Congruity theory and argumentation

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CONGRUITY THEORY AND ARGUMENTATION

This paper sets the premises of a theoretical approach to argumentation and to dialogue whose implications for the study of argumentation *in* dialogic interaction are stated in Rocci (this volume). Together the two papers present the results of a joint research effort. First, the paper concisely presents Congruity Theory, as a theory that provides the necessary conceptual instruments to tackle both the semantic and the pragmatic aspects of discourse. The meaningfulness of the units that make up the nodes of discourse structure is accounted for semantically in terms of predicate-argument frames where predicates impose *presuppositions* to their argument places and license semantic *entailments*. A notion of *connective predicate* defining the pragmatic function of utterances or broader discourse spans and their relations with other discourse units is introduced to bridge the semantic and the pragmatic levels and to justify intuitions of meaningfulness or nonsense at the utterance or discourse. This notion of connective predicate is then applied to argumentation: both the general *pragmatic conditions* of argumentation and the *logical requirements* of the particular inference schemes employed are analyzed as part of the presuppositions of the connective predicate at issue, which often imposes additional pragmatic and semantic restrictions beyond these two basic categories. Finally, a consistent framework of communicative distinctions is reconstructed beyond the vagueness and polysemy characterising the lexical field occupied by *dialogue* and its correlates. Apart from the "extended" uses of *dialogic* to refer to a quality pertaining to every communicative act, a relevant distinction emerges not only between *dialogue* – a communicative interaction where the participants alternate in the roles of speaker and hearer—and *monologue* – one-speaker discourse – but also, within the latter, between *monological discourse* (one's discourse to someone else) and *soliloquy* (speaking to oneself).

Keywords: connective predicate, presupposition, entailment, monologue and dialogue.

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1. A preliminary remark

This paper and the one by Rocci immediately following in this volume present two contiguous phases of a common ongoing research project aiming to identify the semantic and communicative properties of argumentative discourse that are expected to reflect the basic distinction between monologue and dialogue.

The two authors worked in close collaboration and the two papers do represent, strictly speaking, two "chapters" of the same story– a story that is, by the way, far from being concluded, as it will emerge from the "conclusive" remarks of Rocci's paper. Nevertheless, the contributions of the two investigators came to acquire a certain autonomy as they focused on different aspects and reflected different emphases. Thus, in order give each aspect of the research the development it deserved and enhance the readability of the whole it was decided to present it as two separate papers.

The investigation is essentially intended to solve two basic problems.

Firstly, eventhough the last two decades have witnessed an impressive development of argumentation theory at the philosophical as well as at the theoretical, and analytical levels, and the recent emergence of formal semantic approaches to discourse and dialogue has, in its turn, provided new tools to discourse analysis, we still lack a discourse-analytical approach focusing on the semantic and the communicative features that are specific to argumentative discourse.

Secondly, the distinction between *monologue* and *dialogue*, while appearing clean and almost obvious in ordinary language use, has come to show, after several decades of investigations carried out within the linguistic, social and psychological sciences, a remarkable complexity as well as fuzzy, uncertain borders.

Our current research aims at providing an integrated semantic and pragmatic approach to address the semantic and communicative organization of argumentative texts, as well as the specific communication processes that underlie the distinction between monologue and dialogue.

The basic conceptual instrument we use in both papers for investigating the notions of monologue and dialogue is provided by Congruity Theory (Rigotti 1993, 1994; Rigotti and Rocci 2001; Rocci 2003), a theory of meaning and discourse organisation integrated into a general approach to communicative interaction (Rigotti 2003).

The perspective and concerns of argumentation theory represent the backdrop against which the present analysis is placed, and should be eval-

uated. The main goal of the investigation is thus to show the usefulness of some specific semantic and pragmatic concepts developed within Congruity Theory for the definition of the distinctive features of argumentation in monologue and dialogue. Moreover, our analysis will lead to appreciate deep consonances and complementarities between current developments of the semantics and pragmatics of dialogue and recent advances in argumentation theory.

In the following two sections of the present paper I set up the framework for our research by introducing the core notions of Congruity Theory and by applying them to argumentative discourse, while in the third section I try to distinguish the different but related meanings covered by the term dialogue.

2. Congruity and Connective Predicates

The approach advocated by congruity theory is pragmatic, not only in the broad sense of considering the relevance of the contextual factors that integrate the linguistically encoded information in language use, but also in the etymological and more restrictive sense that it is centered on verbal communication as *action*.

The *meaning* of an utterance coincides with its intended effects, that is to say, with the change that it brings about in the context – yet more precisely in the *intersubjectivity* of the interlocutors. It is a view of meaning that is well summarized by C.S. Peirce's statement that the "final interpretant" of a sign is to be identified with a "habit change", a change in the subject's disposition towards action[1]. Consistently, the meaning of

[1] C.S. Peirce in *A Survey of Pragmaticism* writes: "It can be proved that the only mental effect that can be so produced and that is not a sign but is of a general application is a habit change; meaning by a habit change a modification of a person tendencies toward action, resulting from previous experiences or from previous exertions of his will or acts, or from a complexus of both kinds of cause" (*Collected Papers* 5.476). While the Peircean notion of *habit change* characterizes the change brought about by a speech act, the effect of communication, in broad psychological and behavioral terms, the tradition of Speech Act Theory provides a different approach to communication effects, which is *socially* rather than *psychologically* based. This approach focuses on the production of *conventional* (that is social) *effects* which is made possible by the hearer's uptake of an utterance as a performance of a certain act (see Sbisà 2001). These conventional effects can be described in terms of Searlian *commitments* (Searle 1969) exchanged between the interlocutors. Each speach act can be seen as updating a *commitment store* (Hamblin 1970: 257), which represents, in fact, a specific level of the *common ground* (Clark 1996) of the interaction. We believe that these two accounts of communication are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In fact, the assumption of a commit-

a whole text[2], that is of a connected sequence of utterances, is equated with the overall intended change of this complex action. Pragmatic and semantic structures at all levels of a text are respondent to such a task. This is why we see the text as deeply pervaded by subtle but strong *logical* ties. The *coherence* of a text, and indeed its *meaningfulness*, can be accounted for if we represent the text as a hierarchy of *predicate-argument* relations holding between the text sequences at different levels and connecting each sequence to the whole text. The notion of *predicate* is the kernel of our proposal: a *predicate* is conceived ontologically as a *possible mode of being*, a general notion that subsumes more specific ontological distinctions such as those between properties and relations, states and events, actions and non-actions.

One of the functions of syntax is to manifest in a direct manner a part (let us say the lower part) of the predicate-argument hierarchy that makes up the semantics of a text (Rigotti 1993 and 1994a). So a simple sentence like

Louis reads a book

considered as a fragment of a possible text shows a predicate-argument structure that can be represented in an approximate fashion by the following diagram:

ment, when it is sincere, always presupposes some sort of habit change (see also Rigotti and Cigada 2004: 52-56). The relative balance between these two dimensions, moreover, varies according to the type of speech act performed. In the case of a *promise*, for instance, we can say that the change in the commitment store represents the main effect to which the speaker aims, while this is certainly not the case with many *assertive* speech acts: the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition is always present but rarely comes to the fore (except in special contexts such as testimony in a court). More often it is the intended change in the beliefs of the addressee that is foregrounded in the assertive act. Both aspects are needed to understand how argumentation works. Argumentation, as socialized interactive reasoning, has effects on both levels and their relative importance varies according to the precise nature of the interaction: sometimes it is enough for the aims of the arguer to obtain the *commitment* of the addressee to a certain thesis, while in other contexts only the *persuasion* of the addressee and the subsequent behavioral change count as a success. The levels of commitment and habit change in argumentation have usually been studied in isolation within different scientific traditions and with different methodological tools, respectively those of philosophy and argumentation theory (Hamblin 1970; Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984; Walton and Krabbe 1995) and those of social psychology and communication studies (O' Keefe 2002) and an integrated interdisciplinary approach to argumentation effects is .largely still to be developed.

[2] Here we take *text* as a general term including both oral and written linguistic production.

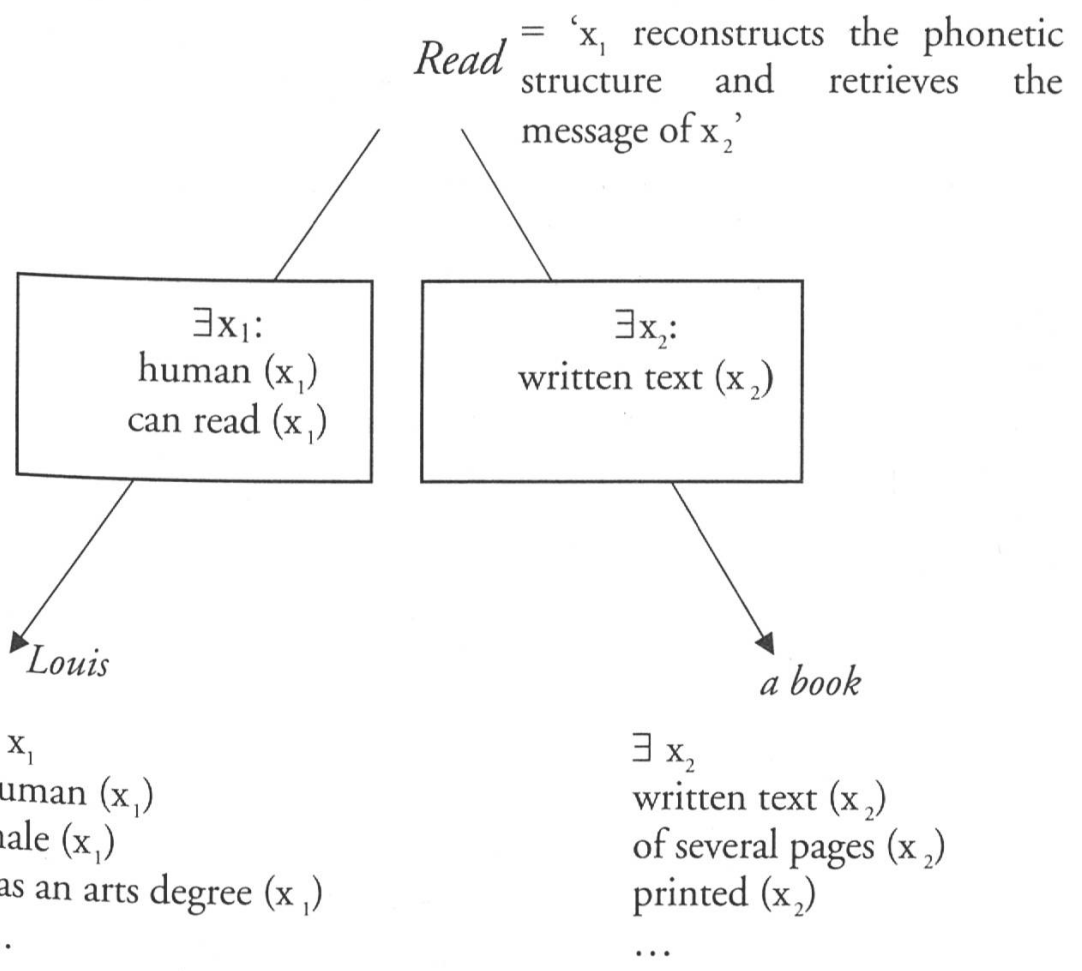

Fig. 1: Congruity theoretic semantic analysis of the predicate "to read"

In the above graph, the arrows link the lexical binary predicate *to read* (x_1, x_2) to its arguments *Louis* and *a book*. This basic semantic nexus is characterised by the requirement of *congruity* between the predicate and its arguments. The predicate imposes conditions (represented in the rectangular boxes placed over the arrows) that the arguments must fulfil, or, in other words, it *predefines* the class of possible arguments.

The requirement of congruity between predicate and argument can be formulated in terms of the following law: "There is semantic congruity between a predicate term and the argument term it is applied to when the characteristics imposed by the predicate on each argument place are hyperonyms of the characteristics of the respective arguments." (Cf. Rigotti 1994).

The conditions that appear in the boxes placed on the arrows are hyperonyms of the traits that appear under the real arguments *Louis* and *a book*. These features of the real arguments represent part of the devel-

oping *common ground*[3] of the text and, therefore, are not restricted to the traits entailed by the lexical meaning of the syntactic arguments (a *book* is a written text, printed, consisting of several pages), but include all the information associated to the real referents in the communicative situation, and, if it is the case, in the course of an ongoing discourse (as, for instance, the existence of our common acquaintance Louis).

The law of semantic congruity can be violated in three ways:

- if there is an incompatibility between the conditions imposed by the predicate and the semantic features of the real arguments, as in *The walls read the newspaper* or *John reads the squirrel*;
- if the real argument is simply synonymous with the argument place, as in *John likes to eat food.*
- If the number of arguments does not correspond to the number of argument places, as in *John sold his house and nobody bought it.*

In all these cases an evident nonsense takes place.

In Congruity Theory the *conditions* imposed by the predicates are treated as *presuppositions*. The presuppositional nature of the conditions that the predicates impose on arguments can be often highlighted by the application of a variant of the test normally used in linguistic literature to recognize presuppositions: the conditions remain if the utterance is negated, while those examples that violate the conditions remain unacceptable in their negative form: *John didn't read the squirrel.* In uttering such a sentence the speaker seems to concede that Jean *could have read* the squirrel, or to put it in another way, he concedes that the squirrel is a readable object and can be considered as a written text of sorts.

Up to this point our analysis has been limited to the *presuppositions* of the predicate to *read* (x_1, x_2). There is however another fundamental semantic component of predicate structure which appears in our graph. It corresponds to the (truth-conditional) content proper of the predicate, which can be rendered in a reasonable way as "x_1 reconstructs the phonetic structure and retrieves the message of x_2". It is interesting to remark that this component of predicate structure exhibits quite a different

[3] Communication takes place on the backdrop of a pool of knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, and values that are shared by the participants. No communication can start from scratch, and, in a given communication event, there is always a certain set of assumptions that speakers take for granted as being part of the shared background. These assumptions form the common ground of the conversation at a given moment. See Clark (1996: 92-121) for a quasi-formal definition of common ground.

behavior towards negation. In *Louis does not READ a book*, our utterance, by negating the predicate, rules out the state of affairs "x_1 reconstructs the phonetic structure and retrieves the message of x_2" leaving the presuppositions intact. In fact, this semantic component corresponds to the information that is added to the common ground when such a predication is asserted.

In this model, the idea that predicates impose presuppositions on arguments plays a major role. In fact Congruity Theory makes two hypotheses of quite general import. On the one hand, we hypothesize that all nonsense, all *incongruity*, derives from the violation or contradiction of presuppositions at different levels. On the other hand, we make the hypothesis that *all presuppositions* should be treated in terms of congruity, as though imposed by a predicate on one of its argument places[4]. Moreover in Rigotti-Rocci (2001) it is argued that not only we can explain the different lexical or grammatical presupposition triggers in terms of predicates that impose presuppositions on their arguments, but it is also possible to treat in similar fashion the *coherence* and *illocutionary felicity* of entire texts.

In order to do that, the hypothesis of congruity must be extended well beyond lexical predicates by admitting into the semantic structure of texts high-level pragmatic abstract predicates which on occasion have no linguistic manifestation at all. For these predicates we have introduced the term *connective predicate*. Let us consider the following two pairs of utterances:

(a)
U1: *My son doesn't drive.*
U2: *He's five!*
(b)
U1: *My son doesn't drive.*
U2: *He's married.*

While (a) is clearly comprehensible without specifying any further context, (b) remains opaque unless we include into the context of utterance some very specific assumptions. The utterance *He is five!* in (a) is understood as respondent to the task of *giving the reason* of the state of affairs stated in the first utterance (U1). This task can be defined trough a relational predicate including the two utterances among its arguments and

[4] A similar hypothesis as also been made independently by Seuren (2000).

imposing certain presuppositional constraints on them. This relational predicate is the *connective predicate*. The constraints imposed by the connective predicate have to be respected in order to ensure the congruity at the textual level, that is the coherence of the text.

The perspective we are now considering belongs to a whole family of approaches to text coherence that are based on relational predicates, sometimes called *discourse relations*[5], which take text units as arguments to which they impose specific constraints.

There is, however, one distinguishing feature of our approach residing in the fact that, in it, the relations that ensure discourse coherence are ultimately defined at a level of communicative acts that is as analogous to the illocutionary acts of Speech Act theory. To put it bluntly, *the connective predicate characterizes the utterance by specifying what the speaker does to the addressee with her utterance*[6]. In a multi-utterance text, each utterance represents a relatively autonomous stage in the accomplishment of the intended effect of the whole text, i.e. the change in the context that the text is attempting to operate. The function of connective predicates is therefore to link directly or indirectly the action accomplished by the utterance to the action accomplished by the whole of the text, and thus to the change that it is supposed to produce.

Thus, also the *speaker* and the *hearer* must figure among the arguments of the connective predicate, and the presuppositions that the connective predicate imposes on them are comparable to the felicity conditions imposed by Searlian illocutions (Searle 1969), which typically involve the *speaker* and *hearer*[7].

We can represent the general form of a connective predicate with the following graph:

[5] The terminology is varied – and sometimes confusing . Different authors speak of *discourse relations*, *coherence relations*, *rhetorical relations*, *rhetorical predicates*, etc. Terminological differences sometimes, but not always, reflect theoretical ones. See Bateman and Rondhuis (1997) for a survey and comparison of various approaches to discourse relations.

[6] This approach has significant similarities with another theory of text coherence, the Rhetorical Structure Theory developed by Mann and Thompson since the late '80s. In RST rhetorical relations are defined both in terms of the constraints they pose on their textual argument and in terms of the effect the speaker intends to achieve in the addressee by establishing a particular relation.

[7] Consider, for instance, the preparatory conditions of the assertion as formulated by Searle (1969). One of them states that 'It is not obvious to the Speaker that the Hearer knows (does not need to be reminded of) p'. This type of condition is treated as a (relational) presupposition imposed by any 'assertive' connective predicate on the argument places characterized by the roles of the Speaker, the Hearer and the asserted proposition U_0.

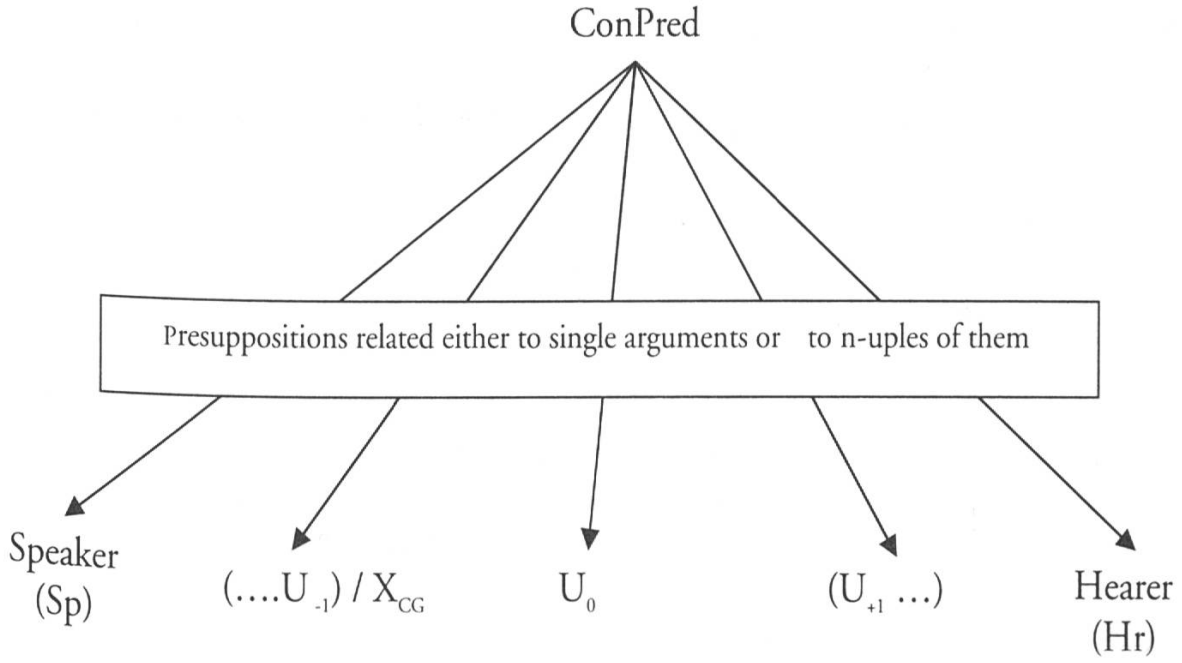

Fig. 2: General structure of a connective predicate

The arguments of the connective predicate of any text utterance U_0 are the *Speaker*, the *Hearer*, the text utterance itself (U_0) and, if it is the case, one or more other utterances preceding (U_{-1}) or following cataphorically (U_{+1}) in the co-text. The rectangular box on the arrows is meant to include the presuppositions that the connective predicate imposes on its arguments[8]. It is worth noting that the argument places occupied by the *co-textual utterances* (U_{-1} or U_{+1}) can be as well occupied by an implicit *contextual proposition* X that is part of the common ground.

In our former example (*My son doesn't drive. He's five!*). the connective predicate imposes on the utterance the particular task, which the utterance has to fulfill in the text, of providing the *causal explanation of a fact*. It is worth noticing that, since the connective predicate carries the function of the utterance and every utterance has a function, the notion of connective predicate does not only concern the coherence of multiple utterance discourse stretches: connective predicates also specify the function of utterances in single utterance texts, linking them to the participants of the communicative event. In this case the optional arguments U_{-1} and U_{+1} are not present. Typical examples are offered by one-liners, slogans and monostich poetries.

[8] Such presuppositions are often related to single arguments, and establish, for example, the conditions of existence or non-existence of a certain argument, but can also connect more arguments together. A typical example is the connective predicate *command*, which presupposes a sort of asymmetry between the speaker and the hearer.

3. Argumentative Connective Predicates & Argumentative Speech Acts

The next step is to apply the general model of the connective predicate to argumentation. Consider the following example:

U_{-1}: *I can't see Louis' car in the parking lot.*
U_0: *He must have already left the University.*

The argumentative connective predicate of the utterance in U_0 is weakly encoded by polysemous markers: the epistemic use of the modal *must* marks the second of the two utterances as the *Conclusion* of a non demonstrative inference made by the speaker (Rocci 2000)[9]. With respect of U_0 the preceding utterance U_{-1} is naturally understood as providing a premise, a piece of evidence, from which this conclusion arises.

It is quite natural to understand U_{-1} as corresponding to what Aristotle calls a *sign*. For Aristotle (*Prior Analytics*, 70a 7-9) when something regularly occurs, or more generally is the case, in concomitance (or before or after) something else is the case, that something is a *sign* of the occurrence of this something else (the *denotatum*). Of the two concomitant facts, the *sign* is the better known fact – often a perceptually accessible fact – and the *denotatum* is the unknown, less accessible fact. If our argument is indeed based on a *sign*, the premise U_{-1} does not suffice to account for the inferential process involved. To obtain our conclusion, we also need to supply a second implicit premise stating the regular co-occurrence of the *sign* and its *denotatum*. A plausible reconstruction of the unstated premise of our argument is *Generally, if Louis' car isn't in the university parking lot, he is not at the university*, which, in turn, could be derived from the knowledge of the fact that Louis almost always drives to the University and parks his car in the University parking lot.

[9] The process of interpretation of an utterance or *a fortiori* of an entire discourse entails the application of complex strategies involving both decoding of information semiotically represented in the language and pragmatic inferences based on general principles of cognitive economy (see Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995) as well as on an interpreting strategy based on a very general "goodwill principle" which ascribes to the other a certain "mind" and *donec contrarium probetur* a certain coherence in cooperating in a specific communication game (see below section 4, and Rocci in this volume). Here it should be remarked that such *communicative inferences*, i.e. the inferential component of the interpretation of every discourse, should not be confused with the *communicated inferences*, or argumentative inferences, that may be part of the content of some discourses.

As a consequence, our argumentative connective predicate will have no less than three argument places, occupied by the explicit premise in U_{-1}, the unstated premise, which we will call X, and the conclusion[10], in addition to the argument places for the speaker and the hearer. We can then represent the global argumentative connective predicate governing our two-utterances text as:

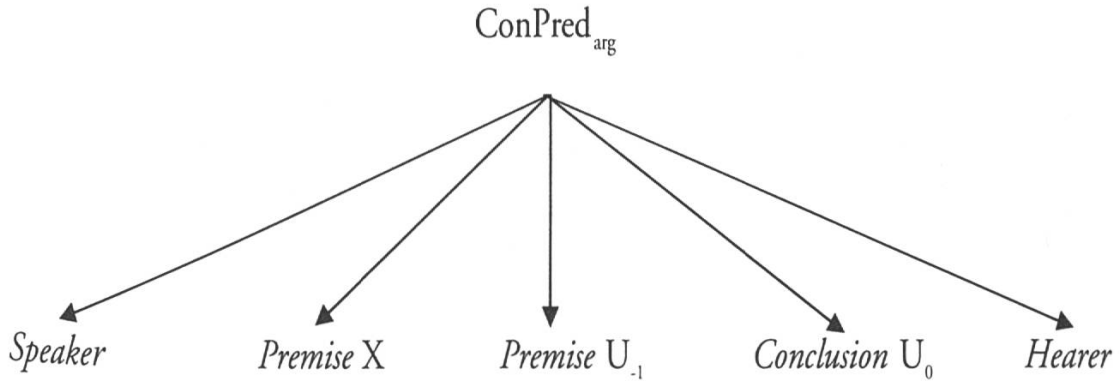

Fig 3: Structure of the global argumentative connective predicate

Our argumentative connective predicate imposes a precise set of presuppositions on its arguments: the *Conclusion* U_0 is presupposed not to be yet accepted by the *Hearer*, while on the premise manifested in U_{-1} the connective predicate imposes a presupposition of factuality for the *Speaker* and the *Hearer*. The implicit premise X we have reconstructed needs as well to be accepted by both the *Speaker* and *Hearer*, that is to be a part of this common ground.

Apart from these general presuppositions of argumentative connectives, there is one other kind of presuppositions that need to be satisfied by the arguments of an argumentative connective predicate for the act of arguing to be felicitous. The premises and the conclusion need to satisfy the requirements of a precise *inference scheme*, which justifies the reasonableness of the move of the hearer's assent from the premises to the conclusion. According to the type of inference scheme which is evoked we have *different types* of argumentative connective predicates, which impose

[10] This set apart Congruity Theory from most theories of discourse relations, where this text would have been analyzed in terms of a two-places relation of *Evidence* holding between the two explicit utterances (see, for instance, Mann, Matthiessen & Thompson 1992).

different presuppositional requirements on their arguments and have a different argumentative force. The valid figures of the syllogism or the propositional schemes of the *modus ponens* and *modus tollens*, for instance, are schemes characterized by a deductive force, while other schemes are inductive in nature. In our text the inference is, in fact, deductive[11] and takes the form of a *modus ponens*. Thus the connective predicate requires that the premise X takes the form 'p → q', where p and q are respectively the *sign* in the premise U_{-1} and the content of the conclusion U_0. Given that the co-occurrence of p and q is probably inductively based, we can reasonably conceive of the premise 'p → q' as subject to a probabilistic epistemic modality, which is carried through the deduction to the conclusion[12].

It should be emphasized that the logical requirements of the particular inference scheme employed are part of the presuppositions of the specific connective predicates at issue. According to the inference scheme employed these presuppositions may include various referential, *content-level* relations, holding in the world between the propositional contents of the utterances. In the particular case of an argument from sign, a factual relation of concomitance is expected between the *sign* and the *designatum*. So, in order to interpret the argumentative connective predicate as congruous, the hearer has to recover from the common ground a premise that satisfies the more abstract logical relation of entailment by satisfying the relation of concomitance between events.

[11] Walton (1996) and other informal logic theorists who maintain that we should not reduce enthymematic reasoning to deduction, find a counterpart of "validity" in the application of a non-deductive argument scheme, which ensures that a presumption in favor of the conclusion is created. This presumption is however subject to critical questioning. In our example, the argument scheme evoked is, according to Walton's terminology, an argument from sign, whose definition is not too removed from the Aristotelian one:

Minor Premise (U-1): Given datum represented as statement p is true in this situation.
Major Premise (X): Statement q is generally indicated as true, when its sign, p, is true in this kind of situation.
Conclusion (U0): Therefore, q is true in this situation.(Adapted fromWalton 1996: 49)

The difference between the deductivist and the non-deductivist viewpoint concerns, in fact, the possibility of attributing the probabilistic modal qualification that often characterizes enthymematic reasoning to the content of the premise and the conclusion of the inference (deductivist view) rather than to the nature of the inferential relation itself (non-deductivist, presumptive view).

[12] Note that what is inductively (statistically) based is the establishment of the premise 'p→q' from previous observations of co-occurrence, and not the drawing of the conclusion q from '(p→q) ∧ p', which is purely deductive.

If we now look at our little text from a dynamic viewpoint, as it develops from a series of successive communication acts, we find that the argumentation is realized through the utterance of two successive units: the minor premise U_{-1} and the conclusion U_0, which are speech acts in their own right. If we zoom in and look at our argumentation from the point of view of the concluding utterance U_0 we can represent its pragmatic function as a connective predicate *Conclude*$_{U0}$, which is characterized by a certain set of presuppositions, and brings about a certain pragmatic effect in the developing discourse. This pragmatic effect corresponds to the content proper of the connective as a predicate. Following the graphical notation for connective predicates we have outlined in the previous section, we can represent it with the following scheme:

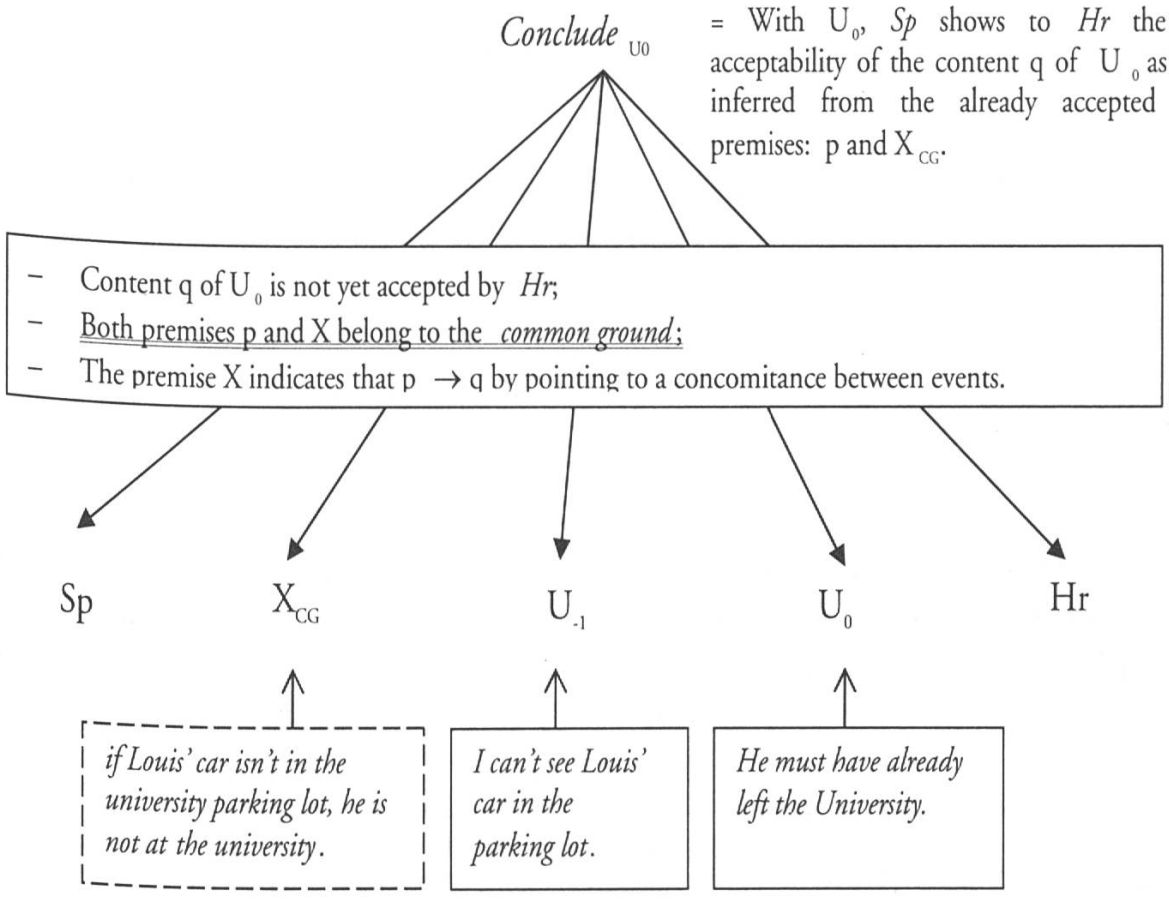

Fig. 4: Structure of the connective predicate of the utterance U_0

The analysis of argumentation in terms of connective predicates I have presented above, shows two distinctive features of Congruity Theory, which set it apart from other approaches to discourse relations.

Firstly, Congruity Theory is not chiefly concerned with defining a closed list of speech acts or discourse relations types in terms of some very

general conditions, but rather tries to describe in detail the *presuppositions* and *effects* of the communicative actions that make up a text.

Secondly, concerning the distinction made by several authors between *content level relations* and *pragmatic/rhetorical relations*[13], Congruity Theory, rather than seeing coherence as a *mix* of content level relations and pragmatic relations, situates the coherence of the text at the level of action — connective predicates are always pragmatic in nature[14] — and treats content level relations as presuppositions of the specific connective predicate involved[15].

Going back to our examples, we notice that, in fact, the concrete argumentative connective often includes presuppositions that are even more specific than the particular argumentation schemes. In the above example, for instance, it is also presupposed that the speaker did not directly witness Sean's leaving the University (one cannot add *and I saw him leave with my own eyes, believe me!*). In fact the speaker does two things, she shows her own chain of inferences, and, by showing it offers to the hearer reasons to reach the same conclusions. The inferential-evidential use of *must* is a clear sign of this process (see Rocci 2000).

Not all arguments manifest this type of dependence from the on-line inferences of the speaker. Consider the following example:

Yes, I am going to marry Sean. He is handsome, brilliant and incredibly rich.

Here the argumentative intention of the speaker is based on a different type of process. The speaker presents an *explanation* of the causes of her decisions, in order to make them more acceptable to the audience. Apparently, here the speaker's knowledge of the propositional content of *I am going to marry Sean* is not the result of an inference. In fact, she

[13] On this distinction see Knott (2001) and the literature cited therein.

[14] In fact, the Congruity Theoretic approach, while deriving from a very different research tradition fits well with many aspects of the pragma-dialectical view of argumentation. Firstly, as the requirement of functionalization states, argumentation is seen as pertaining to the speech act level, secondly the act of arguing is to be seen in connection to a standpoint and involving at least a third (perhaps unexpressed) premise, thirdly acts of arguing are textual level acts (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984: 19-46) that subsume single utterance level acts such as asserting and this is apparent by the fact that connective predicates subsume all searlian felicity conditions for speech acts as presuppositions imposed by the predicate on its argument places.

[15] On the relationship between the semantic and the pragmatic level of discourse relations in connection to the analysis of argumentation see also Snoek Henkemans (2001) and Rocci (In Press).

decided and put the decision into existence! However, this is not the standpoint being argued for. What is argued for is the *rationality, acceptability, goodness* of the decision: by showing the grounds of her decision making process the arguer wants to cause the hearer to recognize the rationality of the decision and the goodness of the choice. Houtlosser (1995) and Snoek Henkemans (2001) have provided principled ways for distinguishing explanation from argumentation, however it is worth noting that at a secondary level the causal explanation of a human decision can be used to argue, not for the *factuality* of the decision but for its rationality as a decision.

It is also interesting to point out, that not only there are arguments that are not based *prima facie* on inferences of the speaker, but there are also inferential-evidential relations that are not argumentative, at least not in the classical sense. Let us imagine the following situation: Sean was sleeping on the grass in the garden. Mary wakes him up and Sean says:

The sun is setting. I must have slept several hours.

Here we obviously have an inferential connective predicate, but we do not have an argumentative one, at least not in the usual sense. The inferential process is not put forth in order to persuade Mary of the truth of the conclusion, which, being awake, she is evidently expected to already know. Rather Sean thinks aloud before his addressee, he shows his chain of thought, probably in order to get a confirmation by Mary. This is what Sean "does to Mary with his utterance". But what happens to Sean? Isn't he persuaded by the arguments he puts forth? Is there an argumentation he addresses to himself?

Rocci (this volume) provides an extended notion of argumentation that can accommodate these borderline cases and makes a case for *monological* – self directed – argumentation. In order to prepare the terrain for such a discussion in the following section I will sketch a rough map of the family of concepts related to the semantic field of *dialogue*.

4. Dialogue and its relatives: a family portrait.

The task of defining in a precise way the class of events that we can refer to as *dialogues* appears from the outset to be a difficult undertaking. We deal, in the first place, with very complex objects-situations. Secondly,

the whole family of words to which *dialogue* belongs is characterized by a lush polysemy and a considerable degree of fuzziness or vagueness. One finds, for instance, the claim that all communication is dialogical in nature. One can show that this is indeed a plausible claim, if we understand it as referring to the interpretation of all actual communication events as instances of *joint action* (Clark 1996: 60-91): an action resulting from the coordination of the actions of the participants.

In fact, in a communication event, the *Hearer* plays a role which is just as active as the role of the speaker. J.L. Austin (1977) introduced the notion of *hearer's uptake of a speech act* in order to emphasize the fact that a speech act – and in particular an illocutionary act – is not something that can be properly performed by a speaker alone, without the hearer doing things as well, at various levels.

The admittedly vague Austinian notion of *uptake,* which was somewhat left out of the picture by the developments of speech act theory in the line of Searle (1969), has been recently reintroduced in speech act theory and, in fact, redefined by Clark (1996) and Sbisà (2001), who emphasize different aspects of the role of the hearer in the performance of a speech act.

Taking both contributions into account we can describe the role of the hearer in the performance of a speech act as follows:

- Firstly, the Hearer *interprets* the text produced by the Speaker (and the action required by the interpretation of a text is not less complex and demanding than its production is).
- Secondly, the hearer *takes up the utterance of the Speaker as an illocutionary act of a certain kind* thereby adding to the common ground its social consequences – or "conventional effects" (Sbisà 2001) in terms of commitments – and, according to the type of speech act performed, can *take it into consideration in view of a response or follow up* (Clark 1996), which may be verbal or non-verbal in nature[16].

In fact, one important characteristic of speech acts, emphasized by Clark (1996: 148-153) is that they *propose* an action to the consideration of the hearer[17]. This also means that the *hearer*[18] is presupposed in the

[16] Note that these two aspects of the role of the addressee, the *uptake* enabling the conventional effects and the consideration of the act in view of a response, are intimately connected to the two dimensions of commitment and habit change we have emphasized in footnote 1. This parallelism would deserve to be better elaborated, and we hope to do so in another publication.
[17] The consequences for argumentation of this general characteristic of speech acts are spelled out in Rocci (this volume).
[18] Here one should distinguish the addressee of a speech act from the simple hearer of

speech act as the *partner* of a joint action proposed by the speaker. The active role of the hearer at the levels of *understanding* and *uptake* can legitimately induce us to say that every communication event is, if not *dialogic*, at least *interactive*.

If we loosen a bit our notion of action and interaction, we could also say that the hearer participates in a communication act inasmuch this act is conditioned in its design and production by the image the speaker has of the hearer. Here, in fact, we do not have *action* in the proper sense, but rather what can be properly considered just *causation*[19], and, again, this causation does not pertain to the objective hearer but rather to an image of the hearer, that is to say to the hearer to the extent that he/she is known to the speaker.

Undoubtedly the *dialogical*, interactive, component that we find in any communication event is an essential aspect of communication itself. Communication as an activity entails at least two partners, and if with dialogue we mean *interaction* or *joint action* all communication is dialogical in nature[20]. However, if we focus exclusively on the recognition of the ultimately dialogical nature of communication, we run the risk of losing sight of the specificity of dialogue proper as a particular type of communicative interaction. But how can we define *dialogue proper*?

Let us start with a very simple aspect that is immediately and prototypically bound to our understanding of the word *dialogue*. A *dialogue* is a communicative interaction where the participants can (and are expected to) alternate, more or less regularly or frequently, in the roles of speaker and hearer. This alternating of communicative roles is by the way the consequence of a deeper property of dialogue that impacts in particular on the levels of interaction I have considered above, and has to do with the way the common ground is negotiated and established step by step. In a dialogue the addressee of a certain act of communication can signal his *under-*

an utterance (cf. Clark 1996:151).

[19] It is interesting to observe that this metaphorical use of the term *action* plays a fundamental role in Newtonian physics. See the well known principle of the *Philosophia Naturalis*: "Omni actioni par reactio". These are actions without agents, as the notion of agency is completely irrelevant at the level of physics.

[20] Communication can be considered dialogical also in the suggestive and insightful vygotskijan sense that every discourse is a dialogue at the ontogenetic level and is internally structured as a dialogue by its pervasive bakhtinian polyphony Uspenskij 1997). However, we should not let these suggestions, insightful as they may be, blur more fundamental distinctions. The polyphony that pervades texts and is deeply rooted in the grammar of natural languages, for instance, looks like dialogue but is not. Rather it is *dialogue pretense*. It speaks convincingly of the primacy of dialogue, but should not be confused with real dialogue, provided that we still value the distinction between real people and the figments of one's imagination.

standing of it, or the lack thereof, display his *uptake* of it as a certain type of illocutionary act, and, most importantly, *accept* or *refuse the interaction proposed* by the other participant and, eventually, make a counterproposal.

Once a certain interaction proposed by one participant is accepted by the other, this acceptance ceases to be a simple assumption or a desire of the proponent and becomes a part of their common ground. A commitment to a *joint goal* is then created. Thus, dialogue, in the minimal sense, typically involves the establishment of some level of cooperation between the participants in the pursuit of a joint goal.

Grice (1975: 45) observed that in a conversation each participant "recognizes, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction", but he tends to identify, in the end, the whole cooperative dimension of conversation with language understanding through the *cooperative principle* and its maxims. Grice, indeed, says very little about what he calls "the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange"(Grice 1975: 67) and in his system the maxims work, in fact, on their own, as if their respect could suffice to ensure cooperation *regardless* of the specific purposes of the dialogue.

The need of moving from an all-purpose inventory of maxims to a deeper understanding of the notion of "accepted purpose" has been emphasized recently both in pragmatics by Clark (1996: 146) and in argumentation theory by Walton (1998: 5), who level similar criticisms at the Gricean account. Their contributions are largely complementary. On the one hand, Clark (1996) develops a fine description of the linguistic, paralinguistic and inferential means that are employed by the participants to coordinate their moves to carry out *joint projects* at various levels of the hierarchy of their joint goals. On the other hand, Walton (1998) defines a set of *dialogue types,* such as *deliberation*, *negotiation*, *persuasion* and *information-seeking*, each characterized on the basis of the joint goals shared by the participants. Largely similar classifications based on the participants' goals have been proposed by Mann (2002) and Vanderveken (2001).

Here, following Mann (2002), I will use the term *dialogue games* to refer to these sets of joint goals that define the cooperative dimension of a dialogue. A partially different route of investigation is chosen by Airenti, Bara and Colombetti (1993), which refine the Gricean account of cooperation by distinguishing a level of *conversation games* from a level of *behavior games.*

Even defined in this way, *dialogue* remains a phenomenon whose boundaries are fuzzy. First of all, the extent to which the participants can

alternate in the roles of speaker and hearer is subject to tremendous variation across the concrete settings of communication. Conversation among peers, classroom interaction, university lectures, conference talks, personal and circular letters, e-mail exchanges, etc. all impose their own particular restrictions on the way alternation is regulated. But, once this first requirement is - to some extent - satisfied, the "percentage of dialogicality" that a dialogue reaches, concretely realizing the set of shared goals that characterizes it as a particular dialogue game, is subject to strong variation.

In this framework, the concept of *monologue* seems to be easier to characterize, at least on the theoretical level. We have the prototypical case of *monologue* in a communicative situation – such as literature or broadcasted media – where the speaker does not expect from the addressee any feed-back concerning her *understanding*, or her *uptake*, and where the *acceptance* of the proposed action can only be wished by the speaker and verified later with different devices (audience measurement, customer behavior, election results and so on)[21]. It is interesting to observe that, according to this definition, the text – for instance a personal letter or an e-mail – can function internally as a monologue (no immediate feed-back is expected for the single speech acts) and be considered, in its entirety as a move in a broader dialogue. *Monological text* and *dialogue* are not mutually exclusive categories: dialogues are made of texts – turns in spoken conversation, e-mail messages, letters, etc. – and *texts* can be part of a dialogue.

There is, however, another notion of monologue that deserves to be taken into consideration. When we speak of a theatrical performance, for instance, we interpret *monologue* as a discourse of somebody to him/herself, a *soliloquy*. The audience sees a certain character, say Hamlet, speaking to himself. It is a sort of thinking aloud. This "speaking to oneself" or "thinking aloud" is, outside the theater, a frequent practice of children. In adults it might be seen as unusual, and in extreme cases pathological behavior. In dramatic art, however, having characters thinking aloud is a device for manifesting their *inner speech*. We could as well, with a bit of non-vicious circularity, define *inner speech* as a *silent soliloquy*[22]. In order to distinguish these two very different uses of the term *monologue,* we can

[21] It has however been remarked that even these texts on the one hand are likely to engender some sort of dialogue-like asymetrical reaction in the addressee, and on the other typically set up a dialogue pretense with an ideal addressee as their fundamental rhetorical strategy (Cf. Bettetini 1984).

[22] Again, the investigations of Vygotskij have shown that in children's monologue as well as in the inner speech of adults deriving from it there is much which has a dialogical nature.

use *monological discourse* for non-interactive texts, and *soliloquy* or *reflexive discourse* for this latter sense of "speaking to oneself"[23].

5. Concluding remarks

In this paper I set as my task to provide the foundations for an approach to argumentation in monologue and dialogue based on Congruity Theory, whose implications will be fully detailed in Rocci's contribution to this volume. In order to do that I addressed two independent issues:

- The use of the semantico-pragmatic notion of *connective predicate* to represent both the communicative and the logical properties of argumentative utterances;
- The proper definition of *dialogue* in a pragmatic theory of verbal communication, in connection with the related notions of *monological discourse* and *soliloquy*;

These two threads will be woven together in the second step of our research, which will use the tools of Congruity Theory, and, in particular, the notion of *connective predicate* to investigate the nature of *soliloquial* – self directed – argumentation and to provide a specification both of the cooperative dialogue games which account for dialogue coherence and of the individual moves and strategies that the participants implement within a specific dialogue game to pursue their own goals.

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[23] In the Merrian-Webster on-line dictionary we find the following glosses in the entry for *monologue*: "1a : *soliloquy* 2b: a dramatic sketch performed by one actor c : the routine of a stand-up comic. 2: a literary composition written in the form of a soliloquy, 3: a long speech monopolizing conversation.".The first two glosses refer to monologue$_2$ and its artistic exploitations, while the third refers to an emphatically non-interactive type of discourse, that is to a form of monologue$_1$

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