertion; the interlocutor's action of closing the window can result from the speaker's illocutionary act of ordering him to do so; expectations can be created by making a promise, etc. (Searle and Vanderveken 2005, p. 119). Thus, commitments are crucially related to speech acts. However, what counts as an act and what can be considered as a commitment resulting from a communicative intention needs to be carefully discussed.

2.5.1 *The Standard View*

Speech act theory hinges on the notions of illocutionary act and illocutionary force. The action that is constituted by way of uttering a sentence has been defined as an “illocutionary act” (Searle and Vanderveken 2005, p. 109):

Whenever a speaker utters a sentence in an appropriate context with certain intentions, he performs one or more illocutionary acts. In general an illocutionary act consists of an illocutionary force F and a propositional content P .

Clearly, the problem in this definition is to determine the “certain intentions” that underlie the uttering of a sentence in context. On Searle’s view, illocutionary acts result in the illocutionary effect of understanding (uptake), which in turn affects the conversational setting by creating and constraining “the range of appropriate illocutionary responses” (Searle and Vanderveken 2005, p. 118). Speech acts are classified according to the following criteria (Mey 2001, Chapter 5; Searle 1976):

- Illocutionary point (the force of the speech act)
- Direction of fit (the way the speech act fits the world, and/or the world the speech act)
- Expressed psychological state (of the speaker: a belief can be expressed as a statement, an assertion, a remark, etc.)
- Content (what the speech act is about. For example, a promise to attend the party has the same content as a refusal).

Such criteria are used for classifying speech acts in the following categories (Searle 1976):

- *Representatives (assertives)*. Their point or purpose of the members is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something is being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. Example: “Bob is tired.”
- *Directives*. Their illocutionary point consists in the fact that they are attempts (of varying degrees) by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. Example: “Go to bed!”
- *Commissives*. The point of these illocutionary acts is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to some future course of action. Example: “I will go to bed right away.”
- *Expressives*. Their illocutionary point is to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content. Example: “I am so sorry about that!”
- *Declarations*. The successful performance of one of these illocutionary acts brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality, and guarantees that the propositional content corresponds to the world. Example: “The judgment is vacated” (declared by a Court).

The analysis and classification of speech acts according to the aforementioned model is characterized by two interconnected premises. First, as Mey puts it, “the illocutionary force is intimately related to the very form the utterance may have: stating, wishing, promising etc.” (Mey 2001, pp. 95–96). In this sense, “the illocutionary force is built into the sentence meaning by linguistic conventions. That is, for Searle, any well-formed sentence-type corresponds to a speech-act type in virtue of linguistic conventions” (Kissine 2013, p. 4). Second, the utterance of any sentence is associated with a “literal” act that in case of indirect speech acts is

distinguished from a primary act (Geis 1995, p. 20). For example, the utterance of “Can you pass me the salt?” is normally considered as an indirect speech act: an interrogative sentence (normally used for asking a question) is used to request a specific action (normally expressed by imperative sentences), namely passing the salt. This speech act is analyzed by Searle by dividing the illocutionary act into a primary act, namely a making request, and a secondary (literal) act of asking a question. This account of the relationship between the utterance form (type) and the illocutionary force confines indirect speech acts in the area of meaning that is derived from what is said by means of further processing, namely in “what is communicated” (Camp 2006, p. 284).

This account of speech acts and “literal” (illocutionary) meaning of an utterance raises two crucial problems that are of fundamental importance for the attribution of commitments and communicative purposes. The first concerns the conventional association between sentence (or utterance) type and illocutionary force. The second concerns the notion of “illocutionary force” in itself. The problem is whether the types of forces described by speech act theory, based on the Gricean concept of non-natural meaning as an intention to provoke some cognitive response, can account for the communicative purposes pursued by the utterances (Kissine 2012).

2.5.2 The Inferential Dimension of Reconstructing Illocutionary Forces

The first point addresses the distinction between a literal, conventional illocutionary force and an indirect one, obtained by means of conversational implicatures. As Mey observes, “it cannot be just by accident that in our daily use of language, indirect speech acts abound, and in many cases [...] are far more numerous than direct ones” (Mey 2001, p. 112). On this view, the correspondence between understanding a speech act and decoding the sentence expressed cannot be maintained. The illocutionary act that a sentence can be used to perform depends on the context, which includes background knowledge, and social and institutional factors. Depending on the speaker, the same sentence can be used to request information or make an order; depending on the background information, the utterance “The weather is indeed lovely” mentioned above can be interpreted as aimed at informing the interlocutor, warning him, complaining against the weatherman, complaining against the weather, etc. (Geis 1995, p. 20). Moreover, the very understanding of the propositional content expressed by an utterance requires contextual inferences (Carston 2002, Chapter 1; Kissine 2012, p. 17; Recanati 1987, p. 224), such as the minimal ones specifying the place and time of the observed weather in the example above.

The lack of correspondence between utterance form and illocutionary force leads to reconsidering the structure of speech acts in terms of presumptions. On this view, an intermediate level is introduced between the sentence level (the linguistic meaning of an utterance) and the illocutionary force, namely the locutionary act (Austin

1962). This distinction can be explained as follows (Kissine 2012, Chapter 2.7; Recanati 1980):

- The ‘locutionary act’ is the expression (presentation) of propositional contents under a certain mode of presentation. The type of the mode of presentation constrains the range of the possible direct speech acts the locutionary act may constitute. For instance, if the imperative mood expresses an attitude characteristic of desiderative mental states, the potential direct illocutionary force will be a directive one. However, this relationship is purely presumptive and potential.
- The ‘illocutionary act’ is the illocutionary act actually performed, in which an illocutionary force is assigned to the utterance.

For example, a sentence can be presented under the imperative mood (“can you pass me the salt”) and used to perform a locutionary act (Kissine 2012, p. 171). The act of uttering a specific propositional content under a certain mode of presentation is presumptively associated (correlated) with certain illocutionary forces (Kissine 2008, 2012, pp. 166–167). However, this relationship is not conventional (does not belong to the conventional meaning of the sentence expressed), but purely presumptive (Recanati 2013, 2016). Direct speech acts are the result of this presumptive relation, while in indirect (non-conventionalized) speech acts, this presumption fails and other contextual factors need to be taken into account for determining the speaker’s communicative intention (an intention to fulfil some communicative purpose).

This perspective relies on two principles. First, the starting point is the “content” of an utterance (including the mode of presentation), which – after being enriched pragmatically by specifying its meaning in context – is correlated to a presumptive interpretation (Recanati 2013, 2016). Second, presumptions guide the interpretative process by providing automatic associations (Bach and Harnish 1979; Levinson 2000) between a locutionary act and an illocutionary act. For example, an utterance having a specific presentational mood (interrogative; a conventionalized utterance form such as “Can you please...?”) is presumptively interpreted as intended to perform a specific act (asking a question; making a request). However, if in the specific context this interpretation conflict with conversational principles, a different interpretation is looked for (Recanati 1987, pp. 224–227).

This approach points out the crucial role of presumptions in establishing the illocutionary force of an utterance. However, it assigns to the content of an utterance a primary role, leaving to the context the function of selecting or rejecting possible presumptive interpretations and relying on conversational maxims for retrieving non-presumptive correlations between utterance form (type) and speech act. This account can explain why many types of indirect speech acts can result from a presumptive processing of the utterance. What matters is the presumptive association between a propositional contents and modes of presentation and an illocutionary force. An indirect speech act or types of indirect speech acts can be highly conventionalized and thus trigger presumptive interpretation. In cases of non-serious utterances, or in actual (non-conventionalized) indirect speech acts, the inferential mechanism starts from the propositional content and the presumptive

illocutionary force to infer the actual communicative intention. For example, we consider the “lovely weather” case above and analyze it according to the inferential steps mentioned above (see Kissine 2012, p.185):

- Step 1: *S* is performing the locutionary act “the party is great,” expressing the proposition *p* in a declarative mood (declarative utterance);
- Step 2: Declarative utterances are usually used to inform the interlocutor of a belief of *S* (to perform assertions);
- Step 3: This party is all that *S* hates; it is shared that *S* hates the characteristics of the party; So, most probably, *S* does not believe that the party is great;
- Step 4: *S* is cooperative and would not violate conversational maxims gratuitously;
- Step 5: The locutionary act needs to be interpreted in a way that does not carry the illocutionary force of an assertion;
- Step 6: *S* does not commit to *p*; *S* intends to communicate rather his non-commitment to *p*, or more probably to its contrary, i.e. to the fact that the party is awful.

This type of analysis, however, becomes more problematic when we take into account real cases, such as the Trump case above. Trump’s utterance (“I love babies”) is at the same time a non-serious assertion and an “indirect” speech act, whose effects (comforting the mother; making fun of the mother; inviting the mother to leave), however, are not fully captured in the classification of cognitive effects underlying the description of illocutionary forces. What is problematic is that Trump does not breach apparently any conversational maxim. He is relevant and apparently truthful, but the mother (only) interprets the assertion as aimed at reassuring her (communicating that the event does not upset him), while Trump and the audience understand it as a rather insulting invitation to leave. What Trump makes clear in his explanation is that he intended to address and fix an interruption of his speech caused by the baby. His utterances need to be analyzed starting from the event they take into account (a baby crying or an unwanted interruption?). Trump may love babies, but his utterance is anyhow non-serious if he is addressing an unpleasant breach and not the baby’s discomfort.

A more serious problem with the Gricean approach to the reconstruction of non-presumptive speech acts is the analysis of the Case 2.5: Blackmail). In this case, we can claim that a declarative locutionary act was made, which was intended to inform the interlocutors. No maxim was apparently violated: the citizens in a heated discussion assert that Mr. Bresler was “blackmailing” the City Council. In fact, the assertion was a complaint and not an accusation, but the speech act was not indirect, nor non-serious. The communicative context affects the interpretation of the utterance and the words used. For this reason, in order to retrieve the communicated (and reported) purpose of the utterance we need to take into consideration, at the same time, the utterance and the context in which it was performed.

This case suggests that the analysis and attribution of commitments to the original speaker or the quoter needs to involve a broader picture of communication. The reconstruction of the speaker’s commitments in the Blackmail case is hard to result from an analysis that starts from the content of an utterance, which needs then to be pragmatically enriched and processed by situating it in the context. Without taking

into account from the beginning the context and the purpose of the conversation the speaker was involved in, it is difficult to understand “why the utterance was produced, that is, what the goal or intended effect(s) of the speaker was in producing the utterance” (Geis 1995, p. 38). If we want to reconstruct the speaker’s commitments resulting from his utterance, we need to understand first his intention in the specific context of the conversation, from which it is possible to derive its interactional or communicative function (Kissine 2013, p. 63). For this reason, we need to reconsider the notion of illocutionary force, and the relationship between propositional content, locutionary acts, and illocutionary acts for the purpose of commitment attribution. In the next section, we suggest that the categories provided by the illocutionary acts are not sufficient for analyzing utterances in context, namely utterances as sequences of a dialogue or a conversation.

2.6 Communicative Intentions and Communicative Purposes

In the section above, we addressed the inferential dimension of the attribution of illocutionary forces to utterances. We underscored how presumptions work even in the interpretation of the “literal” utterances, and how more complex types of inferences are at work in case of indirect speech acts. However, our goal is the reconstruction of the commitments, not the classification of utterances according to cognitive criteria.

The illocutionary forces have been described and classified by Searle based on the “direction of fit,” namely the relationship between the proposition and the world of the utterance (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, pp. 92–95). This leads to a description of utterances in terms of intended cognitive responses: “For some audience A , U (the utterer) intended his utterance of x to produce in A some effect (response) E , by means of A ’s recognition of that intention” (Grice 1968, p. 230). However, the response (effect) is only cognitive in nature, namely beliefs (belief that p) and intentions (intention to bring about the truth of p), such that the reason for the cognitive response is the recognition of this very intention (Grice 1968, p. 230; Kissine 2012).

This view says very little about the effects that an utterance can have on the conversation, or the intentions expressed by non-serious utterances (Kissine 2012, p. 177). Moreover, the description of some speech acts in cognitive terms does not account for the interactional intention of the speaker, namely the effect he intends to have on the conversation. A speaker performs an assertion for many reasons that cannot be reduced to representing a belief concerning a state of affairs. If we do not take into account their interactional and conversational dimension we cannot capture when an utterance is aimed at informing or just reminding of a commitment, or when it is aimed at warning the hearer or threatening him (Kissine 2012, Chapter 6).

For this reason, instead of conceiving intentions in cognitive terms, it can be more useful to analyze the intentions (and commitments) starting from the communicative purposes of utterances, namely the way they contribute to the “work of the interaction in which it occurs” (Geis 1995, p. 10; 32). In this sense, we need to focus on the joint (social) actions performed by the interlocutors, and not on the individual actions that speech act theory describes (Kecskes 2010a, p. 2889; Mey 2001, p. 214). Such purposes are captured by neither a speech-act level description nor a sequence-level analysis. A higher-level classification is needed, in which the individual higher-order intentions that the participants express through their utterances are described according to “conversational demand” (Dascal 1992; Mann 1988), namely their dialogical and communicative aims. The focus is not on the connection between the individual moves, but rather on the relationship between the joint purpose of the dialogue (such as making a decision) and the individual utterances, explaining why a participant is performing a specific speech act (is he requesting information? Is he trying to persuade the interlocutor?).

The starting point of the process of the attribution of commitments should not be the translation of single utterances into a finite set of intended cognitive responses. Rather, we should start from the understanding and reconstruction of the actions that utterances (or strings or parts of utterances) perform in context (Levinson 1983, p. 291), namely the intended effects that the utterances have on the conversational interaction (Mey 2001, p. 163). These acts can be named “pragmatic acts,” using the term coined by Mey (2001, p. 94). We will refer to them as conversational acts (or “dialogue moves,” in the sense specified below), and the underlying intentions will be referred to as “conversational intentions” in the sense of intents (that can be presumed in a given context) to carry out some conversational effects by means of their utterances (or parts or strings thereof) (Bach and Harnish 1979, p. 7). On this view, the reconstruction of the actions performed by means of an utterance and the attribution of commitments is matter of assessing the various presumptions that can emerge in a specific context. If we consider the context, the background information, the type of dialogue or discourse, and the utterance content and type, we reconstruct the meaning of an utterance through several presumptions of different type and level, which result in inferences that are more or less defeasible (Capone 2005, p. 1360, 2013a, Kecskes 2008, 2010a).

The first important consequence of this approach is that the relationship between utterances and commitments needs to be analyzed from a different perspective. The literature on speech act underscores how commitments result from various types of speech acts. However, from an argumentation perspective what matters are the interactional (communicative) purposes that the speaker can reasonably pursue by means of his utterance, more than the cognitive effects he intends to carry out and to be recognized. For this reason, what matters is how the speaker intentionally modifies the conversational context, not the utterance type or illocutionary force.

The perspective on classification of actions in conversation is thus modified. Instead of considering the relationship between an utterance (words) and the world, the focus is placed on the relationship between an utterance, or rather a discourse move (see Levinson 1983, p. 291, 1992) and the macro and micro effects that it can have on the conversational setting.

The second relevant consequence is the reconstruction of commitments by assessing different presumptions of different type and level, starting from the ones associated with the presumed purpose of the interaction and of the speaker's utterance (or string or parts thereof). In this sense, the starting point is the type of activity the interlocutors are engaging in, and the goal becomes the reconstruction of the presumable conversational (or interactional) actions that they propose or perform (Levinson 1992; Mey 2001, Chapter 6). This reconstruction can be defeasible, but once all the factors are considered, the interpretation can also become the only reasonable one, which can be hardly retracted by the speaker. This consequence and the problem of the force of commitment will be the topic of the next chapter.

The focus on the communicative purposes of an utterance (or more generally a string of utterances or a part of an utterance) leads us to the problem of describing and classifying the generic purposes within a conversational context. We will address this issue in the section below.

2.7 Commitments and Joint Communicative Purposes

As mentioned above, utterances cannot be interpreted independent of their communicative contexts, which involve necessarily an audience or an interlocutor (even only a potential one). In argumentation theory, communicative contexts are conceived as dialogues, actual or potential, in which the speaker and the audience or the interlocutors pursue a specific joint goal. On this view, dialogical (and communicative) contexts are represented in terms of communicative or dialogical intentions (in the sense of Grosz and Sidner 1986: 178), which mirror the main purposes of the agents engaging in a discussion (Grice 1975, p. 45; van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, p. 72).

The joint purposes of a dialogue, namely the interlocutors' generic "we-intentions" of pursuing a joint activity (Searle 2002, pp. 92–94), were classified by Walton (Macagno 2008; Walton 1989, 1990, 1998; Walton and Krabbe 1995) in six "types of dialogue:" persuasion, negotiation, inquiry, deliberation, information-seeking, and eristics. The typology of dialogue types, even though non-comprehensive, represents the most common and generic goal-oriented types of dialogical interactions (Dunin-Keplicz and Verbrugge 2001, McBurney and Parsons 2009). The types of dialogue are represented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Types of dialogue and their characteristics

Type	Initial situation	Main goal	Participants' aims	Side benefits
1. Persuasion dialogue	Conflicting points of view.	Resolving conflicts by verbal means.	Persuading the other(s).	Develop and reveal positions.
				Build up confidence.
				Influence onlookers.
				Add to prestige.
2. Negotiation	Conflict of interests & need for cooperation.	Making a deal.	Getting the best out of it for oneself.	Reach a compromise.
				Build up confidence.
				Reveal positions.
				Influence onlookers.
3. Inquiry	General ignorance on an issue.	Increasing knowledge based on evidence.	Finding a "proof" or destroying one.	Add to knowledge.
				Gain experience.
				Remove doubts.
4. Deliberation	Need for action.	Reaching a group decision on how to proceed.	Influencing the outcome through collaboration and compromise.	Reach an agreement.
				Find circumstances.
				Add to education.
				Express preferences.
5. Information-seeking	Personal ignorance.	Finding information.	Gaining, passing on, showing, or hiding personal knowledge.	Reach an agreement.
				Learn facts.
6. Eristics	Conflict and antagonism.	Reaching a (provisional) accommodation in a relationship.	Striking the other party and winning in the eyes of onlookers.	Show off cleverness.
				Develop and reveal positions.
				Gain experience and amusement.
				Add to prestige.
				Vent emotions.

Adapted from Walton and Krabbe (1995), p. 66

The idea of representing global and joint communicative intentions (in the sense of communicative purposes) as generic dialogical goals can be used for representing in the most generic fashion what the interlocutors can be held to pursue in their interaction. Clearly, real dialogues are not uniform, as various dialogical goals can be pursued during an interaction. Global dialogical (or communicative) goals cannot be solely conceived as a priori we-intentions that are used for interpreting (and predicting) the individual utterances, or rather the higher-order and communicative intentions expressed by them (Haugh and Jaszczolt 2012, p. 101; Ruhi 2007).³ Instead, they can be better investigated using the concept of emerging intention (Kecskes 2010b, 2013, p. 50):

The emergent side is co-constructed by the participants in the dynamic flow of conversation. This means that intention is not necessarily an a priori phenomenon; it can also be generated and changed during the communicative process.

On this perspective, the global communicative intention is co-constructed through individual “dialogue moves” (which correspond to discourse segments, see Grosz and Sidner 1986, p. 178), which can be of different nature. Thus, the participants to a dialogue need to intend to engage in a specific joint activity, defined by the situational and institutional context. However, they interact by expressing their own individual communicative intentions (Haugh and Jaszczolt 2012), namely proposals of modifying the conversational context by affecting the interlocutor’s replies and commitments in a specific way. Such proposals, after being recognized, can be followed up or rejected by the interlocutor (Searle 2002, pp. 92–94). The global communicative “we-intention” is then not only a priori concept, but is rather constructed and reconstructed by recognizing, accepting, refusing the higher-order intentions of the interlocutors during the interaction.

On this approach, dialogues are regarded as composed of heterogeneous higher-order intentions that at the same time are coherent with and contribute to the global dialogical goal (see the notion of motivational coherence in Mann 1988). This leads us to analyzing the individual communicative intentions expressed by the units of communication in a dialogue, which we will refer to as dialogue moves (Macagno and Bigi 2017).

2.8 Dialogue Moves

Dialogue types can be conceived as a system for classifying higher-order intentions, namely proposals of engaging in a specific joint activity (such as exchanging information or making a joint decision) (Kádár and Haugh 2013, pp. 221–223). On this

³We will use “global communicative/dialogical intention” or “dialogue goal” interchangeably to refer to a “we-intention” that characterizes the interaction, to which the individual utterances need to be relevant. The term “dialogical intention” will refer to the higher-order intention expressed by the individual move (negotiating; obtaining information, etc.) which in turn embed the communicative intention (the specific intention of performing a specific action through one’s utterance) (Haugh and Jaszczolt 2012, p. 102).

view, the global purpose of a discourse cannot be captured by a composition of grammatical units (or their underlying propositions) (Walton and Macagno 2016; Wang and Guo 2014). Rather, the discourse units need to be defined starting from the global purpose (Van Dijk 1977), analyzing them in terms of their contribution to a joint communicative purpose (Van Dijk 1977) or appropriateness to a conversational demand (Dascal 1992, p. 45; Mann 1988). The focus is not on the connection between the individual dialogue units, but rather on the relationship between the joint purpose of the dialogue (such as making a decision) and the individual utterances (Dascal 1992, p. 45; 50; Grosz and Sidner 1986; Mann 1988; Moeschler 1992, 2010). The aim is to explain why a participant is performing a specific speech act (is he requesting information? is he trying to persuade the interlocutor?) within a specific speech situation (Macagno and Bigi 2017).

The functional units composing the dialogue exceed the boundaries of single utterances (Levinson 1983, p. 291, 1992). They need to be defined starting from their role within the global meaning of discourse (Van Dijk 1977). Discourse segments or – as we prefer – *dialogue moves*, can be defined as follows (Grosz and Sidner 1986, p. 177):

[...] the utterances in a discourse are naturally aggregated into discourse segments. The utterances in a segment, like the words in a phrase, serve particular roles with respect to that segment. In addition, the discourse segments, like the phrases, fulfill certain functions with respect to the overall discourse.

These sequences represent general interlocutors' higher-order intentions, namely the interactional (or, more precisely, communicative) goals (or purposes) that people have (Haugh 2015, pp. 95–97; Ruhi 2007, p. 109). These intentions (which we will refer also as communicative goals in the aforementioned sense, namely what a speaker is aiming to achieve through talk) correspond to commitments (what the interlocutors hold the speaker responsible for) and affect utterance interpretation (Haugh 2015, p. 18). They are conversational demands, in the sense that they pursue communicative goals and at the same time affect the interlocutor's response in a specific fashion (Dascal 1992; Levin and Moore 1977).

The most general individual communicative (or dialogical) intentions that the moves express can be described using the typology of Walton and Krabbe (sharing some crucial features with the typology presented in Mann 1988, 515). Such dialogical intentions can be further specified by identifying sub-goals or more specific goals related to specific contexts of interaction. Table 2.2 below provides an outline of the most generic categories of moves. The *Category* indicates the type of move, the *Description* provides an explanation of the dialogical intention instantiated by the move and the final column provides *Examples* from (adapted) real dialogues in different contexts (Macagno and Bigi 2017, p. 155):

Table 2.2 Categories of dialogue moves

Category (Code)	Description of category	Example
Information sharing (IS)	Dialogue moves aimed at retrieving and providing information.	Doctor: I would like to know how you feel, and if your conditions has changed from the last visit.
		Patient: I feel a bit tired. In the last 4 months, I have been hospitalized three times.
		Doctor: Why?
		Patient: I passed out.
Persuasion (P)	Dialogue moves aimed at persuading the interlocutor, leading him or her to accepting a specific point of view.	Student 1: Smoking is bad for you, because it can affect your lungs. There are many studies claiming that smoking causes lung cancer.
		Student 2: It is true, but smoking has also beneficial effects, such as reducing stress.
Deliberation (D)	Dialogue moves aimed at making a decision.	Speaker 1: What would you do to control illegal immigration?
		Speaker 2: We have no border. We have no control. People are flooding across. We can't have it. I will build a wall. I will build a wall.
		Speaker 3: People want to see the wall built. They want to see the laws enforced.
Negotiation (N)	Dialogue moves aimed at solving a conflict of interests or goals, and making a joint decision satisfying the interests of both interlocutors.	Speaker 1: We are determined to make reforms for paying the debt. But we cannot accept the austerity measures that have affected badly our country and that you are proposing today.
		Speaker 2: You need to propose a plan of reforms that we can accept quickly.
Eristic (E)	Dialogue moves aimed at building or correcting the interlocutor's rapport within a dialogue (for example, confirming defining roles and offices within a relation).	Doctor: Why have you made such a decision without consulting us?
		Patient: I thought you said so.
		Doctor: Look at your therapeutic plan. <i>I have never said such a thing! You were supposed to take these pills twice a day!</i>
		Patient: I thought...
		Doctor: <i>You cannot do such a thing and then blame it on others!</i>

This very general description of some basic types of moves can be further specified, depending on the various dialogical practices. This type of approach can be used for identifying the global shared intention (type of interaction) of the dialogue, to which the move under analysis belongs. In this fashion, from the type of interaction and the presumption that the speaker intends to contribute in a relevant and constructive way thereto, it is possible to presume his generic communicative intentions.

This framework can be applied to some critical cases, to show how it can bring to light the communicative intention and the most generic commitments of the speaker. For example, we consider the Case 2.5: Blackmail), in which councilmen of the City Council of Greenbelt were engaging in a vigorous discussion with Mr. Bresler. The original shared communicative intentions (negotiating a proposal), due to the aggressive and uncompromising behavior of Bresler, shifted to a different type of interaction, the eristic dialogue, aimed at pursuing the goal of venting emotions (complaining, protesting, etc.). Considering this type of shared goal, the move “It seems that this is a slight case of blackmail” needs to be interpreted presumptively as a contribution to a heated discussion, and for this reason its presumptive attributed communicative intention is to vent emotions and attack (insult, complain against) Mr. Bresler. In this perspective, the move cannot be considered as a serious accusation. The newspaper, by reporting the whole context, provided the ground for understanding and attributing the correct communicative intention to the move, and for this reason, the quotation could not be considered as misleading the audience.

A more complex case is the Trump example (Case 2.3). In this case, the addressee of Trump’s moves misunderstands his communicative intention, which is then made explicit by Trump. The purpose of his move, however, emerges clearly when we consider the context (an official rally, i.e. a persuasive speech; a right-wing character known for his scarce respect for women), the non-verbal behavior of the speaker (Trump is mimicking the mother) and his tone of voice. Trump interrupts his persuasive speech and engages in an eristic dialogue aimed at venting his annoyance, or at least remedying the interruption. For this reason, his words “I hear that baby crying, I like it” need to be intended as expressing distress and anger caused by the baby’s disturbing the rally, and as ultimately aimed at urging the mother to stop the disturbance.

The Drunkard captain case is different from the two above, as the shared communicative intention is drawn from the contextual elements in addition to the previous interactions (an official accusation by the captain hurting the first mate). The institutional context is provided by the maritime rules, in which a logbook is regarded as the record of important events in the management, operation, and navigation of a ship that can be used in court in case of disputes, accidents, etc. The presumptive communicative intention of the first mate (from the previous interactions) can be eristic, i.e. aimed at responding to an offence (or at least a communication affecting negatively the first mate perceived as unjust or avoidable). The logbook provides elements for the interpretation of the move that are uncancellable (Capone 2009, 2013a), namely that any statement written thereon shall be considered as a record of important (i.e. unusual or significant) events for the ship. The interpretation of the statement as reporting the exceptionality of the captain’s soberness is just matter of drawing a hardly cancellable and defeasible inference from the rule stating “Every statement written on the logbook reports important or exceptional events.” However, this information-sharing intention connected with the logbook conflicts with the eristic exchange and relation between the captain and the first mate. In this case, the interpretation of the move, presumptively a possible case for defamation, could be challenged if considered in a wider context (the first mate was insulting the captain). The two presumptive communicative intentions that can

be attributed to the first-mate need to be weighted and analyzed, considering their defeasibility conditions (Was the dispute and the first mate's distress commonly known? Could the statement be erased or considered as an unofficial document or rough book?).

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we addressed the notion of commitment. A commitment is a dialogical obligation, a responsibility of the speaker for the intended effects of his utterance (or more specifically, of his move). In order to analyze how commitments can be related to utterances (or rather moves), we took into account the concepts of speech acts and illocutionary forces. The theories that have developed the analysis of speaker's intentions and the actions performed by speaking have focused on the single utterance and more specifically on the linguistic aspects thereof. We have shown how these studies can provide useful insights for the reconstruction of commitments. However, their approach to indirect speech acts or more complex communicative acts cannot account for the complex variety of communicative purposes speakers can pursue in a dialogue. Moreover, by reconstructing the purpose of an utterance starting from the utterance itself, enriching it with contextual elements, the role of the context, the background, and the conversation comes into play only afterwards and as a result of pragmatic processes. This approach leads to various levels and steps of processing, whose actual occurrence is still controversial (Kissine 2012, 2013).

The approach we proposed starts from the context and regards utterances (or strings of utterances or parts thereof) as dialogue moves, namely actions performed in a specific context and at the same time contributing to and constituting it. Dialogue moves are not placed in a context; they constitute the context and cannot be interpreted independent of it. For this reason, the starting point is the shared communicative goal that the interlocutors pursue, and the move is interpreted as a proposal to move the dialogue forward by pursuing a sub-goal or a different and related goal. On this perspective, the interpretative process is the result of various presumptions of different type and level, which are assessed and evaluated.

In the next chapter, we will address the mechanism of interpretation by considering some complex cases of interpretation and commitment attribution.

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