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### **Types of Dialogue, Dialectical Relevance and Textual Congruity**

**Abstract** Using tools like argument diagrams and profiles of dialogue, this paper studies a number of examples of everyday conversational argumentation where determination of relevance and irrelevance can be assisted by means of adopting a new dialectical approach. According to the new dialectical theory, dialogue types are normative frameworks with specific goals and rules that can be applied to conversational argumentation. In this paper is shown how such dialectical models of reasonable argumentation can be applied to a determination of whether an argument in a specific case is relevant are not in these examples. The approach is based on a linguistic account of dialogue and text from congruity theory, and on the notion of a dialectical shift. Such a shift occurs where an argument starts out as fitting into one type of dialogue, but then it only continues to makes sense as a coherent argument if it is taken to be a part of a different type of dialogue.

**Key words** Conversational argumentation, dialectical approach, dialectical relevance, textual congruity, types of dialogue.

The theory of dialogue types can be traced back to Aristotle's *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations*. In the second chapter of the latter work (165a38-b8), Aristotle classified four types of arguments, didactic, dialectical, examination arguments and contentious arguments. In the *Topics*, Walton notices (Walton 1990, pp. 416-417), Aristotle wrote about four contexts of reasoning, or dialogue frameworks (1998, p. 11): demonstration, dialectic, contentious reasoning, and misreasoning. Demonstration can be interpreted both as a scientific inquiry, and in terms of a pedagogical dialogue. In particular, dialectical reasoning was developed in a set of question-answer moves in the VIII book of the *Topics*. The Aristotelian ideas were partly developed in the Middle Ages in the theory of Obligations, but later abandoned. For a long time, the old dialectic was thought to be merely an antiquated art that had no place in the science of logic. It was not until recently that a new dialectic insert<sup>1</sup> was put forward (Walton, 1998) with a new classification of types of dialogue and viewed as contexts of argumentation, and meant to be normative models useful for the study of fallacies. Walton departed at some points from the ancient heritage of the old dialectic, developing modern categories of formal dialectics and dialogue games. The new dialectic analyzed fallacies as arguments that can be used in a dialogue as sophistical tactics, but can also be used as reasonable arguments in certain frameworks of dialogue (Walton 1998, p. 10, Walton 1992, p. 143).

In the new dialectic, an argument is always an argument *for a purpose*: it is a social and verbal means of trying to resolve, or at least to contend with, a con-

flict or difference that has arisen or exists between two (or more) parties (Walton, 1990, p. 411). One of the frameworks of use of reasoning can be an argument, an activity that occurs in an interactional context, most of the times dialectical. In this perspective, the Aristotelian notions of “reasoning” and “type of argument” are interpreted as activities in a dialogical framework. While for Aristotle a dialectical argument is a type of argument, in Walton’s new dialectic it refers to the whole framework of different dialogue types in which an argument can be used. In other words, the ancient method of evaluating arguments in a context of dialogue has been developed by interpreting the Aristotelian typologies of reasoning as different ways an argument can be used in a conversational exchange (p. 36).

The purpose of this paper is to show how the new dialectical theory of dialogue types is connected to the explanation of fallacies and irrelevancies. The theory of dialogue types in the new dialectic is presented as a normative model that is useful to explain some fundamental aspects of argumentation. Dialogue types are analysed from the point of view of textual congruity and interlocutors’ goals. Using tools of the new dialectic like profiles of dialogue and common ground, it is shown how the model of dialogue types allows one to analyze the phenomena of dialectical shifts embeddings. It is then shown how these phenomena are needed to explain dialectical relevance.

## **1. Dialogues types**

The theory of dialogue types in the new dialectic was introduced in (Walton 1989, 1990), and further developed and organized in (Walton and Krabbe 1995) and (Walton 1998). In the new dialectic, a dialogue is conventionalized, purposive joint activity between two speech partners (p. 29). This abstract definition of dialogue is applied to different types of “joint activities” by means of dialogue types. The interlocutors can, in fact, have different kinds of goal, which influence the nature of the interaction. In this conception of dialogue, we can notice that the two parties have individual goals (for instance, in a negotiation, getting the best out of the discussion), and an “interactive” goal (for instance, always in a negotiation, making a deal). The individual goals are sub-ordered to the collective goal, or purpose of the communicative interaction. A type of dialogue, in this perspective, is a normative framework in which there is an exchange of arguments between two speech partners reasoning together in turn-taking sequence aimed at a collective goal (Walton 1998, p. 30).

Dialogue types can be characterized by the type of commitments (propositional or not), the type of starting point (contrast of opinion, open problem, decision to be made), the type of dialogical goal (persuading, making a deal...). The typology of dialogue types is represented in table 1.

| TYPE                   | INITIAL SITUATION                            | MAIN GOAL  | PARTICIPANTS' AIMS                                    | SIDE BENEFITS   |
|------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Persuasion Dialogue | Conflicting points of view                   | Resolution of such conflicts by verbal means             | Persuade the other(s)                                 | Develop and reveal positions<br>Build up confidence<br>Influence onlookers,<br>Add to prestige                |
| 2. Negotiation         | Conflict of interests & need for cooperation | Making a deal  | Get the best out of it for oneself                    | Agreement,<br>Build up confidence<br>Reveal position<br>Influence onlookers<br>Add to prestige                |
| 3. Inquiry             | General ignorance                            | Growth of knowledge & agreement                          | Find a "proof" or destroy one                         | Add to prestige<br>Gain experience<br>Raise funds   |
| 4. Deliberation        | Need for action                              | Reach a decision   | Influence outcome                                     | Agreement<br>Develop & reveal positions<br>Add to prestige,<br>Vent emotions                                  |
| 5. Information-seeking | Personal Ignorance                           | Spreading knowledge and revealing positions              | Gain, pass on, show, or hide personal knowledge       | Agreement<br>Develop & reveal positions<br>Add to prestige,<br>Vent emotions                                  |
| 6. Eristics            | Conflict & antagonism                        | Reaching a (provisional) accommodation in a relationship | Strike the other party & win in the eyes of onlookers | Agreement<br>Develop & reveal positions<br>Gain experience,<br>Amusement<br>Add to prestige,<br>Vent emotions |

**Table 1: Types of Dialogue and their Characteristics (Walton and Krabbe 1995, p. 66).**

In a persuasion dialogue, one party, the proponent, tries to persuade by means of arguments the other party, the respondent, that a thesis is true (Walton 1998, p. 37). In a persuasion dialogue, the disagreement between the interlocutors stems from the respondent being convinced of the truth of a proposition opposite to the proponent's thesis. The role of the respondent, in this dialogue, is to prove his own thesis. Each party tries to persuade the other party to change his opinion, by leading it by means of arguments to commit himself to or to concede certain propositions. Persuasion dialogue can be identified with the critical discussion analyzed by (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1984; 1987; 1992).

Negotiation is an interest-based context of dialogue, in which the goal is to make a deal. Both parties try to maximize the benefits they can get out of it, and try to reach a compromise which is acceptable by both of them. In this type of dialogue, persuasion may be irrelevant or secondary, and it is involved usually to set up a dialogue agenda for negotiation. In negotiation, the goal is not to show that a proposition is acceptable or right; for this reason, a commitment is not an assertion that some proposition is true (Walton 1993, p. 94). Commitments are instead concessions of some goods or services in order to lead the interlocutor to comparable concessions, until a settlement is reached.

Inquiry is a collaborative investigation aimed at proving a proposition, or showing the impossibility of proving it. The focus is on propositions, not on interests such as negotiation, but the starting point is not a conflict of opinion, such as the persuasion dialogue, but an open problem. The inquiry can be successful only when all participants agree upon the same conclusion at the end. In this type of dialogue, similar to the Aristotelian demonstration, the premises of an instance of reasoning are supposed to be better established than its conclusion. The goal is not to show the plausibility or acceptability of a proposition, such as in the persuasion dialogue, but to prove that a proposition is or is not part of the established knowledge. Moreover, retraction of commitments is not generally permitted.

Deliberation in the new dialectic is similar to inquiry inasmuch as it starts from an open problem. However, the problem is practical and the goal of a deliberation is to decide how to act. The main goal is agreement, but it does not coincide with the end of the dialogue, since a decision can be made by an authority without the general agreement. Deliberation is concerned with the future and plans. The interlocutors have to balance the pro and cons of a possible course of action, assessing its possible consequences. The typical kind of reasoning involved is called practical reasoning: an agent considers different possibilities of carrying out an action on the basis of its consequences, and chooses the one leading to the best, or less negative, outcome relative to the goal in a set of circumstances.

In an information-seeking dialogue, a participant lacks and needs some information and requests it from the interlocutor, who is an expert, or has some knowledge, or is position to know something. Unlike the other kinds of dialogue, the information-seeking type is grounded on an asymmetrical dialogical relationship, in which the goal is to spread knowledge. Information-seeking has not as its purpose to prove something, but to retrieve a piece of knowledge. For instance, an example of this type of dialogue can be provided by the case below (Walton 1996, p. 61). A tourist needs a piece of information, and asks a person supposed to know it.

#### Case 1

**First tourist:** Could you tell me where the Central Station is?

**Shopkeeper:** It is across the bridge, one kilometer south

**First tourist:** Thank you [to the second tourist]. Ok. Let's head for the bridge.

Eristic dialogue can be considered a family of dialogues characterized by verbal fighting aimed at reaching a provisional accommodation in a relationship.

Both participants try to win, that is, achieve some effects on onlookers, for instance, striking him out or humiliating him. However, the goal of the dialogue is to resolve a situation of antagonism and conflict between two parties, releasing powerful emotions that otherwise would degenerate into physical fights or frustration. Eristic dialogues vent repressed emotions, and are characterized by anarchy in rules.

The dialogue types have subtypes, characterized by different factors. For instance, persuasion dialogue can be classified into its subtypes according to the type of initial conflict (single, multiple, compound), the nature of the matter discussed, the degree of rigidity of the rules, the preciseness of the procedural description of the dialogue, the admixtures from other types of dialogue. A typical case of admixture is the discussion of a proposal, a persuasion dialogue embedded into a larger deliberation dialogue. In other cases, the admixture does not affect the goal or the essential characteristics of the dialogue, influencing only the relationship between the interlocutors (Walton and Krabbe call it “flavour”). For instance, in a persuasion dialogue, one party may behave as an expert, introducing a certain asymmetry between the participants. Other relevant criteria are the knowledge of the participants and their role. For instance, the expert consultation, a subtype of information-seeking dialogue, is characterized by fact that one party is an expert while the other is not. In the didactic subtype of information seeking, in addition to the different role of the interlocutors, the purpose is different. In this context, the purpose is to turn the layman into an expert himself. The position of the person is determinant in characterizing the interview, in which the subject is an important person or somebody having a story to tell. The subtypes of dialogue can be represented as shown in table 2.

| TYPE                   | SUBTYPES                | TYPE                   | SUBTYPES              |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Persuasion Dialogue | Dispute                 | 4. Deliberation        | Means-ends discussion |
|                        | Formal discussion       |                        | Discussion of ends    |
|                        | Discussion of proposals |                        | Board meeting         |
| 2. Negotiation         | Bargaining              | 5. Information-Seeking | Expert consultation   |
|                        | Making a package deal   |                        | Didactic dialogue     |
| 3. Inquiry             | Scientific research     |                        |                       |
|                        | Investigation           | 6. Eristics            | Interrogation         |
|                        | Examination             |                        | Eristic discussion    |
|                        |                         |                        | Quarrel               |

**Table 2: Subtypes of Dialogue in the New Dialectic**

The notion of admixture introduces one of the most critical and basic aspects of the dialogue types theory, the relations between dialogue contexts. Dialogue models are normative frameworks and are used to describe and evaluate everyday dialogical interactions. Real dialogues are much more complex and articulated than the six typologies presented. Often they present characteristics belonging to different dialogue types. In (Walton 1990) debate is for instance analysed as a persuasion dialogue having some features of an eristic confrontation. The participants’ goal is to persuade a third party, but in this process of persuasion the rules are quite permissive and allow direct attack and moves similar to a quarrel. However, debate has rules, unlike a quarrel. These rules can be more or

less strict, depending on the institutional context in which the debate takes place. For instance, in a university debate certain kinds of personal attack allowed in a political debate are not permitted. Debate is one of the three mixed dialogues analysed in (Walton and Krabbe 1995, pp. 83-85). The other two types of dialogue are the committee meeting and the Socratic dialogue. In a committee meeting all the types of dialogue can be mixed. The goal of a committee meeting is to make recommendations that are binding. The general goal can be, for instance, to form a collaborative plan to carry out an action, and as a first stage the kind of dialogue is deliberation. The other members of the committee board can oppose a proposal. In order to reach agreement, persuasion, eristic, inquiry and information-seeking can be involved. Socratic dialogue is a kind of inquiry, but persuasion is an essential part of it. Socratic dialogue starts from an open problem, but proceeds with a series of persuasion sub-dialogues, in which Socrates questions or refutes the thesis his interlocutor is committed to. In this kind of persuasion dialogue, persuasion is mixed with inquiry and a maieutic function is performed. The three most important mixed dialogues are summarized in table 3 (p. 66):

| MIXED DIALOGUES                                      | INITIAL SITUATION  | MAIN GOAL   | PARTICIPANTS' AIMS   |
|--|--|---|--|
| Debate<br>(Persuasion and<br>eristics)               | Conflicting points<br>of view in front of<br>a third party                 | Accommodating con-<br>flicting points of<br>view                                | Persuade or influ-<br>ence each other and<br>a third party |
| Committee meeting<br>(Mainly delibera-<br>tion)      | Conflict & an-<br>tagonism & need<br>for agreement in<br>practical matters | Working out a policy<br>and endorsing it  | Influence outcome  |
| Socratic Dialogue<br>(Mainly persuasion<br>dialogue) | Illusion of knowl-<br>edge   | Maieutic function<br>(bringing to birth<br>new ideas through<br>the discussion) | Refute and avoid<br>being refuted<br>agreement             |

**Table 3: Mixed Dialogues in the New Dialectic**

## 2. Embeddings and Dialogue Shifts

Dialogue models, as shown in table 1, are not independent and unrelated frameworks, but tools to evaluate and analyze real dialogues. Real dialogues often involve more than a dialogue type, or shift from one dialogue type to another. Persuasion, for instance, can be involved in negotiation or inquiry, inquiry, in its turn, can easily shift to information seeking. For instance, before a negotiation can start, the participants have to agree upon an agenda, and this process is regulated by a persuasive context of dialogue. In an inquiry, when a person reaches a conclusion, his goal becomes to convince the other interlocutors; on the other hand, in order to prove a point information often needs to be collected.

Dialectical shifts, as modelled in the new dialectic, are distinguished from mixed dialogues and dialogue flavours. In a shift, there is a transition from a type of dialogue to another, not a mixture of dialogues involving essential or non essential dialogical characteristics. Dialectical shifts can be sudden or gradual

(Walton 1992, p. 138), that is, there can be a *déplacement* of one type by another, or a shifting from one dialogue to another. In the first case, the dialogue the participants are involved in is (temporally) closed and a new verbal interaction is opened, unrelated to the previous one. For instance, after a negotiation, the interlocutors can meet in a bar and start arguing about soccer (Walton and Krabbe 1995, p. 101). In the second case, the dialogue in which the conversation has shifted is related to the previous. For instance, in a discussion about the decision on whether or not to build a new nuclear reactor, experts may be consulted on whether nuclear reactors are safe (Walton 1992, p. 138).

Dialectical shifts can be licit or illicit. In the licit shifts, the second dialogue is functionally related to the first dialogue. In this case, the second dialogue is embedded in the first one, because it helps the first dialogue to move along constructively. For instance, negotiation dialogues often shift to persuasion dialogue, such as in case of divorce dispute mediation. In these types of negotiation, the shift to a persuasion dialogue on themes like child custody allows the participants to evaluate the situation and to make the most reasonable deal. On the contrary, the dialogue might shift to a quarrel, in which the two parties counter-blame each other. In this case, however, the shift is not constructive for the purpose of the interaction, but prevents the deal from being made. Embeddings can occur in case the main dialogue comes to a deadlock, or to a point in which persuading the initial interactive goal would not lead to any result. We can consider, for instance, the following case (Walton 1998, pp. 116-117):

#### Case 2

Suppose you have entered into a fixed-price construction contract for you house that calls for reinforced concrete foundations but fails to specify how deep they should be. The contractor suggests two feet. You think five feet is closer to the usual depth for your type of house. Now suppose the contractor says: 'I went along with you on steel girders for the roof. It's your turn to go along with me on shallower foundations'. No owner in his right mind would yield. Rather than horse-trade, you would insist on deciding the issue in terms of objective safety standards. 'Look, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe two feet is enough. What I want are foundations strong and deep enough to hold up the building safely. Does the government have standard specifications for these soil conditions? How deep are the foundations of other buildings in this area? What is the earthquake risk here? Where do you suggest we look for standards to resolve this question?

In this case, a negotiation temporarily shifts to an information-seeking dialogue. The information required is necessary to allow the negotiation to move further. In this verbal exchange, the negotiation shifts to an information-seeking in order to go over a deadlock, or a situation in which the two parties would not have been able to resolve the conflict of interests. When the information needed to the negotiation is retrieved, the dialogue can shift back to negotiation.

As seen above, dialogues are characterized by the main goal of the dialogue and by the individual purposes of the interlocutors. Both the participants must agree upon the goal of the interaction, in order for it to be successful. In case of licit shift, the main goal of the dialogue is maintained (embedding), or a new goal is agreed upon by the two parties (sudden shift). However, sometimes the

individual purpose of one party prevails over the interactional goal. In this case, a party shifts to another type of dialogue to achieve his end. This situation is different from the type of non-constructive shift presented above. The shift from a negotiation to a quarrel is simply non-constructive, but it has not a specific function in a dialogue. This shift is dialectically useless, unless the failure of achieving a deal was the real purpose of one of the parties. On the contrary, one party can shift from one context to another pursuing an interactive goal that does not match the type of dialogue in which the participants were engaged. In this case, the shift is a fallacious dialectical strategy to prevail on the interlocutor. Many different fallacies or fallacious strategies can be analysed in terms of dialogical shifts.

In a persuasion dialogue, one party may defend his own point of view without accepting arguments supporting the opposite position. It tries to get the best out of the discussion, while his interlocutor aims at resolve a conflict of opinions. For instance, we can analyze the following case of biased argumentation (Walton 1991, p. 2):

#### Case 3

Bob and Wilma are discussing the problem of acid rain. Wilma argues that reports on the extent of the problem are greatly exaggerated and that the costs of action are prohibitive. Bob points out that Wilma is on the board of directors of a U.S. coal company and that therefore her argument should not be taken at face value.

On the other hand, a negotiation dialogue may be presented from one party as a persuasion dialogue. In the case below, the goal of the dialogue is to divide the labours within the household. The husband presents this negotiation as a persuasion dialogue, attributing to the interlocutor a different interactional goal. This strategy lies beneath the fallacy of straw man (Walton and Krabbe 1995, p. 110):

#### Case 4

Wife: I'll do the cooking if you'll washes the dishes  
 Husband: Why should I?

Dialogues can shift from an argumentative context of dialogue to a non-argumentative context, and vice versa. For instance, as seen above, a negotiation can shift to a quarrel. A fallacious case of such kinds of shifts is represented by some shifts from information-seeking dialogue to inquiry. For instance, a circular sequence of question-reply can be acceptable and reasonable in the context of an information-seeking, but if this circular reasoning is used to prove a point, instead of providing information, the argument begs the question (Walton 1992).

The clashing of a participant's goal with the purpose of the interaction is evident in the case of the fallacious use of the argument from consequences. Reasoning from consequences is an argument scheme typical of deliberation or negotiation. However, it can be used in a persuasion dialogue, such as in the case below (Walton 2000, p. 133):

## Case 5

The United States had justice on its side in waging the Mexican war of 1848. To question this is unpatriotic, and would give comfort to our enemies by promoting the cause of defeatism.

In this example, a persuasion dialogue shifts to a deliberation. The speaker cites the negative consequences not to support a viewpoint, that is the actual goal of the dialogue, but to advocate a decision.

Argument from consequences is the basis of several emotional arguments, such as arguments from fear appeal, or appeal to threat, or appeal to pity. They are all grounded upon a prudential pattern of reasoning. This line of argument is reasonable in negotiation or (sometimes) in deliberation, but is fallacious when used in a persuasion dialogue. We can consider, for instance, case 6 (Walton and Krabbe, 1995, p. 109-110):

## Case 6

A union leader argues for a pay raise. He points out that the workers may get very angry if they don't get the pay raise and may go on strike with disastrous consequences for all. The president of the board retorts that, though he personally would be glad to grant the pay raise, his colleagues on the board would sooner close the shop.

We can notice that, in this case, the union leader uses a threat to shift a persuasion dialogue to a negotiation. The interlocutor accepts the new dialogical context, and replies with another threat. The fallacy prevents the dialogue to move forward, turning it into a negotiation. The argument from appeal to pity involves a similar shift from persuasion to negotiation.

*Ad hominem* arguments are arguments typical of eristic discussions, in which personal attacks are common and acceptable. However, when used in a debate or a critical discussion, they are highly inappropriate. They shift the dialogue into a quarrel. In (Walton 1993, p. 96) *ad hominem* fallacies are analyzed as illicit dialogical transitions. For instance, the following argument is part of a debate in which the theme is the goods and services tax (GST). This move does not contribute to the goal of the debate; on the contrary, it is simply a personal attack that leads to the dialogue degenerating into a quarrel:

## Case 7

If the Minister really wants to reduce the deficit, if the Minister of Finance really wants to control the deficit, why does he not apply the GST to all the lies the Conservatives told in the last election campaign? Then our deficit would disappear overnight.

Many other fallacies can be analyzed in terms of illicit dialogical shifts. For instance, consider the fallacy *ad verecundiam* (how can you deny this? Do you think you know this argument better than doctor X?) can be considered an illicit transition from persuasion dialogue to expert consultant (information seeking) dialogue. *Ad ignorantiam* arguments (I have no proofs that x is false, therefore x is true) are reasonable patterns of reasoning typical of an inquiry, but fallacious in most cases of deliberation dialogue.

However, if a normative model of dialogue types is useful to describe the principal categories of licit or illicit shifts, in order to assess and individuate dialogue shifts it is necessary to enlarge the concept of context of dialogue from a set of norms to the common ground which can be seen as the communicative setting, the interlocutors' positions, the knowledge taken for granted, which can be institutional or cultural. Shifts, in fact, can occur not only from a type of dialogue to another, but also between dialogues belonging to the same category, but characterized by different rules. For instance, we can consider the argument from ignorance applied to a case in court. The line of reasoning "we do not have proofs supporting you are guilty, therefore you are not guilty" is acceptable; however, the contrary "you cannot prove you did not commit the crime, therefore you are guilty" in our legal system is simply fallacious. The fallaciousness, however, depends upon the institutional rules of the dialogue. During the French revolution, the *ad ignorantiam* argument was perfectly reasonable. Similarly, threats are common in negotiation, but they have to respect certain limits the interpersonal relation and social rules impose. For instance, physical threats in a classroom are nowadays unacceptable, but considered reasonable few decades ago (see also Walton and Macagno, to appear). Shifts, moreover, may occur within contexts belonging to the same typology, but characterized by a different common ground between the interlocutors. For instance, the strategy of many questions, such as 'Have you stopped cheating on your income taxes?' can be reasonable in a cross-examination in which the person examined admitted before that he had cheated on his income taxes. In another context, in which this proposition was not admitted, the move would have been fallacious.

The theory of dialogue types and dialogue shifts opens new perspectives on the way the structure of a dialogue can be analysed. The typology of dialogue types involves the initial situation, the goal of the interaction, the type of commitment. However, in order for the theory to explain the variety of shifts occurring in everyday conversation factors such as the interpersonal relationship, the social constraints, and the common ground between the interlocutors should be included in a broader notion of dialogue context.

### 3. Dialectical relevance and profiles of dialogue

The distinction between licit and illicit shifts between types of dialogue or dialogue contexts (we will refer with this term to a broader notion of dialogue mentioned above, including the interlocutors' common ground, their interpersonal relation, etc.) is closely related to the problem of dialectical relevance.

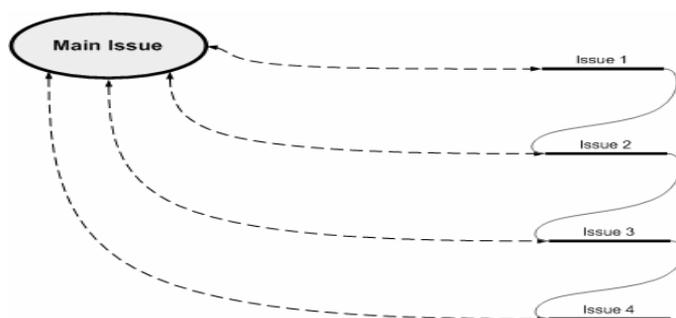
We can distinguish between two levels of relevance, relative to the broad notion of "content", or rather what the dialogue is about, and to the dialectical perspective, how the goal of the dialogue and its topic are fulfilled. The difference between these two levels can be explained by means of an example (Levinson 1983, p. 111):

#### Case 8

A: I do think Mrs. Jenkins is an old windbag, don't you?

B: Huh, lovely weather for March, isn't it?

In this case, the issue of the dialogue, or rather what the dialogue is about, shifts. The explanation of this change can be found at a dialectical level: A looks for the best explanation of why B refuses to accept the dialogue advanced. A possible reason can be that the person the opinion expressed is about is nearby, or that B is a close friend of Mrs Jenkins, etc. However, in the cases 4, 5, 6, 7 above, the issue has not shifted. What is irrelevant is the way the communicative interaction is bought about. In other words, it is not possible to explain the cases above only in terms of topic. The classic notion of relevance (see Grice, 1957, Levinson 1983; Sperber and Wilson 1986) encompasses these two levels, or better, the analysis we advance splits in two layers the classic linguistic concept. This division is necessary, however, because if a content irrelevance can be examined at a dialectical level, a dialectical irrelevance might not involve any topic or issue shift. At the content level, we can represent relevance in dialogue as pictured in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Content Relevance in Dialogue**

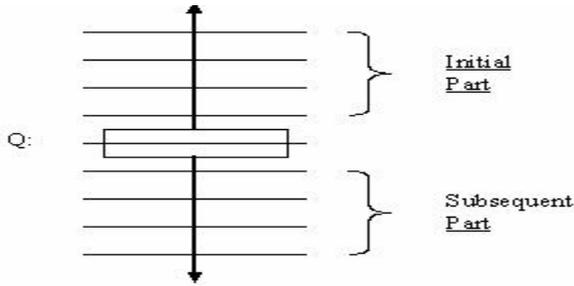
In this diagram, we can notice that in a dialogue the issues must be sub-ordered to the main issue in order to fulfil the requisite of content relevance. In other words, the sub-issues must be somehow connected to the “frame” (see for this notion Fillmore 2003) involved by the concept at stake.

The concept of dialectical relevance can be articulated at two levels, a global and a local one. The global level is represented in figure 1 by the main issue. In a critical discussion, for example, this is the conflict of opinions that is supposed to be resolved by the dialogue. Each specific issue of the four represented in figure 1 is an issue that is discussed at a local level. The discussion of one issue leads to the next one.

Dialectical shifts need to be taken into account as well. At a global level, it is possible to observe that shifts from critical discussion to quarrel are illicit, since a quarrel does not move forward the goal of a critical discussion. Similarly, shifts from persuasion to deliberation are usually not good. However, if we want to analyze the reason why a move is not relevant in a specific dialogue, and inquire into the conditions of relevance of the move, the analysis has been developed at a local level. The examination of relevance at a local level has to assess whether a move was an answer to a question relevant to the previous sequences of dialogue. In other words, if we imagine the process of argumentation as a question-reply interaction, an argument always answers a question, or a possible

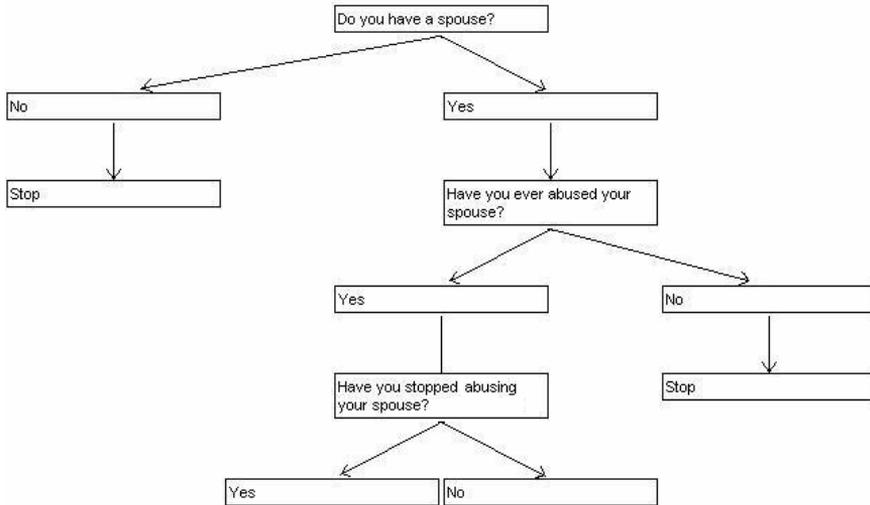
doubt of the interlocutor. If the move does not fulfil the role of answering the relevant question at that point in the dialogue, it is irrelevant.

This principle is the basis of Walton’s theory of profiles of dialogue, developed in (Walton, 1989, pp. 65-71). A profile of dialogue represents connected sequences of dialogical moves. A profile, in other terms, is a kind of focus on a fragment of dialogue, in which a move is evaluated in relation to the previous and subsequent context of dialogue. For instance, a question can be represented in profile 1 (Walton, 1989, p. 67).



**Profile 1: Generic Profile of Dialogue**

A move, in this model, has to respect the context in which it occurs, and the conditions the context imposes on it. The relevance of a question must be evaluated in relation to the context of answers and questions provided in the previous sequence of dialogue. In this perspective, the notion of common ground is related to the possibility of fulfilling an appropriate move in a dialogue. Profile 2 (Walton 1989, p. 68) shows an ideal sequence of question-reply for the fallacy of many questions.



**Profile 2: Profile of Dialogue for the Spouse Abuse Question**

From this model, we can observe that the ideal sequence of moves represents the context and the knowledge required in order for a move to be adequate. From the comparison between the ideal model and the real dialogue the acceptability of the move is evaluated.

Similarly, profiles of dialogue were used to evaluate when an argument from ignorance is adequate in a certain context of dialogue (see Walton, 1999). The argument, after being reconstructed, is compared to an ideal sequence of question-replies, connected to the rest of the dialogue. The sequence is supposed to move the dialogue further. From the comparison between the question the argument is supposed to answer to and the role it actually plays, its dialectical relevance is assessed.

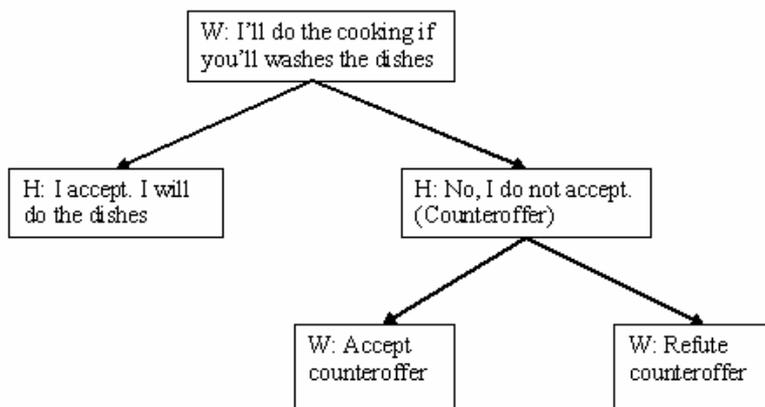
For instance, we can apply the method of profiles of dialogue to assess the dialectical relevance of case 4 above, in which the wife tries to negotiate the division of the labour, while the husband shifts the dialogue to a persuasion dialogue. We can represent the profile of dialogue the wife's move opens as follows:

Case 4

Wife: I'll do the cooking if you'll washes the dishes

Husband: Why should I?

The argumentation sequence in case 4 can be represented in profile 3 below.



**Profile 3: Profile of Dialogue for Case 3**

In this case, the wife's move is a proposal that can be fulfilled by the husband in different ways. In the profile the possibilities are outlined. The husband's answer is then compared to this model, and from the comparison it is possible to notice that it does not play the role of replying to a proposal imposed by the context. The move is for this reason considered dialectically irrelevant.

To conclude, we can notice that the theory of dialogue shifts can be applied to an analysis of real arguments only within a model of dialectical relevance.

Dialectical shifts can be assessed as relevant or irrelevant in two fashions: by evaluating relevance at a global or at a local level. The global level is a more general and less specific point of view on the structure of the dialogue. On the contrary, the local level of relevance connects the dialogue move to the role it has to fulfil in a context. The model of profiles of dialogue, for this reason, can be considered the foundation of the theory of dialogue shifts as tools for analysing the fallaciousness or acceptability of arguments.

#### 4. Profiles of dialogue and textual cohesion

The technique of profiles of dialogue can be considered to be a useful descriptive instrument to analyze and describe shifts. However, a profile does not provide an explanation of the reason why a shift from a type of dialogue into another fails to be acceptable. As noticed above, it is not possible to determine the licit and illicit shifts on the basis of dialogue types. Taking into consideration a broader concept of dialogue context (for a connection between context and dialogue types theory see also (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2005)), a simple analysis grounded upon the compatible and incompatible types of dialogue does not provide an acceptable analytical tool. The theory of dialogue shifts can be developed adopting a linguistic, instead of normative, perspective. The two grounds upon which this theoretical proposal can be founded are the notions of textual connective and action theory and the idea of the dialectical shift.

##### 4.1. Congruity theory

In the congruity theory (see Rigotti and Rocci, 2001; Rigotti and Rocci 2006), the text is seen as a hierarchy of predicates, having as arguments textual sequences. In order to explain the notion of congruity, it is useful to briefly introduce what is meant by predicate and what is the relation between a predicate and its arguments.

In congruity theory, predicates are considered to be possible ways of being, which impose a set of conditions upon their arguments, that is, the entities involved in that predicate. For instance, the predicate ‘to eat’, involving two predicates ( $x_1$ , the eating being, and  $x_2$ , the eaten thing), presupposes for instance that  $x_2$  is a solid food. A sentence such as “I ate water” would be meaningless, unless the word “to eat” is used metaphorically to manifest another predicate. Similarly, textual sequences can be conceived as arguments of a higher predicate, imposing a set of conditions on them. For instance we can consider the following (Rigotti and Rocci 2001, p. 72):

Case 9:

Il fait beau. Mais nous devons terminer notre papier sur le non-sens.

The connective ‘mais’ presupposes two sequences,  $p$  and  $q$ , such as that  $p$  must be interpreted as an argument supporting a conclusion  $r$  ( $p \rightarrow r$ ), while  $q$  as supporting the contrary or contradictory conclusion *non-r*. Predicates connecting textual sequences can be explicit or implicit. For instance, we can analyze the following text (Rigotti, 2005, p. 81):

Case 10:

My son does not drive. He is five.

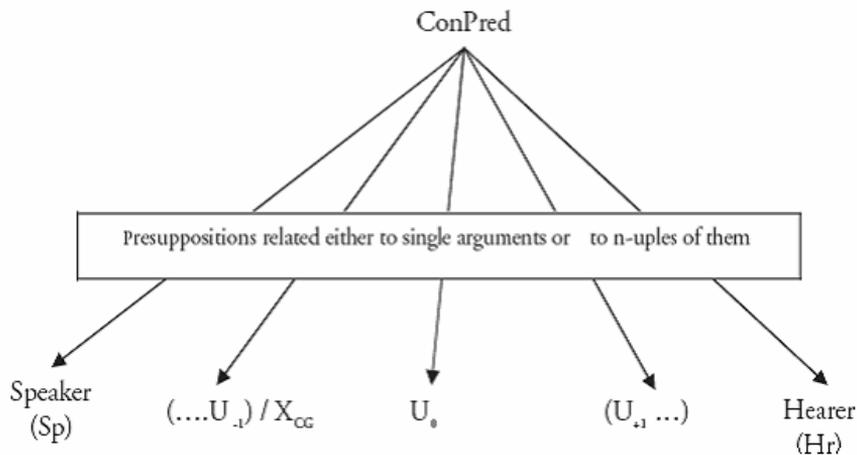
Here the meaning of the second sequence can be drawn only from the type of implicit relationship between the two sequences. The relationship, which we can conceive as an implicit predicate, is one of ‘explanation’.

Textual connective, as mentioned above, is between sequences, fragments of a text, namely a communicative event between the interlocutors, not simply sentences, abstract linguistic models. For instance, if we consider a situation in which one walking past stops a stranger and tells him:

Case 11:

Do you know that Bob got married last week?

In this case, we can observe that there is not cohesion between the implicit connective, that we can represent as ‘to inform’ or ‘to tell a good news’, and the sequence. Some fundamental presuppositions are not met, that is, the hearer does not know Bob, and is not interested in what has happened to him. The context, the mutual knowledge, and the interlocutors’ interests are to be considered arguments of the connective, the fundamental ground of textual cohesion, which we can represent in figure 2.



**Figure 2: The Fundamental Ground of Textual Cohesion (Rigotti 2005, p. 83)**

In this perspective, the text, or better the sequences of the text, are connected not only to the communicative intention (the relation between them), but also to the common ground, or context, including mutual knowledge (see for this concept Clark 1996).

#### 4.2. Cohesion and profiles of dialogue

Congruity theory can be easily applied to a dialectical interaction (for the concept of interaction, see Rigotti and Cigada 2004). The interlocutors in an interaction have distinct goals: for instance, if we consider the typologies of dialogue they might each want to get the best deal, or to persuade the other party, or one party to seek information and the other give it. The principle of examining the types of dialogue according to the interlocutors' intentions can be better explained by quoting a passage from the *Topics*, in which the bases of this idea can be found (*Topics*, VIII, 5):

Inasmuch as no rules are laid down for those who argue for the sake of training and of examination:-and the aim of those engaged in teaching or learning is quite different from that of those engaged in a competition; as is the latter from that of those who discuss things together in the spirit of inquiry: for a learner should always state what he thinks: for no one is even trying to teach him what is false; whereas in a competition the business of the questioner is to appear by all means to produce an effect upon the other, while that of the answerer is to appear unaffected by him; on the other hand, in an assembly of disputants discussing in the spirit not of a competition but of an examination and inquiry, there are as yet no articulate rules about what the answerer should aim at, and what kind of things he should and should not grant for the correct or incorrect defence of his position:-inasmuch, then, as we have no tradition bequeathed to us by others, let us try to say something upon the matter for ourselves.

In Aristotle's perspective, the interlocutors' common goal and positions (roles) establish the dialogue typology. In Walton's types of dialogue, the goal of each party is generally to succeed. However, in order for the communication to be successful, the interlocutors must have a common goal, which can be called at a local level a profile of dialogue, at a broader level a dialogue type, or better, a context of dialogue. With this latter term we identify a dialogue type situated within a specific context. In terms of congruity theory, the goal or function of the conversation can be seen as a higher connective, imposing the conditions on the communicative moves. For instance, we consider case 4, already mentioned above:

##### Case 4

Wife: I'll do the cooking if you'll wash the dishes

Husband: Why should I?

According to the enlarged perspective of profiles of dialogue, we can notice that the dialogue opened by Wife has as main goal a 'negotiation of domestic tasks'. The irrelevance, in this perspective, can be explained in terms of incongruity with the connective. The goal of Husband's move is not to reach a common agreement, neither to get the best deal (for instance negotiating for not doing anything at all), but to make the interlocutor "lose the dialogue game". Hus-

band, in other terms, wants Wife to lose, and refuses to enter into the discussion at the conditions Wife has set out by means of the implicit connective.

This approach has two main implications. First, dialectical shifts are analyzed in terms of incongruity, and not simply of irrelevance. Second, dialectical shifts are examined from the point of view of the goal of the interlocutor who shifts the dialogue. While embeddings or “relevant changes of dialogue type” can be seen as re-negotiations of the connective in order to fulfil the same goal the interlocutor has as a target, other dialectical shifts are ways of eluding the conversation and its grounds. In other words, Husband, in the case above, aims at changing the grounds of the conversation, that is, to reach an agreement on a topic. His dialectical shift, even though it might be interpreted as a shift from a type of negotiation to another, actually is a shift to a contest, or eristic dialogue. If we take into consideration Aristotle’s *Topics*, we can observe that the idea of the dialectical shift is present in the book dedicated to the dialogical strategies, book VIII (*Topics*, VIII, 11):

Accordingly it sometimes becomes necessary to attack the speaker and not his position, when the answerer lies in wait for the points that are contrary to the questioner and becomes abusive as well: when people lose their tempers in this way, their argument becomes a contest, not a discussion.

The principle that a man who hinders the common business is a bad partner, clearly applies to an argument as well; for in arguments as well there is a common aim in view, except with mere contestants, for these cannot both reach the same goal; for more than one cannot possibly win. It makes no difference whether he effects this as answerer or as questioner: for both he who asks contentious questions is a bad dialectician, and also he who in answering fails to grant the obvious answer or to understand the point of the questioner's inquiry.

In this passage, it is possible to understand how the fault of a shift to an adversarial contest is to disregard the common goal. The arguer, in other term, refuses the bases of the conversation, aiming at his own goal and leading the other party to lose.

## 5. Dialogue Types and Dialectical Relevance

The idea of types of dialogue can be considered the core of the new dialectical theory of fallacies, intended as moves that can be acceptable in certain contexts of dialogue, but unacceptable in others. Dialogue types, according to the new dialectical theory, are normative frameworks characterized by specific rules and representing different types of interactions. A move can fulfil the purpose of a dialogue type, or comply with its rules, but in another dialogical context it would not be constructive for the purpose of the dialogue. Dialogue types, whose basis were mentioned in Aristotle’s *Organon*, can be conceived as tools to evaluate the relevance of a move.

According to the new dialectical approach, one dialogue can shift into another in a relevant or irrelevant way. In the first case, a move makes the dialogue shift in order for the goal of the interaction to be fulfilled. In the second case, on

the contrary, the shift is a hindrance for the dialogical purpose. Shifts may occur between dialogue types, or simply between different contexts belonging to the same type of interaction. The general goal of a dialogue cannot, in fact, explain many fallacious shifts which are irrelevant not relative to the general purpose, but to the specific kind of interpersonal relation between the interlocutors. The notion of dialectical relevance is basic to the theory of dialogue types. It is the foundation of the evaluation of an argument's acceptability. However, the abstract theory of dialogue types needs to be connected to the empirical analysis of everyday arguments. The model of profiles of dialogue allows one to examine the local relevance of a move, in relation to the role it is supposed to fulfil in a broader context of dialogue.

The goal of this paper is to present a theoretical development of the model of dialogue types in the new dialectic. Including the notion of context and interlocutors' goals in the new dialectic's normative framework makes it possible to understand the reason behind the norms regulating of the dialogues, and the principles underlying the notion of dialectical relevance by means of the theory of profiles of dialogue. This approach is founded upon a linguistic account of dialogue and text, stemming from congruity theory. Dialogues are seen as texts and textual sequences ruled by a higher predicate. By analysing dialogues not only as successions of moves, but as an activities, factors such as agents and their goal can be included in the notion of dialogue, together with context and common ground. Dialectical relevance, in this perspective, is seen as based on fulfilment of the conditions the predicate representing the interactional purpose imposes on the sequence. Dialectical shifts can be seen as moves or sequences congruous or incongruous with the goal of the conversation. At a normative level shifts can occur potentially between most of the dialogue types, at a level in which the interlocutor's communicative intentions are relevant. A fallacious argument often occurs where there has been a shift in which an interlocutor does not respect the mutual target and transforms the dialogue into an eristic contest, or some other type of dialogue different from the original one.

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