ARGUMENT AS A
FORMULATION-DECISION-DECISION...
SEQUENCE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Schiffrin (1985) identifies three questions which analysis of argumentative discourse should seek to answer: (1) what is the structure of argument? (2) what is the purpose of argument? and (3) what is the role of social and cultural norms in shaping the discourse? This paper proposes a relatively simple analytical framework which provides an answer to the first question, and sheds some light on the remaining two.[1]

1.1 Problems in Discourse Analysis and the General Aim of this Paper

Discourse Analysis has been noted for its general disunity of approach. In reviewing T.A. van Dijk, Handbook of Discourse Analysis (1985), Frawley (1987) describes it as an "omnivorous field, where one thing is as good as another";[2] Kess (1986a) describes it as a 'collection of approaches'. It is sure that Discourse Analysis must be interdisciplinary in nature. Since discourse is a fundamental medium of social interaction, to the "central disciplines of linguistics, psychology, social psychology, sociology and anthropology"[3] could be added such fields as medicine, law, history, literature and political science -- areas already boasting considerable discourse research. The problem in Discourse Analysis, however, is that researchers from disparate backgrounds have so far been unable to develop a single approach to the single task of analyzing discourse. This disunity of approach has led to a confusion of terms; as Kess (1986b) observes, the present diverse perspectives "define and redefine the problem for their own purposes and from their own perspectives."[4]

This fundamental lack of focus must be addressed, if Discourse Analysis is to proceed past the stage of "an emerging field... in the process of self-identification."[5] This paper is presented as an attempt to work some focus in the specific area of argument.

1.2 Definition of Argument

The literature on argumentative discourse is ambitious and detailed, yet varied in approach. The methodological confusion appears to stem from basic disagreement over the definition of 'argument'. The first of two general opinions considers argument to be formalized debate. It is defined as, for example, "a statement in logical processes of argumentation to support or weaken another statement whose validity is questionable or contentious."[6] The approach here is normative, describing the structure argument

should have (in a formalized framework).[7] To the second opinion argument is conversational disagreement -- 'dispute exchanges'[8] or 'argumentative (parts of) conversation'.[9] The approach within this view is empirical, describing the structure argument is seen to have in informal conversations. Other studies on general discourse have direct bearing on argument, yet argument is either not identified,[10] or is identified only as something like 'troublesome' conversation.[11] There is clearly a need for some consensus on the meaning of 'argument'.

Levinson (1983) provides guidance on this issue, in the observation that "conversation is clearly the prototypical kind of language behaviour."[12] It would seem that informal conversation is the prototypical kind of conversation. Thus, it is sensible to conclude that informal conversation will be the source of prototypical data for the discourse analyst. From there, analysis can proceed to formal or institutional (e.g., doctor-patient, police interrogation, classroom) discourse -- forms which are less prototypical because they are highly conventionalized and occur under specialized constriants.

To take informal argument as the 'prototypical' argument[13] concurs with the reasonable assumption that, historically, people first conversationally argued before they developed and practised formal debate. Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) describe the development of formal argument as a process of abstraction of the organizational 'macrostructures' of informal argument. That is, argument was recognized to have a beginning and an end; just how the beginning and end were related was defined by classical logic, which packaged argument in terms of syllogistic premises and a conclusion. Further philosophical refinement (cf. Toulmin, 1958) distinguished such elements as datum, warrant, backing, claim and conclusion.

Formal debate is indeed a formalized type of argument. For the discourse analyst, unformalized, informal argument should be the primary definition of 'argument'.

It is important, nevertheless, to explain the place that the notion of 'formal' argument has in conversational dispute: when a speaker argues, he may produce a more-or-less 'formal' argument. For example,

> Mrs. Boyle: You're very young.
>
> Mollie: Young?
>
> Mrs. Boyle: To be running an establishment of this kind.
>   You can't have had much experience.

These three utterances are excerpted from Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap"[14] and are part of a larger exchange in which the guest, Mrs. Boyle, criticizes the rooming house of Mollie and her husband. Here, Mrs. Boyle argues using her 'formal' argument that

> You are very young.
>
> Therefore, you can't have had much experience.
> _____
> Therefore, you should not be running an establishment of this kind.

This use of 'formal' argument is captured by the distinction of O'Keefe (1982) between argument that is 'made' ('claims-plus-reasons') and argument that is 'had' ('disputatious interaction'). Thus, people may 'make' an argument when they 'have' an argument, but they may 'have' an argument without explicitly 'making' one, as in

Giles: All right. Yes, I was in London. I didn't
            go to meet a woman there.

Mollie: Didn't you - are you sure you didn't?

Giles: Eh? What do you mean?

Mollie: Go away. Don't come near me.

Giles: What's the matter?

Mollie: Don't touch me.

2. A BASIC APPROACH TO ARGUMENT

There is in the literature no general consensus on what the basic structure of argument is. For example, it has been described as exchange patterns of repetition, inversion or escalation (Brunneis and Lein, 1977), or as 'disagreement-relevant expansions' of a main speech act pair (Jackson and Jacobs, 1980).[15] Although these studies elucidate important aspects of argument, it is possible to approach the issue of structure from a more basic stance.

This O'Keefe and Benoit (1982) have done in isolating one 'generic feature' of argument -- the 'relationship of opposition' between participants. That is, interactants "align themselves in different ways"[16] toward some goal(s), act(s) or belief(s). Such fundamental opposition is described by Bavelas, Rogers and Millar (1985) (with focus on beliefs of interpersonal relationship): "one interactant attempts to define the relationship; this is rejected by an an opposing claim from the other, which is in turn opposed by the initial speaker."[17] This jibes with the commonsense impression that, when speakers argue, they disagree; in other words, they are in opposition to each other (over something).

2.1 The Formulation-Decision Speech Act Pair

The analyst will want to be able to identify how this relationship of opposition is displayed in the discourse. The present claim is that this opposition shows up in the fundamental speech act pair Formulation/Decision. A Formulation is a speaker's personal composition, or representation, of a 'fact'.[18] For example, in

Mrs. Boyle: You're very young.

the speaker has formulated (her evaluation of) Mollie's age. Formulations are subjective entities[19] (hence the implications for argument) and may be as broad or specific in content as the speaker desires.

A Formulation may not always be in full-sentence form, as seen in the second utterance:

Trotter: Would you mind telling me your age?

Miss Casewell: Not in the least ...

Miss Casewell's Formulation (of her state of mind toward Trotter's question) illustrates the (simplistic) fact that grammaticality has little to do with acceptability in discourse.

A Formulation may not always be in propositional form; that is, it may be expressed by illocutionary force, as in

Mrs. Boyle: If I had not believed this was a running
             concern, I should never have come here.
             I understand it was fully equipped with
             every home comfort.

Giles: There is no obligation for you to remain
             here if you are not satisfied, Mrs. Boyle.

Mrs. Boyle: No, indeed, I should not think of doing so.

Giles' utterance is a Formulation of the social norm that a guest has the freedom to leave an establishment which is found to be unsatisfactory. Its illocutionary force, however, is that of a suggestion that Mrs. Boyle leave.[20]

A Formulation does not occur as an isolated unit; it is the first part in a two-act sequence, or utterance pair. In such pairs, the second utterance is 'conditionally relevant' (Schegloff, 1972) to the first utterance (i.e., it is expected). Just what second utterance is conditionally relevant to a Formulation is defined by Heritage and Watson (1979):

An inspection of our data indicates not merely that formulations occasion receptions ... but also that the character of their receptions is sharply constrained to confirmations or disconfirmations or, more generally, decisions.[21]

Thus, we have the Formulation/Decision speech act pair. That these acts are the basic elements in the process of argument means that argument (as any discourse) is 'interactionally-rooted' (Bilmes, 1985). A Formulation-plus-disconfirmation is the discourse display of the fundamental relationship of opposition between participants, which is the essence of argument. Adopting the notation of Heritage and Watson (1979) (F, D+, D-), a previous example now has the form

F Giles: There is no obligation for you to remain
here if you are not satisfied, Mrs. Boyle.

D- Mrs. Boyle: No, indeed, I should not think of doing so.

It is Mrs. Boyle's disconfirming Decision (D-) to Giles' Formulation (F) that makes this an argumentative exchange. Mrs. Boyle's D- is itself a Formulation of her opinion on whether or not she should leave the guesthouse.

2.2 Differences Between 'Dialogue' (Non-argument) and Argument

The fact that every Decision is itself a Formulation is important for explaining the basic structure of argument. Preliminary to that explanation, however, it is necessary to note two major differences between dialogue and argument.

(a) In dialogue, Decisions are not always required (though they usually are). This does not mean that the Formulation/Decision pair does not hold, only that the conditional relevance between the two may be relaxed. For example,

F Miss Casewell: Afraid my car's bogged about half a
mile down the road - ran into a drift.

F Giles: Let me take this. Any more stuff in
the car?

D- Miss Casewell: No, I travel light.

That Giles does not produce a Decision to Miss Casewell's first Formulation does not make this an incoherent exchange. Note, however, that Miss Casewell does produce a Decision to Giles' own Formulation.[22] We could speculate that, in dialogue, the actual number of Decisions that may be absent is limited: if there were no limit, speakers could develop parallel streams of talk -- not relating their utterances, they would not really be having a conversation any more (cf. Grice, 1975, 'Maxim of Relation').

In argument, however, Decisions are mandatory.[23] They are also constrained, at least initially,[24] to disconfirmations. That is, in order for there to be argument, there must be a minimum two-party exchange,[25] and some initial disagreement.

(b) The Formulation/Decision pair of dialogue is expanded in argument to a minimum Formulation-Decision-Decison sequence. Both Decisions are mandatory, and both are constrained to disconfirmations. For example,

F Mrs. Boyle: If I had not believed this was a running
concern, I should never have come here.
I understand it was fully equipped with
every home comfort.

D- Giles: There is no obligation for you to remain

here if you are not satisfied, Mrs. Boyle.

is not yet an argument. If the next utterance were something like

D+ Mrs. Boyle: Yes, well, perhaps you could show me to my room.

we would not say that Mrs. Boyle and Giles had argued, but that they had merely disagreed on one point. The point is that argument must have uptake; uptake occurs when there is disagreement to disagreement. The minimal structure of argument, therefore, is a F/D-/D- sequence.[26] When this discourse structure occurs, speakers have switched out of dialogue into argument.[27] This is the case in the present example, because Mrs. Boyle's next utterance is actually

D- Mrs. Boyle: No, indeed, I should not think of doing so.

The fact that every Decision is itself a Formulation provides for the on-going process of argument: as a Formulation, every Decision itself requires a Decision. For example, the full exchange in the above example is

F Mrs. Boyle: If I had not believed this was a running
concern, I should never have come here.
I understand it was fully equipped with
every home comfort.

D- Giles: There is no obligation for you to remain
here if you are not satisfied, Mrs. Boyle.

D- Mrs. Boyle: No, indeed, I should not think of doing so.

D- Giles: If there has been any misapprehension it
would perhaps be better if you went elsewhere.
I could ring up for the taxi to return.
The roads are not yet blocked. We have had
so may applications for rooms that we shall
be able to fill you place quite easily.
In any case, we are raising our terms next
month.

As long as this F/D-/D-... structure continues, the argument continues, and the participants continue to be engaged in argument activity.

3. ARGUMENT-INITIATION

Uptake of argument occurs when a minimum F/D-/D- sequence is produced by at least two speakers.[28] In order to explore the issue of uptake further, it is necessary to turn from the question 'What does argument look like?' (structure) to the question "When does argument start?' (dynamics of uptake). In answering this, it is useful to invoke the notion of a 'comment slot'. As Bilmes (1985) states, "When A formulates ... then it is expectable that B will comment on that formulation. That is, A has created a slot for such a comment."[29] In argument, (since Decisions are mandatory) Formulation comment slots are mandatorily filled. If they are not filled, and if each one is not filled (at least initially) with a D-, there is no argument.[30]

Argument-initiation is a question of who, of speaker or hearer, has control over the comment slot; i.e., who decides how it should be filled? Whoever has control over the slot has real control over whether or not an argument is to occur.

The template for argument-initiation may be represented as
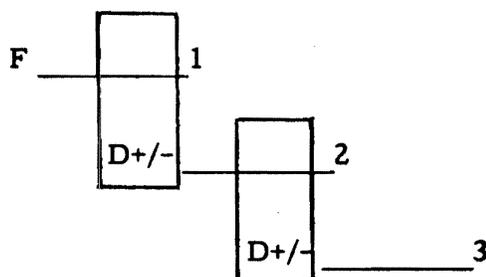
with slots 1 and 2 pivotal for the achievement or non-achievement of the minimal (F/D-/D-) argument sequence: if slot1 incurs a D-, there is initiation of uptake; if slot2 also incurs a D-, uptake is complete.

3.1 The Role of the Hearer in Argument-initiation

The participant with the most obvious control over slot1 is the hearer, since he is the one who will fill it. If he fills it with a D-, an argument may ensue; the hearer is, thus, in Speier's terms, 'interactionally consequential'.[31]

The hearer has three options:

(a) Fill the slot with a D-, and initiate uptake, as does Giles in

F Mrs. Boyle: If I had not believed this was a running
                  concern, I should never have come here.
                  I understand it was fully equipped with
                  every home comfort.

D- Giles: There is no obligation for you to remain

here if you are not satisfied, Mrs. Boyle.

(b) Fill the slot with a D+, and decline to intiate uptake. In this case, the hearer either agrees with the initial speaker's Formulation, or disagrees, but is not in the mood for an argument, as is

F Christopher:	I'm going to like it here. I find your wife most sympathetic.
D+ Giles:	Indeed.
cont. F Christopher:	And really very beautiful.

(c) Fill the slot with a non-Decision. Heritage and Watson (1979) suggest that a non-Decision performs a 'checking operation' between a Formulation and a Decision. For example,

F Mrs. Boyle:	You're very young.
non-D Mollie:	Young?
cont.F Mrs.Boyle:	To be running an establishment of this kind. You can't have had much experience.
D- Mollie:	There has to be a beginning for everything, hasn't there?
D- Mrs. Boyle:	I see. Quite inexperienced. An old, old house. I hope you haven't got dry rot.
D- Mollie:	Certainly not.

Mollie's comment ("Young?") is a non-Decision prompting further elaboration of Mrs. Boyle's Formulation. Mrs. Boyle's Formulation is an example of how a speech act may span more than one turn (cf. Wunderlich, 1980). The eventual slot of this Formulation is filled with a disconfirmation ("There has to be a beginning for everything, hasn't there?"), which initiates the uptake of this argument. A non-Decision, then, forestalls a choice by the hearer between options (a) and (b), although a choice is ultimately required.[32]

Even with complexity of structure and utterance indirectness, the F/D-/D- sequence still holds. For example,

F Giles:	I once read in a paper that these homicidal cases are able to attract women. Looks as though it were true. Where did you first meet him? How long has this been going on?
D- Mollie:	You're being absolutely ridiculous. I never

set eyes on Christopher Wren until he arrived
yesterday.

D- Giles: That's what you say. Perhaps you've been
running to London to meet him on the sly.

Giles' first utterance is an over-all Formulation that Mollie is romantically involved with Christopher Wren. It is actually composed of four sub-Formulations, i.e.,

F1   I once read in a paper that these homicidal cases are
able to attract women.
F2   Looks as though it were true. (=It is true in this
case.)
F3   Where did you first meet him? (=You have known him
for some time.)
F4   How long has this been going on? (=You have been
involved with him.)

Because a Formulation may consist of several acts, it is (or can be) a speech act complex (cf. Wunderlich, 1980). Mollie's utterance ("You're being absolutely ridiculous.") is a comment on Giles' over-all Formulation that she is romantically involved with Christopher Wren. Filling the comment slot of the over-all Formulation apparently also fills the slots of the sub-Formulations -- and satisfies the principle that, in argument, comment slots are mandatorily filled.[33]

3.2 The Role of the Speaker in Argument-initiation

The control of the speaker (of the initial Formulation) lies in his framing slot1 for a D+ (non-argument) or a D- (potential argument). That is, although the speaker is out of the picture, so to speak, once his Formulation is produced,[34] the nature of his Formulation may be such that it increases the likelihood that it be met with a D+ or a D-. Three options the speaker has for framing the slot for a D- are

(a) Produce a F which is blatantly false[35](in the hearer's interpretation), as in

F Giles: I once read in a paper that these homicidal cases
are able to attract women. Looks as though it were
true. Where did you first meet him? How long has
this been going on?

(b) Produce a F which is accusatory in content.[36] In the above example, Giles combines this tactic with that of option (a).

(c) Produce a F which contains a slot-framing structural device. This is an issue which requires further research. Slot-framing devices are likely subtle and may include tag-expressions or intensifiers, e.g., 'quite' and 'old, old' in

F Mrs. Boyle: I see. Quite inexperienced. An old, old
house. I hope you haven't got dry rot.

A tag expression which frames a slot for a D+ is the negative tag-question.[37] For example, if the following (hypothetical) Formulation

F   You saw him on the night of the twelfth.

were utterred by a cross-examiner in court, one would not be able to predict whether a D+ or a D- would follow. That is, the response could be

D+   Yes, I did.

or

D-   No, I did not.

The slot of this Formulation, then, is unframed (unless it were blatantly false, or accusatory). However, adding a negative tag-question will frame the comment slot for a D+ (the desired response for the cross-examiner, who seeks 'agreeing' testimony from the witness):

F You saw him on the night of the twelfth, didn't you?

If one does not stop to think, the D+ ('Yes, I did.') fairly produces itself. The notions of a comment slot and slot-framing appear to explain the impression that tag-questions are leading in the legal setting:[38] a negative tag-question will so frame a slot that, especially for a child, to respond with a D- ('No, I did not.') requires effort. Further research should explore the issue of devices such as tag-questions which may frame a slot for a disconfirmation.

3.3 The Role of Social and Cultural Norms in Argument-initiation

Norms of status or conversational setting may dictate whether or not an argument should occur on a given occasion. That is, they may cast a general D+ or D- framing over all the comment slots in a given conversation. A D+ framing is cast by the (cultural) norm, 'don't discuss religion or politics at formal gatherings': the subjects should not arise, or, if they do, a hearer should avoid their argumentative potential by agreeing with whatever is said about them. Other unformulated norms may cast a D- framing; for example, at political press conferences, debate club meetings, or city council forums, argument is expected.

The speaker/hearer status differential can provide a general D+ framing. For example, a student will not be likely to uptake on an argumentative Formulation uttered by a professor, nor will a parishioner on one uttered by his cleric.[39] The contradictory example of children who typically argue with their parents, and parents who typically tolerate this, suggests that various norms may interact in general slot-framing.

4. ARGUMENT RESOLUTION

The concepts of 'win' and 'loss' in argument are intriguing, yet elusive. Heritage and Watson (1979) discuss achievement of a 'proper gloss' of a Formulation, out of competing 'multiple glosses'. For example, the larger argument

F Giles: I once read in a paper that these homicidal cases are able to attract women. Looks as though it were true. Where did you first meet him? How long has this been going on?

D- Mollie: You're being absolutely ridiculous. I never set eyes on Christopher Wren until he arrived yesterday.

D- Giles: That's what you say. Perhaps you've been running to London to meet him on the sly.

D- Mollie: You know perfectly well that I haven't been up to London for weeks.

D- Giles: You haven't been up to London for weeks. Is-that-so?

D- Mollie: What on earth do you mean? It's quite true.

might be 'resolved' by the hypothetical utterance

D+ Giles: Well, alright, so you haven't been up to London for weeks and you've never seen Christopher Wren till yesterday. I suppose there's nothing going on.

yielding the 'proper gloss', 'Mollie is not involved with Christopher Wren' (a 'win' for Mollie). It might also be 'resolved' by

D+ Mollie: All right! I've not been up to London for weeks, but Christopher has been stopping by while you've been out afternoons. It's only been a fling. Are you

satisfied?

yielding the 'proper gloss', 'Mollie has been involved with Christopher Wren' (a 'win' for Giles).

But it is more likely that, in many instances, interpersonal conflict runs deeper than mere competing Formulations. In the case of the first 'proper gloss', above, Giles may 'lose' the argument, but continue in his suspicions of Mollie. In the second case, achievement of the 'proper gloss', that Mollie has been unfaithful, in no way resolves the conflict, or greater argument, that is present. 'Win' and 'loss' in argument, therefore, are complex notions, and involve several pragmatic factors per conflict situation.

5. CONCLUSION

In a very basic manner, the question 'what is the structure of argument?' has been answered: regardless of utterance indirectness, argument participants will produce the discourse sequence F/D-/D-. The speech acts, Formulation and Decision, are broad acts performed by a speaker and a hearer as they display their fundamental relationship of opposition (over something). Other studies which have examined the composition of these acts, and their patterns of production, may now fit as illustrations of the complexity which the basic F/D-/D- sequence can achieve.

The purpose of argument is a difficult issue to pin down. Since interpersonal conflict may be complex (may occur on several levels, may be 'resolved', yet not resolved), the discourse activity of argument may on the discourse level serve one purpose, yet on the global, interactional, level serve another. For example, petty arguments, especially in the marital context, may serve only to perpetuate some long-standing and mundane conflict between the participants. Conversely, arguments which interactants engage in 'for the heck of it' may occur where no conflict exists at all.

Social and cultural norms appear to have real power in shaping a discourse as argument or non-argument. This power may override speaker/hearer intensity, or the argumentative properties of a Formulation which is false, accusatory, or produced in conjunction with a slot-framing device.

Whatever the complexity an argument may achieve, its discourse structure will be orderly, as the foregoing discussion has tried to illustrate. As any discourse activity, argument is interactionally-rooted: the speech acts that are performed will determine whether uptake occurs, and the nature of the argument which may develop.

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Canadian Linguistics Association Conference, Windsor, Ontartio in May, 1987. I acknowledge the helpful suggestions of those present at that talk.

[2] (Frawley 1987: p.363)

[3] (van Dijk 1985a: p.xiii)

[4] (Kess 1986b; p.386)

[5] (Kess 1986a: p.98)

[6] (Kopperschmidt 1985: p.159)

[7] See van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984 and Schiffrin 1985.

[8] See Brunneis and Lein 1977.

[9] See Quasthoff 1978.

[10] See Ragan 1983 and Pomerantz 1984.

[11] See Schegloff 1972 and Heritage and Watson 1979.

[12] (Levinson 1983: p.284)

[13] Jackson and Jacobs (1980) refer to formal argument as the 'prototypical' argument; the present discussion should make clear the sense of 'prototypical' that is appropriate for discourse analysis.

[14] An important issue in discourse analysis is what constitutes appropriate data. If the primacy of orality over literacy is assumed, then spoken discourse will be the primary data source (not written prose). The use of plays is not unheard of, however; a play is used (and arbitrarily chosen) for this exploratory paper on the assumption that a successful playwrite is skilled at producing real discourse. Nevertheless, support for the suggestions made in this paper will have to be found in actual spontaneous discourse.

[15] An example of 'disagreement-relevant-expansion' of a main speech act pair is the case when an Offer meets with a Refusal, and argument develops around the Offer, or the Refusal, or both.

[16] (O'Keefe and Benoit 1982: p.170)

[17] (Bavelas, Rogers and Millar 1985: p.19)

[18] Along with Bilmes (1985), I propose a broader definition of a 'Formulation' than the sense previously applied by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), Schegloff (1972), Heritage and Watson (1979) and Bilmes (1981). In these studies, Formulations were limited to metacomments which summarized 'talk-thus-far'.

[19] Although a thorough explanation will not be undertaken here, Formulations are seen in the present discussion to be valid 'formal structures' of conversation, after Garfinkel and Sacks (1970). Garfinkel and Sacks list the criteria for 'formal structures' as (p.346)

> activities (a) in that they exhibit upon analysis the properties of uniformity, reproducibility, repetitiveness, standardization, typicality, and so on; (b) in that these properties are independent of particular production cohorts; (c) in that particular-cohort independence is a phenomenon for members' recognition; and (d) in that the phenomena (a), (b), and (c) are every particular cohort's practical, situated accomplishment.

[20] This is a classic example of what Grice (1975) describes as 'conversational implicature'.

[21] (Heritage and Watson 1979: p.141)

[22] The notion of finding the 'formal' argument underlying a speaker's utterance is crucial in determining what a hearer's Decision is in response to. Although the treatment of questions as Formulations is still sketchy at this point, we could see the question 'Any more stuff in the car?' as a Formulation such as '(It is possible that) you have more stuff in the car.'

[23] This is a descriptive, not a prescriptive, statement. It is apparent that, in order for there to be argument, speakers must be engaged in their relationship of opposition; this they show by producing (disconfirming) Decisions.

[24] Decisions are constrained to disconfirmations only initially because, as an argument progresses, 'agreement' may be reached (i.e., there may be an occurrence of one or more D+) on smaller points in what still remains an over-all argument.

[25] Cases of one-party, intrapersonal argument are excluded from this treatment.

[26] Millar, Rogers and Bavelas (1984) describe a relational approach, in which this crucial structure is discussed as 'three consecutive one-up moves'; see also Bavelas, Rogers and Millar (1985).

[27] In the present example, there is no switch from dialogue into argument, since the speakers start off their exchange in argument activity.

[28] It is possible that a third speaker may utter the second D-, and complete the uptake, as in the hypothetical sequence:

> F Speaker 1: You're very unimaginative.
> D- Speaker 2: No, I'm not!
> D- Speaker 3: He's right. You are unimaginative.

[29] (Bilmes 1985: p.331)

[30] A slot may be filled verbally or non-verbally, or by silence. Silence may imply a D+ (see Bilmes, 1985), or a D-. Decisions appear to be as subjective as are Formulations -- that the speaker of a Decision may mean one type of response and the hearer may decode it to mean another means that argument is an ever-present possibili-

ty in discourse.

[31] See Speier 1972.

[32] The reality of utterance indirectness suggests another, probably more applicable analysis:

F1 Mrs. Boyle:	You're very young.
D-1 Mollie:	Young?
F2 Mrs. Boyle:	To be running an establishment of this kind.
D-2 Mollie:	There has to be a beginning for everything, hasn't there?

where F1, a very indirect Formulation, is distinct in level of indirectness and propositional content from F2. Similarily, D-1 is distinct from D-2 (with the occurrence of a D- of the type that D-1 is meaning that a subsequent D- by this speaker is likely). I thank Ron Hoppe for his suggestions for this analysis.

Actually, the category of 'non-Decision' is uncomfortable, since it suggests a neutral, even void response. A true non-Decision would be the same as the absence of a Decision — something which does not occur in argument, since in argument speakers are engaged in their opposition. Mollie's 'non-Decision', "Young?", is really a reserved, or indirect, D-, used to mitigate the emerging disagreement in this example.

[33] Following the alternate analysis discussed in the above note, this exchange would be seen as

F1 Giles:	I once read in a paper that these homicidal cases are able to attract women.
F2	Looks as though it were true.
F3	When did you first meet him?
F4	How long has this been going on?
D-1 Mollie:	You're being absolutely ridiculous.
D-2	I never set eyes on Christopher Wren until he arrived yesterday.
D-1 Giles:	That's what you say.
D-2	Perhaps you've been running to London to meet him on the sly.

where D-1 (Mollie) is a comment on Formulations 1-4. What participants actually track, and tune their responses to, are the made arguments of Formulations/Decisions: D-1 (Mollie) is a comment on the underlying arguments of (the very indirect) Formulations 1-4. This suggests a hierarchical structure of arguments and sub-arguments, which are pursued in a complex manner within the basic F/D-/D- structure.

[34] (except for on-going gestures)

[35] See Bilmes 1985.

[36] See Rosenblum (1987) for discussion of the speech act pair Accusation/Denial, Acceptance.

[37] Another structural device for D+ framing is the Canadian 'eh?'

[38] See Danet 1980a and 1980b.

[39] Recalling an earlier distinction between initiation of uptake, and uptake, the lower-status participant may disagree, but will be unlikely to engage in (i.e., complete the uptake of) an argument. Certain sactions will apply if this norm of status is broken.

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