

It's A Two-Way Street: The Joint Meaning of Illocutionary Acts of Arguing

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Abstract: As a communicative activity, argumentation has been characterized as a specific type of speech act. In the analysis of the speech act of arguing, I have distinguished two illocutionary levels: one related to the speaker's utterance and the other related to the communicative exchange involving the speaker and the interlocutor. In this article, I argue that these two levels are associated with the speaker's meaning and the joint meaning, respectively. The two-level analysis of meaning makes it possible to account for cases in which commitment attributions are at stake and that may, as a result, give rise to a special form of discursive injustice.

Résumé: Parfois, nous discutons à propos de chats ou de l'existence d'un plus grand nombre premier. D'autres fois, nous discutons d'arguments. Dans ce cas, nous nous engageons dans une méta-argumentation. La plupart des descriptions de méta-argumentation dans la littérature l'abordent rétrospectivement: nous méta-argumentons sur des arguments déjà avancés. Ce faisant, nous pouvons trouver des méta-raisons de rejeter un argument par ailleurs valable, entre autres. Cet article aborde la méta-argumentation dans l'autre sens, c'est-à-dire de manière prospective. Pour illustrer ce concept, nous explorons des cas où l'on a des méta-raisons de formuler intentionnellement de mauvais arguments, ou, dans d'autres cas, où l'on argumente sans argumenter du tout, mais en communiquant de manière non argumentative pour étayer d'autres arguments. Nous appelons ces derniers cas des para-arguments.

Keywords: commitment attribution, joint meaning, normative effects, speaker's meaning, speech act of arguing

1. Introduction

On December 10, 2023, Santiago Abascal, leader of the Spanish far-right party Vox, made the following statement about Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, whose Spanish acronym is PSOE) in an interview for the Argentinian newspaper *Clarín*:

Pedro Sánchez is not as clever and skillful as people think. A politician who has no scruples, who has no principles, has a competitive advantage over honest politicians who have scruples because we set limits for ourselves. I have moral limits. I have principles. I cannot sell them. Sánchez has none. He can step on the laws, he can do anything, he can put national unity at risk. That gives him a competitive advantage. **There will be a time when the people will want to hang him by his feet [emphasis added]** (Niebieskikwiat 2023) [Author's translation].

A few days later, on December 13, 2023, the PSOE filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor's Office for a hate crime against the president of the government in which they claim that Abascal

does not limit himself to identify the president, democratically elected, with a dictator, but comes to **justify** [emphasis added] through the simile that, as happened with Benito Mussolini, there will come a time when the people will want to use violence against him (RTVE 2023a) [Author's translation].

In short, it seems that Santiago Abascal, through his words, has justified the use of violence against Pedro Sánchez.

After this, Abascal, at a rally of the Brothers of Italy (party of Prime Minister Georgia Meloni) held in Rome on December 17, 2023, responded to the accusations claiming that the left "has manipulated and twisted my words to make a violent caricature and to lynch me in the public square. [...] I want to say that no, I do not wish anyone, not even a corrupt person or a traitor, to be hanged by the feet. No one, absolutely no one" (RTVE 2023b) [Author's translation].

This case exemplifies the importance of the interlocutor's interpretation of the speaker's utterances. Here, the speaker, Santiago

Abascal, has been interpreted as justifying—that is, as arguing in favor of—the use of violence against the Spanish Prime Minister although he denies this interpretation of his words. As we can see, the weight of interpretation in determining the type of speech act carried out can be so great as to constitute grounds for a complaint to the public prosecutor's office for an offence as serious as the crime of incitement to hatred. As we will see, this is so because communication, including argumentative communication, changes our normative landscape.

This type of case raises certain questions, such as whether the commitments one's utterances give rise to and those that the interpretation of our words calls for are easily altered or eradicated, what effects our utterances have on the normative space we share with others, and what our obligations and entitlements are in relation to the commitments that result from our utterances and the interpretation of those utterances.

In this paper, I will argue that it is necessary to distinguish between what a speaker means, conceived in Gricean lines as dependent on the speaker's communicative intentions, and its interpretation by the interlocutor. Drawing from the notion of joint meaning proposed by Carassa and Colombetti (2009), I will account for these two aspects of meaning in terms of the speaker's meaning and the joint meaning of illocutionary acts of arguing.

Argumentation is often described as a communicative activity that takes place through the performance of speech acts. This connection can be seen, most notably, in theories developed within the normative pragmatics framework, such as the approaches of Jackson and Jacobs (1982, 1992) and Jacobs (1989), but also in the accounts proposed by Hitchcock (2007) and, more recently, Lewiński (2021a, 2021b). These theories, however, do not define argumentation as a specific type of speech act. In contrast, pragma-dialectics (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984) and the linguistic normative model of argumentation (Bermejo-Luque 2011) take a step further and characterize argumentation as a concrete type of speech act.

Recently, I (Haro Marchal 2023) have argued that the Searlean approach endorsed by both pragma-dialectics and the linguistic normative model of argumentation entails two inter-related prob-

lems. The first one concerns its inability to account for the active role played by the interlocutor in the performance of the illocutionary act of arguing. In the Searlean account, for an illocutionary act to be successful, the illocutionary effect that is overtly intended “[...] consists simply in the hearer’s understanding the utterance of the speaker” (1969, p. 47). Thus, the interlocutor does not play an active part in the performance of the act; their function is reduced to understanding the speaker’s utterance. However, this view does not account for other constitutive aspects of communicative exchanges. In real-world exchanges, the interlocutor’s role is not limited to passively interpreting and understanding what the speaker has said. On the contrary, they actively engage by responding to the speaker’s utterance in a way that reflects their interpretation of the speaker’s words and how the normative landscape of both the speaker and the interlocutor has changed.¹ The second problem arises from its failure to consider other types of illocutionary effects, namely, the normative effects inherent in any illocutionary act, including the act of arguing. These consist in the production of changes in the set of dialectical obligations and entitlements of the participants in the argumentative exchange.

To solve these problems, I (Haro Marchal 2023) have proposed distinguishing between two levels in the analysis of the illocutionary act of arguing: one related to the speaker’s utterance and the other related to the communicative exchange involving the speaker and the interlocutor in the performance of the illocutionary act of arguing. The distinction between the two levels of analysis makes it possible to account for the differences between arguing as an act performed solely by the speaker and arguing as a communicative exchange, as well as for the illocutionary effects associated with the performance of the speech act of arguing. As we will see below, this strategy has twofold benefits: it enables us to preserve the explanatory value of pragma-dialectics and the linguistic normative model of argumentation while also overcoming the problems posed by the Searlean view (2023, p. 490).

¹ In polylogical contexts, the normative landscapes that undergo change may include not only those of the speaker and the interlocutor, but also that of the audience.

In this paper, I will go a step further by exploring whether there is any difference in the meaning that can be attributed to the illocutionary act of arguing at each of these levels. As Oswald (2023) highlights, argumentation understood as a communicative activity encompasses an exchange of meaning among its participants. This is why for argumentation theorists, “the production and identification of speaker meaning is of particular interest” (2023, p. 145). There is no doubt, then, that argumentation theorists are interested in the speaker’s meaning linked to the speaker’s utterance. However, we should ask whether focusing on the speaker’s meaning is enough to account for what happens in the argumentative exchange involving the speaker and the interlocutor, and I will argue that it is not.

Following Carassa and Colombetti (2009), I will argue that it is necessary to distinguish between the speaker’s meaning and the joint meaning of illocutionary acts of arguing. The former is to be attributed to the illocutionary act of arguing at the first level of analysis (i.e., the level of the speaker’s utterance). The latter represents the meaning jointly construed by the speaker and the interlocutor at the level of the communicative exchange, where the speaker, but also the interlocutor play a role in the performance of the act of arguing, which may or may not coincide with the speaker’s meaning.

Accounting for the meaning of the illocutionary act of arguing in terms of speaker’s meaning and as a joint construal will provide insights into the existing connection between the speaker’s utterance and their communicative intentions and the interlocutor’s interpretation and response to it. Furthermore, this proposal will allow us to determine how the normative effects associated with the performance of illocutionary acts of arguing are produced at the level of the communicative exchange. It offers a theoretical basis for understanding how dialectical rights, obligations, and entitlements are introduced and modified by and among the participants of argumentative exchanges. In other words, it allows us to account for how their dialectical normative landscape changes by means of the illocutionary acts of arguing.

Additionally, I will delve into the consequences that the distinction between the speaker’s meaning and the joint meaning poses

for the analysis of argumentative exchanges. I will argue that this distinction proves to be particularly relevant for analyzing cases in which commitment attributions are at stake, such as cases of discursive injustice.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, I present the two problems associated with the Searlean view assumed by pragma-dialectics and the linguistic normative model of argumentation, and the solution based on the two-level of analysis account I propose. In section 3, I contend that there are differences in the meaning that can be attributed to the illocutionary act of arguing at each level of analysis. In order to do this, I build on Carassa and Colombetti's (2009) account of joint meaning. In section 4, I argue that the distinction between the speaker's meaning and the joint meaning within the two levels of analysis can shed light on argumentative exchanges that involve commitment attributions. Finally, in section 5, I draw the main conclusions of the paper.

2. The speech act of arguing: two levels of analysis

As previously noted, both pragma-dialectics (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984) and the linguistic normative model of argumentation (LNMA) (Bermejo-Luque 2011) provide a characterization of argumentation as a specific type of speech act. Although there are noteworthy differences between their respective proposals,² only one of these differences is relevant for the purposes of this paper. This is related to the bearers of the act of arguing. While van Eemeren and Grootendorst exclude the claim the speaker is attempting to justify from the illocutionary act of arguing, the LNMA includes this target-claim as a constitutive part of the act.

According to pragma-dialectics, the simplest speech act of arguing consists of at least "[...] two statements (cf. the datum and the warrant in Toulmin's model)" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst

² For instance, while van Eemeren and Grootendorst emphasize that convincing would be the intrinsic perlocutionary goal of argumentation, in the LNMA, convincing would be just one of the multiple goals that arguers can have, but it does not have a special status.

1894, p. 32). The utterance of these sentences has two simultaneous illocutionary forces: each sentence has the illocutionary force of one of the members of the assertive class (statement, assumption, or assertion) and is also part of a whole that, at a higher textual level, has an argumentative illocutionary force. For the utterance of these sentences to count as an illocutionary act of arguing, they must be in a relationship of justification or refutation with an expressed opinion (1984, p. 43). Accordingly, it is correct to claim that, in this model, the bearers of the illocutionary act of arguing are at least two sentences. To illustrate this, consider the following example in which a couple is deciding whether to walk or take the bus to the restaurant where they're meeting some friends:

(1a) Michael: We should take the bus.

(1b) Anna: Is it really necessary? I don't think it would take that long to walk.

(1c) Michael: Well, it looks like it will start raining soon.

In this example, (1a) constitutes the expressed opinion to which Michael's argumentation is in a relationship of justification. By means of (1c) together with the unexpressed premise (working as the warrant) "if it looks like it will start raining soon, then we should take the bus," Michael performs an illocutionary act of arguing. (1c) together with the unexpressed premise count as an illocutionary act of arguing, that is, as an attempt by the speaker to justify the acceptability of the expressed opinion and convince his interlocutor.³

Unlike pragma-dialectics, in the LNMA, illocutionary acts of arguing are composed of a speech act of adducing (a reason), a speech act of concluding (a target-claim), and "the implicit inference-claim that turns a mere claim into a reason for another" (Bermejo-Luque 2011, p. 57). In this model, and in contrast to pragma-dialectics, for Michael to be considered as carrying out an illocutionary act of arguing, uttering (1c) together with the implicit

³ Here it is necessary to stress that the "premise—conclusion" structure inherent in arguments does not necessarily follow a temporal sequence. In the given example, the conclusion is expressed before the premise, but it still constitutes an act of arguing.

inference-claim is not enough. In the LNMA, the illocutionary act of arguing would be performed by means of the utterance of (1a) and (1c). In this case, two first-order speech acts (a suggestion and an assertion, respectively) turn into a speech act of concluding and a speech act of adducing by virtue of their relation to the implicit inference-claim, namely, “if (it is true that) it looks like it will start raining soon, then (it is true that) we should take the bus.” Hence, in this case, the bearer of the illocutionary act of arguing is the utterance of two sentences, corresponding to the speech act of adducing and the speech act of concluding, together with the implicit inference-claim.

In a nutshell, in the pragma-dialectics model, the illocutionary act of arguing is carried out by means of the utterance of sentences like (1c), together with the unexpressed premise, whereas in the LNMA, it is performed by the utterance of (1a) and (1c) and the implicit inference-claim.

Despite this difference, they share a common characterization of the illocutionary act of arguing in terms of Searle’s (1969) speech act account.⁴ This encompasses specific preparatory, propositional, content, and sincerity conditions (though articulated differently in each model) that must be fulfilled for an illocutionary act to count as an act of arguing (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984, pp. 43-44; Bermejo-Luque 2011, pp. 71-22). Nonetheless, as I (Haro Marchal 2023) have argued, the Searlean approach they endorse poses two interrelated problems. These were raised and addressed within the broader context of speech act theory, particularly by those proposals framed within the normative (also known as *interactional*) approaches to speech acts (Clark 1996; Sbisà 2006, 2009; Carassa and Colombetti 2009; Witek 2015). The first problem lies in Searle’s attribution of a merely passive role to the interlocutor in the communicative process where, as Clark

⁴ In the case of the LNMA, the account of speech acts offered by Bach and Harnish (1979) also plays an important role. More specifically, Bermejo-Luque adopts their speech act schema as an interpretative tool because, according to her, it “can be used to deal with indirect and non-literal argumentation” (Bermejo-Luque, 2011, p. 61). In pragma-dialectics, van Eemeren and Grootendorst carry out a revision of Searle’s account for its application to the characterization of argumentation (Snoeck Henkemans, 2014, p. 42).

points out (1996, p. 137), their response does not seem to play an active role in the performance of the illocutionary act. However, as previously noted, the interlocutor's response is crucial, as it shows not only how the speaker's utterance has been interpreted, but also whether the speech act has been successfully carried out—that is, whether the illocutionary effects have been produced. The second problem arises from the fact that Searle's account overlooks one of the illocutionary effects outlined by Austin (1962) as consisting of the production of changes in the set of rights, obligations, and entitlements of the participants of the communicative exchange, which Sbisà (2006, p. 158) calls *deontic modal competence*.⁵ For instance, if I utter “I promise you I won't smoke anymore,” the normative effects associated with a successful performance of this illocutionary act consist in the setting of a commitment on my part to refrain from smoking again. Additionally, my interlocutor is entitled to expect me not to smoke and has the right to blame me if I fail to keep my promise. By contrast, in Searle's approach, the only illocutionary effect connected to the performance of an illocutionary act is the securing of uptake, characterized in terms of the hearer's understanding of the speaker's utterance (1969, p. 47). However, this makes it difficult to explain how the participant's normative position changes by means of the performance of illocutionary acts.

To address these problems in the case of argumentation, I have adopted a normative approach to speech acts according to which they should be characterized as social actions (Sbisà 2007; Caponetto and Labinaz 2023, p. 10). This entails that, in characterizing them, we must consider the way “they change the normative stances [rights, obligations, entitlements] of interlocutors” (Corredor 2023). In other words, we must consider how they change

⁵ Given van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1984) adjustments to Searle's theory for its application in analyzing and characterizing argumentation as a speech act, one might argue that their approach does not encompass these two problems. However, despite these modifications, they would still need to address these issues. For instance, although they introduce the listener in the formulation of the recognition conditions of the illocutionary act (1984, 42-43), this still has no active role. For a more detailed discussion, see (Haro Marchal 2023, pp 489-490).

the deontic modal competence of the participants of the communicative exchange. In this sense, characterizing argumentation as a specific type of speech act involves conceptualizing it as a social action whose performance encompasses the mutual recognition by both the speaker and their interlocutor of the changes in their normative position. More specifically, it entails the mutual recognition of the changes in their dialectical obligations and entitlements.

As already mentioned, the solution I proposed to the problems associated with the Searlean account in the case of argumentation consists in distinguishing two levels in the analysis of the illocutionary act of arguing (Haro Marchal 2023, p. 490). At the first level, to determine whether the illocutionary act has been successfully carried out, we need to take into account the speaker's utterance, and what the speaker means by it (i.e., the communicative intentions that can be reasonably attributed to the speaker⁶). In addition, at this level, the successful performance of the act requires that the speaker fulfills the condition of securing uptake—that is, they must make their utterance comprehensible for a potential interlocutor (Haro Marchal 2023, p. 482). By contrast, at the second level of analysis, the level of the communicative exchange, determining whether the illocutionary act of arguing is successful or not involves taking into account not only the speaker's utterance, but also the interlocutor's response. This response shows how the interlocutor has interpreted the speaker's utterance (Sbisà 1992, p. 101; Haro Marchal 2023, p. 482) and whether the normative effects (i.e., changes in the rights, obligations, and entitlements of the speaker and their interlocutor) associated with the act of arguing have been produced. If these effects are produced, then we can say that, from the perspective of the second level of analysis, the illocutionary act of arguing constitutes a successful act.

The following is a preliminary list of specific, *prima facie* normative effects of the illocutionary act of arguing (Haro Marchal 2023, p. 491):

⁶ What can be reasonably attributed to the speaker depends on what the speaker utters, but also on contextual information. While, as rule of thumb, the interlocutor's interpretation should coincide with the speaker's intended meaning, this is not always the case, as Abascal's example shows (Niebieskikwiat 2023).

- The interlocutor's legitimate expectation that the speaker can provide more reasons to justify the target-claim⁷ if requested to do so by the interlocutor
- The interlocutor's entitlement to ask for reasons to show why the reasons already provided do justify the target-claim/expressed opinion
- The speaker's commitment to the truth of the implicit inference-claim/warrant
- The speaker's obligation to provide more reasons (i.e., reasons to show why the reasons already provided do justify the target-claim) if requested to do so by the interlocutor
- The interlocutor's conditional commitment to accept the correctness of the target-claim/expressed opinion unless they can produce reasons to the contrary⁸

This preliminary list can be expanded. As van Laar and Krabbe (2013, pp. 201-202) argue, it is important to account not only for the dialectical obligations of the speaker (or the proponent) in an argumentative exchange, but also those of the interlocutor (or opponent). In their view, a proponent can respond to the oppo-

⁷ Or the expressed opinion in the case of pragma-dialectics.

⁸ One might argue that these kinds of effects, as effects of the speech act in the world, are perlocutionary rather than illocutionary effects. My response to this consideration aligns with the perspective initiated by Austin (1962) and further developed by Sbisà (2007). Both locate these effects within the illocutionary realm rather than the perlocutionary one, as they are a constitutive aspect of illocutionary acts. Unlike perlocutionary effects, which are causal by nature—meaning they may or may not occur and whose production, though guided, is not under the control (albeit is potentially the responsibility) of any party involved in the communicative exchange—illocutionary effects are not directed at intentions, emotions, or psychological attitudes. In the case of illocutionary effects, as Sbisà points out, these are conventional effects in nature. That is, the production of normative effects is neither causal nor psychological; rather, it depends on intersubjective agreement—interpersonal or social. This is evident in their defeasibility, meaning that these effects can be annulled if it is determined that the act was infelicitous and thus constitutes a misfire, for instance (Sbisà 2013, p. 33).

ment's criticisms in different ways, including by criticizing the criticisms. The concept of "burden of criticism" they introduce corresponds to the "dialectical obligation of an opponent to adequately react to the criticisms of her criticisms" (2013, p. 202). Based on this, I consider that the following normative effects produced by an act of arguing can be added to the previous list:

- The interlocutor's acceptance of the burden of criticism in challenging the speaker's argument
- The speaker's commitment to addressing potential counter-arguments and objections

In the following section, I will show how the joint meaning account applies to the analysis of argumentation. I will illustrate how it works within the distinction between the two levels of analysis and argue that it provides a suitable framework for explaining how the normative effects of acts of arguing are produced. To do so, I will apply the joint meaning account to the pragma-dialectics model and to the LNMA. This will allow us to identify the differences that this application entails for the analysis of argumentation from each model.

3. The joint meaning of illocutionary acts of arguing

As already explained, from the point of view of the second level of analysis (i.e., the level of the communicative exchange), for an illocutionary act of arguing to be successfully performed, the normative effects associated with it must be produced. Hence, offering an account of how these effects are brought about is crucial. To do this, we first need to determine whether the meaning that can be attributed to the act of arguing is different at each level of analysis. As we will see, there may be instances where it is possible to identify a gap between what the speaker intended to communicate and what was *actually* communicated.

To account for the distinction between the meaning of the illocutionary act of arguing at each level, I build on Carassa and Colombetti's (2009) joint meaning account. They distinguish between the speaker's meaning (conceived along Gricean lines)

and the joint meaning of speech acts. While the former must be understood as a personal communicative intention, the latter is conceived as a joint construal of the speaker and the interlocutor (2009, pp. 1837-1838). Joint meaning is characterized as a propositional joint commitment of both parties to the extent that a specific communicative act has been performed by the speaker (2009, p. 1851). In addition, the meaning jointly construed may or not coincide with the speaker's meaning. In order to illustrate their proposal, Carassa and Colombetti (2009, p. 1841) offer the following example of a dialogue between Barry (the boss) and Evelyn (an employee):

(2a) Barry: Are you free tonight?

(2b) Evelyn: Yes, I am, Barry. I think it would be a good idea to spend a couple of hours on the draft of the project.

(2c) Barry: Oh, well ... yeah. Back here at half past eight?

(2d) Evelyn: Perfect, I'll be here.

(2e) Barry: See you at eight thirty, then.

In this example, Barry's original intention, so it is supposed, was to invite Evelyn to have dinner at a restaurant. However, what Evelyn's response shows is that by means of her utterance (2b), she has "redefined Barry's original intention as an indirect proposal to spend the evening working [...]." (2009, p. 1841)⁹. In addition, what Barry's response (2c) shows is that Evelyn's inter-

⁹ In my view, this explanation is not entirely correct. This is because, in this case, Evelyn would be entitled to use the existing room linguistically indicated for interpretation in order to serve her purposes. That is, Barry's utterance was ambiguous enough for both interpretations to be plausible. Here, the interlocutor's choice of one interpretation over another may be influenced by various factors. For instance, this is a dialogue in which Carassa and Colombetti explicitly highlight the roles of the participants, Barry being the boss and Evelyn the employee. Therefore, it is a communicative situation marked by a power imbalance that influences the interlocutor's interpretation. We can imagine that Evelyn has recognized Barry's communicative intentions when he asks, "Are you free tonight?" but she chooses not to explicitly express her discomfort with her boss's implicit proposal for dinner. It is conceivable that Barry has used a vague expression so that, if faced with a response like, "I think this is an inappropriate invitation," he can deny that those were his communicative intentions.

pretation is accepted by him. According to Carassa and Colombetti “the proposal to spend the evening working on a draft must be regarded as a joint construal by Barry and Evelyn” (2009, p. 1841).

In what follows, I will show how Carassa and Colombetti’s joint meaning proposal can be applied to the analysis of argumentation and how it works within the distinction between the two levels of analysis. I contend that, at the first level of analysis, the meaning attributed to the illocutionary act is the speaker’s meaning, whereas at the second level, the meaning of the illocutionary act must be conceptualized as a joint meaning—that is, as the meaning jointly construed by the speaker and the interlocutor, which may or may not coincide with the speaker’s meaning.

In my view, as I have argued, the illocutionary success of an illocutionary act of arguing at the level of the communicative exchange involves mutual recognition by the speaker and the interlocutor of the production of the illocutionary, normative effects—that is, changes in the dialectical obligations and entitlements of the participants. I have argued that, at the first level of analysis, all we need to consider in order to determine whether the illocutionary act of arguing has been successfully carried out is the speaker’s utterance together with the fulfillment of certain conditions (Haro Marchal 2023, p. 490), including, among others, the securing of uptake understood as the speaker making their utterance comprehensible for a potential hearer. If these conditions are met and the speaker has made their utterance graspable, then the illocutionary act of arguing has been successfully carried out. By contrast, at the second level of analysis, to determine whether the illocutionary act has been successfully performed or not, it is necessary to take into account the interlocutor’s response to the speaker’s utterance. This response shows how the interlocutor has interpreted the speaker’s act and, thus, whether the normative effects associated with the act have been produced (Caponetto and Labinaz 2023, p. 14; Sbisà 1992, p. 101). It is the mutual recognition by the speaker and the interlocutor of the production of these normative effects, understood as changes in the speaker’s and interlocutor’s deontic modal competence, that renders the illocutionary act successful.

But the question we should ask now is how exactly these effects are brought about. I contend that, in order to do this, it is necessary to offer a characterization of the meaning of the illocutionary act at the second level as depending not only on the speaker's communicative intentions, but as a joint construal by the speaker and the interlocutor. The production of the normative effects hinges upon the interlocutor's interpretation of the speaker's meaning together with the speaker's acceptance of this interpretation. Thus, for the normative effects to come into being, speaker and interlocutor must be jointly committed to some interpretation of the speaker's utterance.

For our purposes, the notion of commitment store as conceived of by Walton and Krabbe (1995) proves to be useful. As they point out, this notion is used by Hamblin (1970) "as a technical device to keep track of arguers' commitments in dialogue, as part of a method of evaluating argumentation" (1995, p. 123). As previously mentioned, the construction of joint meaning is necessary for the production of normative effects. Along the lines of Carassa and Colombetti (2009), the joint meaning¹⁰ of acts of arguing can be conceptualized as the joint commitment of the speaker and the interlocutor that the speaker has carried out a certain speech act. This joint commitment is what enters into the commitment store shared by the speaker and the interlocutor. Now, to illustrate this, let's consider again example (1). When the speaker utters (1c) "Well, it looks like it will start raining soon," he shows his acceptance of the interlocutor's interpretation of his utterances as an act of arguing. Once they are jointly committed to the fact that the speaker carried out a speech act of arguing, the normative effects are produced and now we can consider the interlocutor, Anna, as entitled to (for instance) ask for reasons why the reasons already provided justify the target-claim.

Another crucial aspect concerning the construal of the joint meaning at the level of the communicative exchange relates to the constraints regarding the dialectical moves derived from it. These constraints result from the specific commitments in the commit-

¹⁰ By 'meaning' I mean here both the illocutionary force and the propositional content of the speaker's utterance.

ment store, which determine the moves that are allowed. For example, the speaker would not be allowed to ignore or refuse to address the interlocutor's challenges to the reasons already given for this would be incompatible with the interlocutor's right to seek additional justification. In the case of the interlocutor, they would not be allowed to disregard or ignore the reasons already given by the speaker without providing a challenge or request for clarification, or to deny the speaker's commitment to the truth of the implicit inference-claim or warrant without a proper clarification.

In order to illustrate the idea that the meaning that can be attributed to the illocutionary act of arguing is different at each level of analysis, let's consider the following dialogue from the movie *When Harry Met Sally*.¹¹ This analysis will be conducted using both pragma-dialectics and the LNMA, and it will demonstrate that the analysis of an instance of argumentation changes in pragma-dialectics and the LNMA once we consider the different meaning that can be attributed to the illocutionary act of arguing at each level.

- (3a) Jess: If she's so great, why aren't YOU taking her out?
 (3b) Harry: How many times do I have to tell you, we're just friends.
(3c) Jess: So you're saying she's not that attractive.
 (3d) Harry: No, I told you she is attractive.
(3e) Jess: But you also said she has a good personality.
(3f) Harry: She has a good personality.
 (3g) Jess: [Stops walking, turns around, throws up hands, as if to say "Aha!"]
 (3h) Harry: What?
(3i) Jess: When someone's not that attractive they're ALWAYS described as having a good personality.
(3j) Harry: Look, if you were to ask me what does she look like and I said she has a good personality, that means she's not attractive. But just because I happen to mention that she has a good personality, she could be either. She could be

¹¹ Although this example illustrates an instance of argumentation here, it was used by Horn (2004, p. 5) to consider the difference between conversational and generalized implicatures.

attractive with a good personality or not attractive with a good personality.

(3k) Jess: So which one is she?

(3l) Harry: Attractive.

(3m) Jess: But not beautiful, right? (Horn 2004, p. 5)

First of all, it should be stressed that this is a highly complex example that could be analyzed from different perspectives taking into account different elements. However, for the sake of simplicity, I will focus on Jess's utterances that would count as acts of arguing. In order to analyze this example, I will start by focusing on the first level of analysis.

Based on the pragma-dialectics model, the analysis of this example is as follows. By means of utterance (3c), "So you're saying she's not that attractive," Jess carries out a speech act of concluding that is not part of the argumentation. The content of (3c) is the expressed opinion to which the argumentation is related. At the sentential level, the argumentation is formed by an assertive speech act that Jess carries out by means of (3e), "But you also said she has a good personality," and by the unexpressed premise that turns (3e) into an instance of argumentation at the textual level. The unexpressed premise is made explicit later in the dialogue by means of (3i), namely, "When someone's not that attractive they're ALWAYS described as having a good personality." The elementary illocution (3e) together with the unexpressed premise constitute the speech act of arguing because they are in a relationship of justification with the expressed opinion in (3c).

By contrast, based on the LNMA, the analysis of the example would be the following. By means of (3c), Jess asserts that Harry meant that Sally is not very attractive. By means of (3e), Jess asserts that Harry told him that Sally has a good personality. Jess implicitly asserts that, if (it is true that) Harry told him that Sally had a good personality, then (it is true that) Harry meant Sally is not very attractive. Jess cites Harry's statement that Sally has a good personality as a reason to conclude that he meant she is unattractive. The argumentation, according to the LNMA, would

be constituted by (3c) and (3e) together with the implicit inference-claim.¹²

As observed, at the first level of analysis, in order to determine whether the illocutionary act of arguing has been successfully performed, it is only necessary to consider the speaker's utterance and the fulfillment of certain conditions. This would apply for both pragma-dialectics and the LNMA. This is so because, as explained above, in both models the performance of the illocutionary act of arguing depends on the speaker, thus assigning the interlocutor merely a passive role. In addition, the illocutionary effects necessary for the successful performance of the act are limited to the interlocutor's understanding of the speaker's utterance. However, in order to account for how argumentation, as a communicative activity, changes the dialectical and normative landscape for both the speaker and the interlocutor, taking into consideration the speaker's utterance and what a speaker means is insufficient. From the perspective of the communicative exchange, the interlocutor's response becomes crucial, for it shows how the speaker's utterances were interpreted by the interlocutor. In this example, we need to take into consideration Harry's responses. They allow us to determine whether the meaning of the illocutionary act has been jointly construed (that is, to determine whether the commitments that have been introduced into the commitment store include Jess's commitment to (3e), (3c), and the unexpressed premise), and thereby whether the normative effects associated with the illocutionary act of arguing have been brought about. Considering this, let us examine how the analysis of the example changes when it is carried out from the second level of analysis.

In the case of pragma-dialectics, the analysis of the example is the following. By means of (3f) ("She has a good personality"), Harry shows that he does not accept that Jess's utterance (3e) ("But you also said she has a good personality") is in a relationship of justification with the opinion expressed by means of (3c) ("So you're saying she's not that attractive"). Insofar as it functions as what makes the unexpressed premise explicit, Jess's utter-

¹² In addition, in the LNMA (3i) would work as the backing (Bermejo-Luque 2011, p. 115).

ance, (3i) (“When someone’s not that attractive they’re ALWAYS described as having a good personality”) is needed for his speech act to constitute argumentation. However, by means of (3i), Jess shows that he does not accept Harry’s interpretation of (3e) as a mere assertion. In other words, Jess does not accept that the commitment to the speech act performed by the speaker should be introduced into the commitment store as a simple assertion, as would be the case if he accepted Harry’s interpretation of his utterance. By (3j) (“Look, if you were to ask me what she looks like and I said she has a good personality, that means she’s not attractive. But just because I happen to mention that she has a good personality, she could be either. She could be attractive with a good personality or not attractive with a good personality”), Harry shows that he accepts Jess’s speech act as an instance of argumentation. But he questions the warrant. By the end of the dialogue, the commitment finally introduced into the commitment store would be the fact that the speaker has performed an act of arguing.

By contrast, according to the LNMA, Harry’s response (3f), “She has a good personality,” shows that, in the first place, he was interpreting Jess’s utterances as mere assertions. However, given that Jess’ intention was to perform an illocutionary act of arguing, Jess does not accept this interpretation. If that had been the case, then the speech act of arguing that Jess had attempted to perform would have been unsuccessful. In this case, the commitment to the speech act performed by the speaker introduced into the commitment store would have been the fact that the speaker performed an assertion, and the normative effects produced would correspond to it. By means of (3i), “When someone’s not that attractive they’re ALWAYS described as having a good personality,” Jess makes explicit the implicit inference-claim that supports his implicit assertion, rejecting Harry’s interpretation of his speech acts as mere assertions. And by means of (3f), Harry shows that he takes up Jess’s utterances as an illocutionary act of arguing although he questions the implicit inference-claim, that is, the warrant. Hence, the commitment added to the commitment store would be that the speaker has performed an act of arguing.

As we can see, the analysis of the example differs when we take into account the interlocutor's response: while at the first level of analysis the meaning of the illocutionary act is accounted for as dependent solely on the speaker's communicative intentions, at the second level it is characterized as jointly constructed by the speaker and the interlocutor and determines what has been actually communicated, that is, what joint commitments have been introduced into the commitment store.

As we have seen, both pragma-dialectics and the LNMA can integrate the second level of analysis. However, the LNMA has a fundamental advantage for our purposes. While both models share a characterization of argumentation as an individual exercise carried out by the speaker and solely dependent on their intentions, unlike van Eemeren and Grootendorst's ideal model for critical discussion, Bermejo-Luque's LNMA is particularly well suited to the analysis of ordinary argumentation that takes place in a variety of communicative contexts—not limited to critical discussions—and oriented toward a plurality of perlocutionary goals beyond merely convincing (Bermejo-Luque 2011, p. 59). As we will see, this openness is especially important for addressing situations of injustice that arise in contexts of everyday argumentation where power imbalances may exist and where participants in the exchange do not argue solely with the goal of resolving a difference of opinion.

As mentioned earlier, by means of illocutionary acts of arguing, individuals engage in mutual recognition and alterations to their normative positions. In this regard, I have argued that the way in which an illocutionary act can take effect—and thus be rendered successful—at the level of the communicative exchange is by producing the illocutionary, normative effects associated with it (Haro Marchal 2023). In example (3), the normative effects associated with the act of arguing are triggered only when Harry and Jess *jointly* commit to the fact that, by means of the utterance of (3e) and (3c) (and the warrant or implicit inference-claim), Jess was carrying out an illocutionary act of arguing. As I argued above, in the case of argumentation, these normative effects can be characterized as changes in the dialectical obligations and entitlements of the speaker and the interlocutor. Following Sbisà (2009),

I consider that these effects are produced as a result of being recognized by both the speaker and the interlocutor. In Sbisà's words, the production of these effects "depends on the agreement about their coming into being among the members of the relevant social group" (Sbisà 2009, p. 48). In my view, this agreement must be understood as the joint construal of the joint meaning, that is, as the acquisition by the speaker and the interlocutor of the commitment to the fact that the speaker has performed a certain speech act of arguing. It is the creation of the joint commitment that results in the production of normative effects. This amounts to saying that it is the communicative exchange, and not merely the speaker's utterance, that makes the production of normative, illocutionary effects (and their recognition) possible and results in a successful illocutionary act of any type, including the act of arguing. As it was pointed out, within the normative framework of speech acts, illocutionary acts of arguing are conceptualized as social actions whose performance introduces changes in the rights, obligations, and entitlements of the participants of any communicative exchange, including argumentative ones. Thus, in order to consider an individual to be responsible for what they have done, and in order to know the kind of obligations or rights acquired by them and their interlocutor by means of their act, it is important to reconstruct the meaning of the illocutionary act. This is what the distinction between the speaker's meaning and the joint meaning within the two levels of analysis allows us to do. In the following section, I will illustrate how this distinction can shed light on analyses in which commitment attributions are at stake in argumentative exchanges, such as in cases of discursive injustice.

4. Joint meaning and commitment attributions

Abascal's (Niebieskikwiat 2023) example allowed us to show how important the interlocutors' interpretation of the speaker's utterance is in determining the type of speech act performed and also the extent of the consequences of this interpretation. In this section, I will show why the distinction between the speaker's and the joint meaning of acts of arguing is especially important in cases

involving commitment attributions. Here, I will focus on cases of discursive injustice.

The notion of discursive injustice, introduced by Kukla (2014), refers to situations in which someone's speech ability is undermined because of their social position. An example of this kind of injustice, offered by Kukla (2014, p. 445), is one in which a female manager at a factory is trying to give orders to her male employees, but they don't recognize her as a person authorized to give orders due to the social position she occupies (i.e., being a woman). For this reason, the employees interpret her as requesting instead of ordering something, which means that they are not obligated to do what they are ordered to do. As Kukla (2014, p. 446) points out, in terms of a request, "acknowledging its legitimacy leaves the one requested free to grant or refuse the request." This occurs when the illocutionary force associated with a speaker's utterance is distorted by the hearer due to the speaker's social position. The phenomenon of discursive injustice thus takes place in communicative contexts. As far as argumentation can be understood as a communicative activity, cases of discursive injustice might also occur in argumentative exchanges. We thus need an approach that accounts for the occurrence of this phenomenon in argumentative practices. For the reasons outlined above regarding the advantages of the LNMA over pragma-dialectics, I will analyze a case of discursive injustice from the perspective of the LNMA.

To illustrate the importance of distinguishing between the speaker's meaning and the joint meaning of the illocutionary acts of arguing for the analysis of discursive injustice, consider the following example. Three PhD students in psychology, Emma, Fred, and Albert, are discussing which therapy is better for the treatment of anxiety: cognitive-behavioral therapy or behavioral therapy alone. Every participant in the conversation knows that Emma's husband is a clinical psychologist with a strong behaviorist background. In this scenario, the following exchange takes place:

(4a) Fred: Albert, you must admit that behavioral therapy has produced the greatest advances in the history of clinical psychology, especially for the treatment of anxiety.

(4b) Albert: I don't deny that, Fred. I'm just saying that cognitive-behavioral therapy incorporates all the benefits of traditional behavioral therapy with the added impact of the cognitive techniques.

(4c) Emma: Well, several papers show that the efficacy of cognitive-behavioral therapy is fully explained by its behavioral components.

If the exchange would have finished at this point, the analysis of this example from the point of view of the speaker's utterance (the first level) would be as follows. In uttering (4c), Emma's communicative intention was to perform an illocutionary act of arguing. By means of her utterance, she was carrying out a speech act of adducing that the existence of several papers showing that the efficacy attributed to cognitive-behavioral therapy is fully explained by its behavioral components is a reason to conclude that behavioral therapy alone is a better form of therapy for anxiety. This is so because we attribute to her the implicit claim that if (it is true that) several papers show that the efficacy attributed to cognitive-behavioral therapy is fully explained by its behavioral components, then (it is true that) behavioral therapy alone is a better form of therapy for anxiety.

However, let us imagine that the conversation continues as follows:

(4d) Albert: Look at you! How well your husband has trained you! I can see your husband's reinforcement program is working perfectly.

At the second level of analysis, the interlocutor's response (4d) is crucial in determining whether Emma's intended speech act of arguing has been successfully carried out. It allows us to determine how her act has been received and interpreted by her interlocutor, which in turn helps us to determine whether the normative effects associated with the illocutionary act of arguing have been pro-

duced. In this case, Albert's response (4d) indicates that Emma's utterance was not received as the act she was intending to carry out, that is, as an act of arguing. At best, he seems to be interpreting her utterance as an entreaty to participate in the conversation. Now we can imagine that Emma, overwhelmed by the situation and in an effort to avoid conflict, responds to Albert by uttering (4e):

(4e) Yeah, well... I guess.

By means of (4e), Emma shows that she accepts Albert's interpretation of her utterance.¹³ Thus, the normative effects associated with the act she intended to perform in the first place were not brought about: Albert does not have the legitimate expectation that the speaker, Emma, will provide more reasons to show the correctness of the target-claim nor is Emma obligated to do so if requested by the interlocutor, etc. This example can be considered as a case in which the speaker's meaning does not coincide with the meaning jointly construed. In addition, it constitutes a case of discursive injustice within an argumentative context where the illocutionary force of Emma's act is distorted by Albert who has interpreted the act as, for instance, an entreaty to participate in the conversation rather than an attempt to justify a target claim, that is, an act of arguing.¹⁴ In this example, as in all cases of discursive

¹³ This raises the question of whether the speaker's original communicative intention remains relevant once they have accepted the meaning jointly constructed. In this case, we can imagine that other participants in the argumentative exchange (such as Fred) have correctly interpreted Emma in a way that aligns with her intended meaning. Moreover, Emma herself may recognize that she has indeed presented an argument—perhaps even a strong one, given her expertise. However, due to the hostile context, she might not feel confident enough to provide a different answer to Albert. She might anticipate that any further engagement would provoke another rude or dismissive reaction from him, making continued participation seem futile. This could stem from various factors, including her social position or the prevailing norms governing argumentative exchanges.

¹⁴ This example can be accounted for as an example of an *ad hominem* attack: it is possible to interpret that Albert is actually recognizing Emma as arguing, but he is just not taking her seriously. Albert could believe that it is Emma's hus-

injustice, the distortion might well be due to the speaker's social position, which in this case corresponds to the fact that she is a woman. As exemplified by Zenker et al. (2023, § 4.2, para. 9), “speakers from underprivileged social groups (e.g., in terms of their ethnicity, gender, or education) may be invited to join a debate, with no overt exclusion taking place.” However, if it is the case that “the group’s demands are treated as mere suggestions, [...] their speech acts’ illocutionary force can nevertheless be blocked or downgraded” (Zenker et al. 2023, § 4.2, para. 9).

This example illustrates how, at each level of analysis, the meaning of the illocutionary act performed by the speaker differs. While at the first level, the meaning of the illocutionary act is accounted for as dependent on the speaker’s intentions and what is reasonable to attribute to the speaker, constituting the speaker’s meaning, when the hearer’s response is taken into consideration, the meaning of the illocutionary act of arguing is characterized as jointly construed by the speaker and the hearer. This joint construal constitutes what is communicated and not merely what is intended to be communicated—that is, what has been introduced into the commitment store.

In addition, I consider that the example above provides a significant contribution in that it can account for the intuition that the woman has, to some important extent, performed the act she intended to perform. This is why, from a third-person perspective, it would not be a problem to contend that her interlocutor is doing something wrong. From the point of view of the first level of analysis, as far as the woman has fulfilled certain conditions (and thus her utterance is graspable for potential hearers), her interlocutor should have been able to understand the meaning of her utterance, that is, to grasp the speaker's meaning. He should have recognized that Emma’s communicative intention was for her utterance to be interpreted as an act of arguing. This would be the case, for instance, with an alternative interpretation offered by another interlocutor, Fred. We can imagine that Fred correctly interpreted Emma’s utterance and, after their conversation, seeks her out to

band who is arguing, not her. So, in his view, there would be no point in trying to engage in an argumentative exchange with her.

continue the discussion, directly engaging with the argument she has put forward. His response shows that his interpretation corresponds with what Emma meant, attributing to her the intention of arguing rather than merely entreating to participate in the conversation.¹⁵ This is so because, as previously noted, what a speaker means also depends on what is reasonable to attribute to them as their intended meaning given what they have said in that particular context.

The distinction between the speaker's meaning and the joint meaning allows us to explain what constitutes a successful illocutionary act at each level and how the normative effects associated with the successful illocutionary acts of arguing are produced.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented an approach to the meaning of illocutionary acts in which I distinguish between the speaker's meaning and the joint meaning of speech acts of arguing. Based on my two-level analysis of illocutionary acts of arguing (Haro Marchal 2023), I have contended that, while the former can be attributed to the act of arguing at the first level, the latter can be attributed to the illocutionary act at the second level. As we have seen, an account such as the one proposed here is pertinent not only because the illocutionary act of arguing involves the speaker's intentional act of giving reasons that support a claim, but also because it changes the dialectical obligations and entitlements of both the speaker and the interlocutor. Through an analysis of the meaning of illocutionary acts of arguing, we can discern the speaker's communicative intentions and the interlocutor's interpretation of their utterance, thus enriching our interpretation of the argumentation put forward by the speaker. As we have seen, an important result of this proposal is that it can be useful to account

¹⁵ Although in this example the third-person perspective corresponds to an audience member (Fred), it can also be understood more generally as the perspective of an analyst who, while not directly involved in the exchange, is nonetheless in a position to evaluate whether the interlocutor's interpretation was appropriate.

for cases of discursive injustice that occur in argumentative practices.

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