A Model for the Pragmatic Analysis of Argumentation

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1. Introduction

Argumentation is a verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge (van Eemeren et al., 1996: 5). It is that topic which has a long tradition in history and which has been made by the hands of philosophy, logic, rhetoric, dialectic, and more recently, pragma-dialectic. As such, there have been different models that are developed for the sake of analyzing argumentation from different angles. However, these models do not deal with argumentation from a linguistic perspective; or even when some of them do, they confine themselves to a limited extent. Thus, a need arises to the development of a more comprehensive model. The current study assigns this task to itself through developing an eclectic model which is based on various models, in addition to the researchers' observations.

2. Models of Argumentation

These models include the following:

a- Van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1983) ideal model of a critical discussion.

b- Toulmin's (2003) phases of argument.

c- Benoit and Benoit's (2006) strategies of getting into and out of arguments; and

d- Trapp's (2006) model of argument episodes.

Van Eemeren and Grootendors't (1983: 85-7) ideal model of a critical discussion involves four stages on which certain speech acts are

distributed (i.e. those which help resolve the difference of opinion which is the gist of a critical discussion).The stages are: confrontation, opening, argumentation and concluding. As van Eemeren as Grootendorst (1992: 35-6) state, their ideal model is, to some extent, far-away from real life argumentative discourse, so what will be taken from this model is the terminology only, viz. the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage.

Toulmin's (2003: 16) phases of an argument have been put to prove the idea that the procedures (phases) of arguing are the same regardless of the field in which this process occurs. As such, he invokes cases from two different fields (law cases and rational cases) to show that the number of phases (viz. three) is the same, what differs is the kind of evidence or support needed to reach the final stage in each case. In trying to prove his notion, Toulmin gives examples from two different fields both of which are different from the kind of data in the novels under study. Therefore, what will be taken here is the number of phases, i.e. three phases (stages).

Benoit and Benoit (2006: 61-70) strategies of getting into arguments are: insult, accusation, command, and refusal of a request; and those of getting out of arguments are: physical or psychological disengagement, apology, agreement, and restoring the relationship. What will be taken are the strategies of getting into arguments, and some of those of getting out of arguments (viz. physical or psychological disengagement, apology, and agreement). Not all the strategies of getting out of arguments have been taken because the interactants with whom the Benoits' research had been conducted were roommates, romantic partners, and friends; that is to say, not all of these kinds of interactants are found in the novels under investigation, so the most appropriate strategies have been selected.

According to Trapp's (2006: 44-6) model of argument episodes, an argument episode is triggered by the perception of incompatibility. The episode is initiated by one participant deciding to confront the other, inventing and editing argument strategies and arguing. The consequences of

argument episodes range from conflict (de)escalation, to conflict resolution, to self-concept damage or improvement, to relational improvement or dissolution, and/or to physical violence. One of the requirements of the arguing process, according to Trapp, is what is called 'argumentative competence'. That very notion will be taken from Trapp. Trapp (ibid.: 44) reveals a very important thing about his model. He states that in developing that model he has struggled with the " trade-off between accuracy and simplicity. When accuracy is the goal, models become less simple; but when simplicity is reached accuracy is sacrificed".

3. An Eclectic Model

The model intended to be developed by this study can be illustrated as follows:

Argumentation consists of three stages: the *opening* stage, the *subsequent argumentation* stage, and the *concluding* stage.

Generally, the *opening stage* includes the violation of the addressee's face (positive or negative) which can be defined as " the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself " (Brown and Levinson, 1979: 66; Cited in Al-Hindawy, 1999: 60). This violation is attained to by one or more of different strategies which include: insults, accusations, request refusal, command, suggestion, comment, statement of disappreciation,… etc.

This stage leads, in turn, to the second *subsequent argumentation* stage which involves three parts: arguing effectively, arguing appropriately, and combination of both. The combination of effectiveness and appropriateness is termed 'argumentative competence'. Argumentative competence is initiated by Trapp, Yingling, and Wanner (1986) in a published paper entitled "Measuring Argumentative Competence". Later on, Trapp (2006) expresses more clearly what is conceived of by argumentative competence.

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Effective arguers are those who " make clear connections…, are logical, provide support for arguments, and explain things clearly" (Trapp, 2006: 48).

Translated into pragmatic terms, effectiveness can be found equal to keeping to Grice's *Cooperative Principle* (CP) and its maxims. If the preceding features of effectiveness have been considered again, it will be noted that each one of them is equivalent to one of the Cricean maxims:

- Make clear connections = be relevant (*the relevance maxim*).

- Be logical = tell things which are true and to which you have solid evidence (*the quality maxim*).

- Provide support for arguments = be as informative as is required (*the quantity maxim*).

- Explain things clearly = be clear, brief, and orderly (*the manner maxim*).

Appropriateness, on the other hand, as Trapp (ibid.) sees it, involves avoiding any act of " being obnoxious, arrogant, and overbearing; insulting or poking fun at others; belittling opponents; trying to prevent others from expressing their points of view, and directing arguments against the other person rather than the other person's position".

Again, if translated into pragmatic terms the aforementioned features indicate that arguing appropriately entails keeping to the *Politeness Principle* (PP).

Models of politeness are many, of which Lakoff's models will be chosen because it " is part of a general system of interactional style which classifies people's interactional behavior according to how they handle interpersonal relationships" (Eelen, 2001: 49). Since novels are built on a network of interpersonal relationships, then this model seems suitable.

As James (1980: 129-31) argues, Lakoff's model of politeness is summarized in three rules:

a- Don't impose on your hearer (distance rule).

b- Give hearer options (deference rule); and

c- Make hearer feel good (camaraderie rule).

These rules are linguistically realized by many strategies which are called modality markers. Some of these strategies include: the use of questions and past tense (distance rule); the use of politeness markers such as titles such as Mr., Miss.etc. (deference rule), and the use of interpersonal markers such as address terms (e.g. first names) (camaraderie rule).

These two principles, i.e. the CP and PP, are very important in face-to-face interaction due to the fact that the CP opens the channel of communication and the PP keeps it open (Leech, 1983: 82).

The second stage leads to the final concluding stage which may come either positively or negatively. It is positive in the sense that the main point of incompatibility has been resolved, thus it may either end by agreement, apology, combination of the two. On the other hand, it becomes negative when the point of incompatibility has not been resolved, i.e. it ends either with physical or psychological disengagement (silence), disagreement, verbal aggression, or combination of the first and third strategies (i.e. physical or psychological disengagement and verbal aggression).These last three strategies (i.e. disagreement, verbal aggression, and the combination) are not mentioned in the Benoits' strategies. Disagreement and the combination have been added by the researchers because they are very possible strategies of getting out of arguments; the second has been taken from Trapp (2006). Verbal aggression (which involves attacking the person her/himself instead of the standpoint adopted) is termed by Walton (2004: 106) a 'quarrel'. The term 'quarrel' seems more accurate than 'verbal aggression', this becomes evident when the meaning of 'quarrel' is checked in the dictionary:

quarrel: *an angry argument or disagreement between people, often about a personal matter* (Hornby, 2002: s.v. quarrel).

Therefore, the third strategy of concluding the process of argumentation is **quarrel** (which has the same notion of verbal aggression as presented by Trapp, but with a more accurate terminology).

For more clarification, the just illustrated model will diagrammed as follows:

4. Data Analysis

(1) The following two examples taken from **<u>Jane Eyre</u>** (p.7, 106, respectively) will be analyzed depending on the developed model.

Situation: Jane, an orphan girl, lives in her dead uncle's house with his wife and children. One day, the children (i.e. Jane and her cousins) quarrel, and it is her cousin, John Reed, who starts the quarrel. Instead of punishing him, Jane gets punished. One executing the punishment, the following argumentation begins, when Bessie (the servant) tries to convince Jane of behaving well.

Bessie*: What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress's son! Your young master!*

Jane*: Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?*

Bessie*: No; you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep. There, sit down and think over your wickedness. You ought to be aware, Miss, that you are under obligations to Mrs. Reed: she keeps you; if she were to turn you off, you would have to go to the poor-house.*

Jane*: (I had nothing to say to these words: they are not new to me: my very first recollections of existence included hints of the same kind).*

In this example, the opening stage begins with insulting Jane of being a servant (the insult has not been stated by explicitly telling her that she is a servant; rather, she has been told that the young gentleman is her master, which implies that someone who has a master could be a servant). This has led to the second stage in which Bessie argues how is Jane is less than a servant.

In the second stage, Bessie is cooperative for she has kept to Grice's maxims (by being informative, telling the truth, being relevant, and being clear, brief and orderly). The PP, also, has been kept to as is shown by the use of the title 'Miss' that indicates deference.

The argumentation process in this example has been negatively concluded because Jane kept silent. Keeping silent, as Benoit and Benoit (2006: 66) state, is negative because it prevents any further interaction among participants, and since it takes two (or more) to engage in and continue a conversation, then the main point of incompatibility (insult in this example) will not be resolved; rather one of the arguers (Jane in this example) disengages and, so, the argumentation cannot continue.

(2) **Situation**: Rochester, the master of the house in which Jane works as a governess, wants to have a conversation with Jane about any subject she chooses. She tells him that it is better that he chooses the topic in order to make sure that it will be of interest to him. So, he asks her whether she agrees with his opinion that he has the right of being a little masterful due to the fact that he is older and has a wider experience than hers. On answering him "Do as you please, sir.", the following argumentation begins, when Jane tries to convince Rochester of not having the right to command her.

Rochester: *That is no answer: or rather it is a very irritating, because a very evasive one – reply clearly.*

Jane: *I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have – your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience.*

Rochester: *Humph! Promptly spoken. But I won't allow that, seeing that it would never suit my case; as I have made an indifferent, not to say, a bad use of both advantages. Leaving superiority out of the question then, you must still agree to receive my orders now and then, without being piqued or hurt by the tone of the command – will you?*

The opening stage begins with Rochester's commanding Jane to reply his question. The command has been explicitly issued in the form of an imperative (that is, *reply clearly*).

In the second subsequent argumentation stage, Jane argues competently, that is, effectively and appropriately. The effective arguing is demonstrated in her keeping to the CP and its four maxims, therefore she is informative, truthful, relevant, and mannered (i.e. clear, brief, and orderly). The appropriate arguing, on the other hand, is manifested in her keeping to the PP indicated by her use of the title 'sir' which shows deference .

The argumentation, in this example, has been positively concluded by showing agreement. The agreement is implied in Rochester's requesting Jane to receive his orders, at any time, without being piqued or hurt by them; and that indicates the commander's (i.e. Rochester) admission that he has not the right to command her because of the reasons he mentioned. And that, also, denotes that he has been convinced by what Jane has said, and thus he agrees with her.

(3) Two examples taken from **<u>Wuthering Heights</u>** (475-6) will be analyzed.

Situation: Heathcliff and Catherine meet after a long period of separation. On seeing him, the following argumentation begins, where Heathcliff tries to convince Catherine that he has not done her any harm.

Catherine: You have killed me – and thriven on it, I think. I wish I could hold you till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn't you suffer? I do. Will you forget me? Will you be happy when I am in the earth! Will you say twenty years hence, ' That's the grave of Catherine Earnshaw. I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it is past. I've loved many others since: my children are dearer to me than she was; and at death I shall not rejoice that I am going to her: I shall be sorry that I must lose them!' Will you say so, Heathcliff?

Heathcliff: Don't torture me till I'm as mad as yourself! Are you possessed with a devil to talk in that manner to me when you are dying? Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally after you have left? You know you lie to say I have killed you; and , Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your internal selfishness that, while you are at peace, I shall writhe in the torment of hell?

Catherine: I shall not be at peace. I'm not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff. I only wish us never be parted: and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me. Come here and kneel down again! You never harmed me in your life. Nay, if you nurse anger, that will be worse to remember than my harsh words! Won't you come here again? Do!.

The opening stage is motivated by Catherine's accusing Heathcliff of killing and forgetting her. Her accusation is presented in two ways: as an assertion (*you have killed me*), and as a series of questions which indicate (from Catherine's point of view) that Heathcliff will forget her sooner or later.

In the subsequent argumentation stage, Heathcliff argues effectively and appropriately. His effective arguing is demonstrated in his keeping to the CP and its four maxims, so he is informative, truthful (which is shown via his use of the verb 'know' which denotes that the "information following that verb can be treated as a fact" (Yule, 1996: 27)), relevant, and mannered. His appropriate arguing, on the other hand, is manifested in his keeping to the PP which is employed by:

a- his use of questions (*Are you possessed…, Do you reflect…, Is it not sufficient…*) which are polite as they are the most indirect.

b- his use of the first name '*Catherine*' which shows rapport and equality; and

c- his use of the negative form (*Is it not sufficient...*) which gives the addressee the freedom of giving the response required.

The concluding stage is positive for it ends with a combination of strategies: apology and agreement. The apology is indicated by Catherine's asking for forgiveness, which is one of the strategies of apologizing (as is indicated by Cohen, 1983:20-4; Cited in Al-Khaza'li, 2009: 116; Benoit and Benoit, 2006:68). The agreement, on the other hand, is implied in her saying (*You never harmed me in your life*). This is so because '*killing and forgetting*' harm, and since he has never harmed her in his life, then he has neither killed nor forgotten her.

 (4) **Situation**: Catherine and Isabella quarrel in the presence of Nelly. When Catherine leaves the room, Isabella turns to Nelly and argues with her about Heathcliff's good features. On that point the following argumentation is activated, when Nelly tries to convince Isabella of not marrying Heathcliff.

Isabella: All, all is against me; she has blighted my single consolation. But she uttered falsehoods, didn't she? Mr. Heathcliff is not a fiend; he has an honorable soul, and a true one, or how could he remember her?

Nelly: Banish him from your thoughts, miss. He's a bird of bad omen; no mate for you. Mrs. Linton spoke strongly, and yet, I can't contradict her. She is better acquainted with his heart than I, or any one besides; and she never would represent him as worse than he is. Honest people don't hide their deeds. How has he been living? How has he got rich? Why is he staying at Wuthering Heights, the house of a man whom he abhors? They say Mr. Earnshaw is worse and worse since he came. They sit up all night together continually: and Hindley has been borrowing money on his land, and does nothing but play and drink, I heard only a week ago; it was Joseph who told me – I met him at Gimmerton (and Nelly goes on telling Isabella what Joseph has told her). Now, Miss Linton, Joseph is an old rascal, but no liar;

if his account of Heathcliff's conduct be true, you never think of desiring such a husband, would you?

Isabella: *You are leagued with the rest, Ellen. I'll not listen to your slanders. What malevolence you must have to wish to convince me that there is no happiness in the world.*

The opening stage, here, begins with Isabella's accusing Catherine of telling falsehoods about Heathcliff. Although the accusation is not directed to Nelly, yet she chooses to defend Catherine because Nelly knows that what Catherine says is the truth. The accusation is presented as a statement (she uttered falsehoods, didn't she) followed by a tag question which is intended to elicit consent from the listener.

In the subsequent argumentation stage, Nelly does not argue explicitly about the accusation; rather, she tells Isabella two things: first, to banish Heathcliff from her thoughts; and second, Catherine's speech is correct though it has been said in a strong manner. This means that Nelly is implicitly defending Catherine. To do so, she has kept to the CP and its four maxims, i.e. she is informative, truthful, relevant, and mannered. Accordingly, Nelly has been arguing effectively. She has also been arguing appropriately by keeping to the PP which is employed via:

a- her use of the title '*Miss*' which has been repeated twice to show deference.

b- her use of the past tense (*you would never think…*) which gives the addressee the impression of having freedom of the type of the response required.

c- her use of the tag question (*would you?*) in the past tense which smoothens the impact of imposition.

The concluding stage comes negatively for it ends with disagreement. The disagreement is explicitly expressed by Isabella's asserting that she will not listen to Nelly's words, which Isabella calls slanders, in order to emphasize her disagreement with what has been said.

Conclusions

The paper has come up with the following conclusions:

1- The workability of the developed model has been validated. What establishes that validity is the analysis of four randomly chosen examples from two different novels according to the various classifications of the model. For instance, the first example (from **Jane Eyre**) is negatively concluded with psychological disengagement (i.e. silence); this is one of the divisions of the eclectic model. The third example

(from **Wuthering Heights**), on the other hand, is positively concluded with a combination of apology and agreement; this is, also, another division of the developed model.

(2) The notion of argumentative competence (as is developed in this paper) has been employed in the chosen examples. This becomes evident when noticing that the characters (i.e. Bessie in the first example, Jane in the second, Heathcliff in the third, and Nelly in fourth) have kept to the CP and its four maxims (thus they have been arguing effectively), and to the PP (thus they have been arguing appropriately).

(3) Through the analyzed examples, it has been shown that arguing competently, that is, effectively and appropriately, does not guarantee how the final stage is concluded. This is so because in the four examples, the competent arguing has been appealed to, yet two examples (viz. the second and third) have been positively concluded (with agreement and combination of apology and agreement, respectively); and the other two have been negatively concluded (with psychological disengagement and disagreement, respectively).

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