

Role of Argumentation in Discourse

Irina Kardovich
Plekhanov Russian
University of Economics
Moscow, Russia
ik_125212@mail.ru

Marina Konysheva
Russian University of
Transport (RUT-MIIT),
Law Institute
Moscow, Russia
mkonysheva@mail.ru,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4269-5723>

Ekaterina Korobova
Plekhanov Russian
University of Economics
Moscow, Russia
ekkorobova@yandex.ru
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2217-8892>

Dina Mironova
Plekhanov Russian
University of Economics
Moscow, Russia
dina_mironova@mail.ru

Abstract — The present paper offers a survey of prevailing lines of research on linguistic argumentation, which is a fundamental part of a logical communication structure of any sense bearing text. The paper explores the character and structure of linguistic argumentation with regards to communication and pragmatic aspects. It also substantiates a broad understanding of argumentation as an indispensable element for the universal communication process, which lies behind any piece of information to be transferred further on in the context of the discourse activity. Unlike most scholars who, while interpreting argumentation, focus on the logical (evidentiary) aspect of this phenomenon, the authors of the paper consider and prove argumentation to be a pragmatic framework to build any extended language construct characterized by relatively accomplished meaningfulness, i.e. conveying a certain informative value. Ranged and classified views on the nature of argumentation make it possible to draw a line between a broad and narrow approaches to its interpretation. Argumentation in a broad sense is a communication process, which goes along with any informatively significant language construct and serves as a universal technique to transfer information through the discourse act. Among distinct manifestations of inherent speech argumentation, we find the following speech constituents – narrative, explanation, confirmation, illustration, classification, persuasion and etc. Argumentation in a narrow sense is identical to proving based on arguments.

Keywords - cognitive linguistics, discourse, text, narrative, explanation, confirmation, illustration.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is common knowledge, that language is a universal tool for recording, keeping, transferring, interpreting and processing information. While learning a language, one can gain a better understanding of cognitive faculties of a person, get into his/her concept-based inner world, understand specific features of national mentality and way of thinking, perceive unique features of the national picture of the outworld molded in the mundane consciousness of a certain language community.

Any language construct, bearing certain information, represents some kind of a step forward in the cognitive process, an element of general experience of a particular society. "Basically, communication is nothing else but the exchange of information in the human society, and as a result – a manifestation of the social character of consciousness" [1, p. 89]. The act of informing is generally viewed as a transfer of knowledge in the form of objective communication [2]. The study of human mind and

intelligence "as a system, responsible for all types of operations with information and standard development of various mental processes" results from the interest researchers feel to various cognitive faculties of an individual, such as attention, perception, imagination and etc. [3]. Argumentation skills are no less important for cognitive development and social adaptation in the human society.

A lot of research works in various aspects and areas of humanitarian knowledge testify to the importance of argumentation as one of the leading language concepts. The research study of argumentation turns out to be especially important and relevant in view of text analysis carried out from the pragmatic perspective of communication. Therefore, language argumentation receives great attention both from scholars in Russia and abroad [4 – 7].

To support our stand on argumentation we offer a brief description of current lines of research to clarify our understanding of this phenomenon.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Traditional paradigms of argumentation lie in the spheres of logical-philosophical, rhetorical and neo-rhetorical research methods.

The traditional West European logical reference point in the research of argumentation rests on Aristotle's syllogistic rules, whereas argumentation depends on processes of proving any thesis. As often as not, Russian scholarly literature also considers argumentation along the line of the formal logical method as a theoretic base to come up with a logical argument aimed at proving the validity of the thesis [8].

The rhetorical paradigm which has a deeply rooted and rich tradition goes back to the classical art of rhetoric. In Ancient Greece, the skill of public speaking was considered a vital skill for any full citizen. The founders of classical rhetoric – Protagoras, Gorgias of Leontini, Lysias, Isocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero – stood at the origins of the modern theory of argumentation (TOA), having laid the foundation for its development within the theory of the art of rhetoric. In their tractates they worked out the concepts of conducting a dialogue and dispute, argument and counterargument, search for the truth in the course of communication, which later became part of a cross-disciplinary TOA, integrating various tools of a number of philological and non-philological disciplines. And though neither Plato, nor Socrates, or Aristotle used the term "argument" or "argumentation", it was precisely an argumentation phenomenon that they wrote

about. Thus, the Plato's dialogue "Gorgias" describes persuasion as an essential part of argumentation (according to Plato's theory, emotional persuasion goes at the expense of the logical argument). Aristotle, developing the system of deductive and inductive reasoning, in fact, describes efforts aimed at composing an argumentative text which structurally looks like the following sequence: thesis – argumentation – conclusion.

By the way, according to N.I. Makhnovskaya, the fact that Aristotle did not use the term "argumentation" in his works can be explained by the specific character of the translated text, as in some tractates the term "reason" is followed by the Latin term "argumentation", given in brackets. The author gives emphasis to the fact that the concept "argumentation", implicitly rooted in the minds of ancient philosophers and thinkers, was realized by them as verbal and cogitative efforts to build proof [9].

Despite an active position of the logical line of rhetoric which bases on Aristotle and rests on logical argumentation (limited only by exclusively rational and logical types of arguments), the role of other types of argumentation with its refined version called the "rhetorical argumentation" is no less significant. In classical antiquity rhetorical argumentation of the speaker aimed at enlisting sympathy of the addressee despite the truth value of the thesis. Advancing an argument the speaker was trying to influence not only the addressees' thoughts but also their feelings and emotions.

Excessive interest either in logical or literary lines of argumentation gradually brought rhetoric to break from social practice and, as a result, to critical reconsideration of its contents.

H. Perelman and O. Titeca, who laid the foundation for neorhetoric, considered it as a theory of argumentation [10]. Practically rejecting the role of logic in building argumentation and placing TOA within the sphere of psychology, the authors, nevertheless, as it is stated in the name of their main work, bring together the questions of logic and rhetoric. It is undoubtedly a very significant move, as logic and rhetoric are difficult to be automatically separated and can effectively exist only in the context of cross-fertilization of ideas. The link between logic and rhetoric was mentioned long ago by Aristotle, who criticized Plato's theory in his famous "Rhetoric", saying that Plato belittled the importance of logical argument. Aristotle's dialectics supports logic in case of irrational, seeming, possible, conditional or plausible conclusions.

Rhetoric extends beyond the truth-value verifiable knowledge. Moreover, Aristotle emphasizes the importance of respect for moral ethical standards.

Aristotle's "Rhetoric" abounds with the analysis of such moral concepts as friendship, the good, virtue and the like, used by the author to classify different types of speech (judicial, consultative and so forth). Arguing on global categories of the good, the benefit and so forth, the author actually expands the concept of argumentation, adding to its moral and ethical components. The latter item is very important as it allows us to have a close look at the structure of argumentation.

Modern understanding of rhetorical argumentation, as it is stated by P. Silaev, aims not only at proving validity of

certain conclusions and concepts but also proves the expediency of certain ways of action, estimates, manners of behavior, subjective preferences [11].

The author considers rhetorical argumentation as a set of rational (logical) and irrational (rhetorical) arguments. The former group comprises verified facts, statistical data, references to recognized authorities and obviously true judgments, while the latter group covers argumentation built on analogies, argumentation appealing to emotions, to the personality, to the public, etc.

Developing new aspects in understanding the essence of argumentation a group of scholars gave rise to the Dutch school of argumentation headed by F. van Eemeren and R. Grootendorst [12].

Their interpretation of argumentation is based on a set of social, rational and verbal activities directed to convince the addressee of (un)acceptability of any provision or opinion by means of putting forward certain groupings of pro-positions (arguments) aimed to prove or disprove the expressed opinion. The works of this school of thought make one more step on the way to understand the multi-facet phenomenon of argumentation, attempt to coordinate its logical, rhetorical and social aspects.

This specific point of view is aligned with D.Yu. Budylin's work in which the nature of argumentation is bound with social life [13]. As the author justly points out, arguments can prove the put-forward statement, without being true. On the other hand, the addressee can accept the statement aside from accepting it as a result of argumentation. It gives factual grounds to D.Yu. Budylin to draw a conclusion that the logical link between the rationale and the conclusion should be considered in aspect of social practice "the logical argumentativeness can be taken into account only with socially organized reference to reality" [13, p. 18].

Thus, at the present stage argumentation is described as a multidimensional phenomenon covering numerous spheres of human activity.

The universal nature of this phenomenon is declared in many research works. Thus, it is stated that argumentation is an integral part of human life, it covers all spheres of human activity from everyday communication to scientific disputes [14, p. 73]. Being the most ancient intellectual and communication human activity, it is inseparable from the development of human society [9, p. 22] and represents an essential instrument of building successful speech communication, while the ability to make an argument is a principal condition for an individual to survive in the society [11].

However, emphasizing the comprehensive and universal nature of argumentation, most researchers (the above-mentioned authors among them), interpret this phenomenon placing emphasis on its logical (evidential) side, regard it as a special type of communication or a distinct speech act.

G.A. Brutyan, who introduced the term "argumentation" into the Russian philosophical language, defines it as a way of reasoning in the course of which some statement is put forward as the thesis to be proved. In the cause of proving it both arguments for and against it are being considered [15, p.

71]. This definition is accepted as fundamental in a great number of modern academic works focused on argumentation perspective [16].

Confining argumentation to the act of making arguments in order to support their concepts, many authors treat this phenomenon as the activity to settle a dispute, a conflict, a difficult situation [17, p. 27]; to overcome disagreements on issues under discussion [14, p. 78]. It thus assumes the necessity to prove one's point of view, uphold the taken position, search for and establish a compromise on some disputable issue, and as a result narrows the concept of argumentation to a special form of discourse activity, a distinct way of discourse organization.

Following this line of thought, A.N. Baranov defines argumentation as a special type of communication which has a specific influence on the addressee's consciousness through language signs, organized according to the principles of persuasion, accepted in a particular cultural society [18, p. 9].

A similar point of view is expressed by S.Yu. Dashkova, who calls argumentation a special type of communication which affects human consciousness and is organized in compliance with the norms of argumentative discourse inherent to a particular speech community [19, p. 31].

III. RESULTS

In our opinion, the interpretation of argumentation as a particular case of speech influence does not clarify the understanding of this phenomenon, and quite often brings confusion into this difficult subject. For example, E.V. Shelestyuk, offering a classification of types of speech influence, adds to its structure argumentation and proving as separate units. At the same time, according to the author, argumentation presupposes the same types of statements as the act of proving, but with specially selected facts and well-structured arguments to persuade and overpersuade the addressee [20, p. 14]. This makes correlation between argumentation and proving very indistinct, as proving does not also go without specially selected facts and structured argumentation.

Similarly, an indistinct definition is given by O.V. Kulikova in an attempt to draw a line between argumentation, reasoning and explanation as separate forms of discourse activity. Technically differentiating these phenomena, the author is repeatedly compelled to mention lack of accurate criteria for their differentiation [17].

It is quite probable that the interpretation of argumentation in the above-stated definitions is caused not only by the logical tradition, but to some extent by a confusion of concepts and terms "argumentation" and "proving".

Researchers differ in their interpretation of correlation between proving and argumentation. Some scholars draw a distinct line between them, interpreting the former (proving) as justification of the validity or falsehood of judgment, and the latter (argumentation) as justification of conclusions that cannot be proved by a deductive method, i.e. there is no way to establish their validity. D.A. Bokmelder writes, "To convince via proving means to bring the system of estimates of the object under consideration in accordance with the real world. To convince via argumentation means to bring the

system of estimates of an object in question in accordance with the estimates the subject of persuasion has" [21, p. 27].

Though there exists an absolutely opposite point of view on correlation between proving and argumentation, it interprets proving as part of argumentation. This viewpoint is described in detail in N.I. Makhnovskaya's review [9, p. 78-80]. In our opinion the right background to compare and determine the status for proving and argumentation centres around the concept of "persuasion".

G.V. Kolshansky fairly specifies [1, p. 141] that speech communication represents not only assertion of this or that event, but serves to establish mutual understanding, aims at achieving some result and bears in itself a component of impact on the partner in communication. At the same time not only the statements inducing some activity have influencing power, but also the statements which seemingly just inform the addressee, like texts from a school textbook influence pupils, making them acquire the necessary knowledge of the school subject and socialize in general.

Traditionally the universally acknowledged ways of speech influence include persuasion and suggestion [20]. In the context of argumentation we are especially interested in persuasion which unlike suggestion is based on reasonable, cognitive adoption of information assessed and analysed by the addressee.

According to a fair remark made by D.A. Bokmelder [21, p. 13] the primary purpose of the act of persuasion, rooted in any speech act is to form steady opinions and estimates in the addressee's mind. Basically this notion describes the purposeful verbal communication aimed at correcting the addressee's linguistic picture of the world and developing "the ontology of knowledge" for assimilation and integration of new knowledge into the model of the addressee's world, as A.N. Baranov describes it [18, p. 47].

To persuade, as B.A. Bokmelder says, means to influence the process of making decisions by the addressee by means of changing the ontological status of his/her knowledge of the fact or event [21, p. 15].

As the ultimate goal of argumentation is the acceptance of the proposed provisions by the audience [8], argumentation is fairly called the instrument of persuasion. The fact that in the course of communication people not only transfer information about the outer world to each other, but in every act of communication try to impose on each other certain rules of conduct makes the logical-communicative process of substantiating the position of the addresser i.e. argumentation, the integral part of any discourse.

In our opinion the ability to make argumentation is essential for both text producing and text perceiving; is a vital determinant of human behavior inseparably related to communication activity and transfer of knowledge.

Argumentation acts as a way of transfer and substantiation of knowledge. Information, reaching the cognizing subject, becomes part of their knowledge system only when due to argumentation it goes through their intellectual, sociocultural and ethic worldview attitudes, which lay the groundwork for its interpretation and understanding [22, 23]. Argumentation, being a universal instrument for persuasion and thus acting as the main tool of

speech influence, is the background to frame and transfer knowledge to the addressee in the form of mental representations of real-life situations, events, etc. In other words, any discourse involves speech influence, in its turn, any speech influence is carried out through persuasion, at the same time any persuasion is inextricably intertwined with argumentation which operates as a logical communication process. This logical communication process serves to substantiate a certain point of view so that it should be perceived, understood and/or accepted by the individual or collective recipient.

A great number of factors influence the addressee during the communication process, the most noticeable and recognizable are - the purpose of communication, the subject matter of speech communication, the age of participants of communication, various social, cultural, national and religious peculiarities of both sides of communication and etc. A skillful communicator takes these factors into account and chooses some of the most acceptable and effective types of argumentation - explanation, confirmation, definition, refutation, assessment, narrative, illustration, exemplification and etc.

All the factors mentioned above are special cases of substantiation of the speaker's/author's position (opinions, points of view, propositions, etc.), i.e. represent special cases of argumentation. As specified above, any proving is substantiation, but not any substantiation is proving. The criterion of proving is validity, while natural speech argumentation is based on the principle of broad relevance, now interpreted as presumptive argumentation.

O.V. Kulikova believes that "presumptive reasoning represents a chain of inference statements leading to a conclusion of a presumptive (variable) character which can be modified in case new information comes" [17, p. 23].

In the line of the discussed above it seems right to treat argumentation as a universal communication and pragmatic process of substantiation of a certain fragment of knowledge to be transferred during the discourse activity. This universal process is involved in building any language construct characterized by relatively accomplished meaningfulness, i.e. conveying a certain informative value.

A number of scholars keep to the same view on the universal nature of the inherent speech argumentation. To speak more specifically, it is necessary to mention that some scholars accept as true the view that people live not in the world of natural or man-made objects and social relations, but in the mentally constructed world which they model for themselves. Every individual builds his/her own living space in this constructed world to act, think and live in it.[24]. Thus, the information which interlocutors exchange among themselves does not describe the outer world; it reflects their mental construct, stemmed from the interaction between the outer world and the instruments of its representation [25].

In our linguistic research work we share the approach to argumentation expressed by N.Yu. Fanyan who suggests considering argumentation as a logical constant, inherent in any speech activity; considering any discourse as argumentative, and any text as loaded with argumentation [26]. The author accepts the discourse principle of relevance

(pertinence) as an alternative principle, opposing the criterion of validity.

Developing the idea, expressed by N.Yu. Fanyan, it is possible to say that a transfer of knowledge via its effect on the argumentation context shaped in the mind of another person can be achieved only through the procedure of argumentative structuring of information.

The universal character of argumentation, being its integral, as it is stated in most definitions, can be viewed through 5 aspects:

- 1) factual aspect which is actually the information of the facts involved as arguments;
- 2) rhetorical aspect, which involves various forms and styles of speech and emotional influence;
- 3) ethical aspect, which encompasses moral acceptability or permissibility of arguments;
- 4) logical aspect, focusing on logical coherence and sequence of arguments;
- 5) axiological aspect associated with value-based arguments [22].

The listed aspects of argumentation complement each other and can vary depending on specific goals of communication, communicative situation, the speaker's/writer's thesaurus and a great number of other factors.

Argumentation appears as an elaborate multicomponent phenomenon with the constituents which interpenetrate into each other, intensifying and building an argumentative framework of the language work product. Presumably it is flexibility and interpenetration of the argumentation components as well as ambiguous division lines between them that do not allow to carry out their final and hard-line differentiation and classification.

Thus, for example, S.Yu. Dashkova, identifies three types of argumentation – theoretical, empirical and rhetorical and refers to illustration, analogy and comparison to an empirical (inductive) type of argumentation [19]. On the contrary, the research work, devoted to specific features of V.I. Lenin's argumentative discourse, describes comparison as one of stylistic means to enhance emotional expressiveness of the text. D.A. Bokmelder excludes emotional means from argumentative elements of the text altogether [21, p. 56].

Different views and opinions cited above do not mean that it is impossible to carry out an inventory and differentiation among various language means and ways to express factual, logical, rhetorical and other aspects of argumentation.

The point is that describing corresponding aspects, it is advisable to be guided by prototypical, that is focal characteristics with a certain range of variation within a concrete topical area.

As it is already noted above, the actual argumentative configuration of a discourse depends on a set of factors, related to the type of speech activity, the age of participants of communication, national and psychological uniqueness of the addressee, all aspects of social, national, religious and

cultural elements, which have an impact on the perception of information.

To further develop the idea it wouldn't go amiss to emphasize the fact that in the course of person's cognitive development, at different stages of their communication progress the ability of argumentation and the argumentative instrument of the person, which possibly even precedes speech activity, is undoubtedly improved and refined, together with the mechanisms of rhetorical and logical argumentation.

We find confirmation of this idea in a number of research works focused on inherent cognitive abilities of the person. In recent years many researchers share the idea that knowledge exists in the form of mental representations that are a formal set of knowledge within the cognitive system, while the language develops and shapes to objectivize this knowledge [3].

The book by N. Chomsky [27] became one of early studies of how language is represented in human mentality. According to the author, the cognitive ability of speech is inborn which explains rapidity of language acquisition by the child despite a poor base of his/her pinafore stage of existence.

Though not all linguists share this concept, many cognitive scientists speak about some conceptual system which preexists to language acquisition and further on makes a base for language development as a system of signs.

It is well-known that cognitive development of the child precedes his/her speech development. In the preverbal period the child is capable to satisfy the simplest requests of adults and begins to understand the speech addressed to him/her. It would be impossible, "if the child did not have corresponding mental representations that precede the formation of the ideal side of conventional signs" [3].

In our opinion, just like the conceptual system of a person changes constantly, develops, grows in experience acquiring new conceptual structures in the course of life's activity and world cognition, so does the persuasive mechanism of the language personality undergoes continuous change and development, replenished with new means and methods of argumentation. It is reflected both in the addressor's ways of presenting information in discourse, and in the ways this information is then extracted and interpreted by the addressee.

The broad understanding of argumentation we offer does not exclude other approaches to this phenomenon. We believe there is sense to make a distinction between two ways of interpreting the phenomenon. Argumentation defined narrowly centers around the process of proving to establish truthfulness of a statement or a thought.

Argumentation defined broadly represents an all-purpose means of knowledge transfer in natural communication circumstances, a universal way to influence the world model shaped in the recipient's mind. At the same time such natural communication phenomena as justification, dispute, confirmation, explanation, illustration, classification and others act as options for argumentative speech activity in communicative practice.

Below come the examples of super phrasal units (SPU) with some of the above-mentioned types of substantiation.

Example 1 Narrative

And then the good guys won, the beauty contest came to an end and so did the decades of western progress in relation to equality and individual rights. In the USA, the median income – the number bang in the middle of the earnings curve – has for workers stayed effectively unchanged since the 1970s, while inequality of income between the top and the bottom has risen sharply. Since 1970, the highest paid fifth of US earners have grown 60 per cent better paid. Everyone else is paid 10 per cent less. In the 1970s, Americans and Europeans worked about the same amount of hours per year; now Americans work almost twice as much. That's the case for the people in the middle: for the people at the top, and especially for the people at the very top, it's different: between 1980 and 2007, the richest 0/1 per cent of Americans saw their income grow 700 per cent [28, p.10].

In this extract the narrative develops from generalization to detail. The first sentence of the SPU contains a generalization, followed by the disclosure of the key idea on the material of more specific provisions that complement and reinforce the original information.

Example 2 Illustration

Some styles and looks are just not transferable. For instance, we have found that certain California products seem to appeal only to Californians, perhaps because of unique lifestyles and environment. Most of these nontransplantable products seem to fall in the categories of decorating, furniture, and ethnic foods [29, p.22].

Here, the main idea is illustrated by means of an example.

Example 3 Explanation

This aspect of how banks work is critical to the way the economy works; it's the reason banks are not just some convenient add-on to capitalism, but they are at the centre of how it's supposed to function. Banks create credit, and credit makes the economy work. In a sense, credit isn't just an aspect of the economy, it is the economy – the seamless, ceaseless, frictionless ebb and flow and circulation of credit. When it works, this process is a wonder of the world [28, p. 17-18].

Here the key message of the first sentence is explained and clarified in subsequent sentences.

Example 4 Confirmation

The United States is a prime example of a market economy and as such – like all market systems – it is driven more by popular demand than by government diktat. Indeed, because of its unique history and traditions, there is probably a more active and pervasive distrust of centralized government in the United States than it is the case in Europe and in most other developed nations. It was the increasing demand for home loans and the all-to-easy willingness of financiers to provide those loans, unrestricted by any central authority, which drove up house prices throughout the boom years of the 1990s. Both consumers and producers of this rapid expansion of US finance were too caught up in the

enjoyment of inflated wealth to consider the long-term picture [30, p. 3-4].

In this case, additional information provided in sentences 2, 3 and 4 confirms the message of the first sentence.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. The overview of the main research directions and most common views on the nature of argumentation proves the multidimensional structure of this phenomenon and ambiguity of current interpretations. With that knowledge we believe that argumentation requires a deeper analysis on the basis of its communicative and pragmatic characteristics.

2. Serving as a tool of persuasion, argumentation appears a universal communicative process of substantiation of a certain fragment of knowledge to render it during the discourse act. Argumentation also serves as a logical framework to build any speech construct characterized by relatively accomplished meaningfulness, i.e. conveying a certain informative value.

3. Argumentative speech acts, such as explanation, confirmation, narrative, statement, classification and others are types of substantiation of a certain point of view (opinion, statement, etc.), and, therefore, they can be considered as specific manifestations of natural communication argumentation.

4. The survey of prevailing views on the nature of argumentation involves a distinction between broad and narrow approaches to its interpretation. Argumentation in a broad sense is a communicative process which goes together with any informatively significant speech construct and acts as a universal way to convey information in the act of discourse. Argumentation in a narrow sense is identical to proving based on arguments.

5. Further quantitative and qualitative clarification of argumentation structure which manifests itself in the acts of discourse within different communication spheres might discover formation principles of active cognitive structures, responsible for receiving, transferring and keeping information.

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