

УДК 81+811.111

## Indirect Speech Acts in Argumentative Text Segments

**Arsentiy I. Bochkarev\***

*Novosibirsk State Teacher Training University  
28 Vilyujskaya, Novosibirsk, 630126 Russia*

Received 31.03.2012, received in revised form 15.04.2012, accepted 18.04.2012

---

*This article studies the problem of indirect speech acts realization in argumentative text segments. Moreover, while analyzing the interaction of speech acts and formation of indirect speech acts, it is necessary to apply rhetorical relations. The article also examines simple and complex ways of indirect speech acts formation.*

*Keywords: rhetorical relations, textual function, reductional way of ISAs formation, functional way of ISAs formation, semantic way of ISAs formation.*

---

### Point

A speech act (SA) is one of the basic terms in pragmalinguistics. Usually, a SA is treated as a unity of three components: a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act (Austin, 1986). There exist a lot of classifications of SAs. In a previous article we offered our own classification of speech acts. We divided all SAs into seven major classes with the following subdivision: 1) representatives, 2) requestives, 3) advisives (unlike requestives which are advantageous to an emitent, these SAs are advantageous to a recipient), 4) interrogatives, 5) commissives, 6) propositives (they regulate both a position of an emitent and a position of a recipient), 7) expressives (Bochkarev, 2011). But, as far as the speech act theory does not take context into account in a proper way, it must be somehow modified.

We suggest rhetorical relations adopted by many theories, mostly by Discourse Represented Theory (DRT) and by Segmented Discourse Represented Theory (SDRT) as a solution. Rhetorical relations that were introduced by T. Mann and S. Thompson hold between two text units. According to T. Mann and S. Thompson, rhetorical relations can consist either of one nucleus and one satellite or of two equal units (Mann and Thompson, 1986). N. Asher and A. Lascarides who introduced SDRT stated that rhetorical relations describe the rhetorical roles that utterances play in their discourse context. They also added some more rhetorical relations to the existing classification (Asher and Lascarides, 2003).

In (Bochkarev, 2011) we stated that different SAs execute definite textual functions in rhetorical relations. So in rhetorical relations of evidence two SAs execute two functions: a

nucleus functioning as a statement and a satellite functioning as evidence. Here we give the definition of a textual function. A textual function is a role of a particular SA in definite rhetorical relations. Besides, one and the same SA can have two textual functions: for a previous SA and for a following one. In this case one and the same SA can be both a nucleus and a satellite.

In spite of the fact that rhetorical relations play a crucial role for the SA realization in a definite context, it is not worth while refusing a traditional SA like some researches do, for example, N. Asher and A. Lascarides (Asher and Lascarides, 2003). So we define a SA as a unity of three levels and textual functions.

Now we dwell upon argumentative texts. As there is an interference of text types in a real communication, it would be better to segment a text. Text segments can be corresponded with text types. An argumentative text segment is a segment consisting of SAs that are sequentially linked by the following rhetorical relations: background, motivation – statement, action elicitation, information elicitation – evidence – elaboration, intensification – summary. An argumentative text segment can be either a continuous text segment that does not include additional rhetorical relations within the text segment or a discontinuous text segment that includes additional rhetorical relations. Depending on emitent's intensions an argumentative text segment can play either a crucial role, while other segments can prevail quantitatively, or a minor role, while it can prevail quantitatively.

Moreover, if there is an opponent, an argumentative text segment consists of two or more parts depending on the number of opponents. Every part of each opponent is linked with an initial part of an emitent by rhetorical relations. A textual function of the first opponent's SA is an antithesis that can be either a refusal if a thesis is a requestive or an advise or an interrogative,

or a non-agreement or a correction if a thesis is a representative or a commissive or an expressive. The following SAs are linked either with an antithesis and their function is evidence or with opponent's arguments and their function is a non-agreement. In most cases a recipient agrees with an emitent using a SA functioning as an agreement or a contact signal or an answer or an acceptance.

As F. Eemeren and R. Grootendorst mentioned, an argument is always explicit while other elements can be implicit, so an argumentative text segment can be represented by one sentence (Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004).

In this article we will concentrate upon the realization of different indirect speech acts (ISAs) types in argumentative text segments. An ISA is a SA that expresses either more than its form presupposes or something different. We singled out three simple ways of ISAs formation: reductional, functional and semantic.

### Example

#### *Reductional way of ISAs formation*

This way began to develop within the cognitive approach to the problem of ISAs and was performed by M. Geis who developed S. Levinson's idea about the reduction of a speech situation: the more we know, the less we speak (M. Geis, 1995). So a reduced SA can be reconstructed from the rest SAs. This way of ISAs formation is entirely different from the others because two speech acts are fully realized in this case. There exist two subtypes of this type of transposition:

a) an implicit act precedes an explicit one.

In argumentative text segments this type of reduction occurs mostly when a thesis or an antithesis is implicit. In this case an argument functions as a thesis or an antithesis which can be easily reconstructed:

*Don Corleone: I) a) (Implicit: **I promise I will solve your problem with this pezzonovante**);*

b) *At the end of the month this pezzonovante, this 90 caliber will give you that job you want.*

Johnny: 2) a) (Implicit: *You can't solve my problem with this pezzonovante*); b) *This guy is a personal friend of J. Edgar Hoover.* 3) *You can't even raise your voice to him.*

Don Corleone: 4) *He's a businessman.* 5) *I'll make him an offer he can't refuse* (Puzo, 2002: 28).

The scheme of rhetorical relations in this text segment:

1) a) statement (thesis) to 1 (b), 4 – b) elaboration to 1 (a) – 2) a) non-agreement (antithesis) to 1/statement to 2 (b), 3 – b) evidence (argument) to 2 (a)/ statement to 3 – 3) evidence (argument) to 2 (a) – 4) evidence (argument) to 1(a)/ statement to 5– 5) elaboration to 4.

In the previous abstract Johnny has been complaining about his boss (who is called pezzonovante (from Italian: a man with power) by Don Corleone) who does not want to give him a role in the movie. As Johnny is among those visitors who ask Don to help them, so it presupposes that Johnny asks Don to solve the problem with the boss. There exist three possible variants of a reactive move to a request: 1) a promise, 2) a refusal, 3) a temporization (an act that is not fulfilling the illocutionary intent of a request and postponing the decision-making). The Godfather asserts that pezzonovante will give Johnny the job so Johnny gets what he has asked. It means that Don's reactive move is a promise that is no explicit. SA 1 (b) is an elaboration to an implicit thesis SA 1 (a) that is introduced by a commissive and can be easily reconstructed: "I promise I will solve your problem with this pezzonovante". The Godfather reduces the promise to do it more convincing. The function of the implicit SA is a statement. A statement of a commissive differs from a statement of a representative by a positive reactive move of a speaker that must be a contact

signal (thanking) in case of a commissive and an agreement in case of a representative. As there is no any sign of thanking in the reactive move (on the contrary, Johnny tries to prove the advantage of his boss over Don), so SA 2 (b) is the evidence proving the antithesis which can be easily reconstructed, as it is always opposite to a thesis: "You can't solve my problem with this pezzonovante".

b) An explicit SA precedes an implicit one.

Generally, ISAs that determine felicity conditions for SAs realization belong to this class. For example, the following felicity conditions should be satisfied to make a requestive:

- recipient's conditions: (1) desire and (2) ability to perform an action,
- emitent's conditions: (3) desire and (4) necessity for an action to be performed,
- action's condition: (5) necessity for an action to be performed by a recipient.

In the first two cases a reduction can be performed only by a recipient. In other cases a reduction can be performed by both an emitent and a recipient.

In argumentative text segments this way of ISAs formation can be mostly realized in a summary and in a thesis:

*And now, you have only to surrender the charter to me to complete the ceremony of submission to the order of His Majesty* (Carlton, 2010: 23).

This example is taken from the part of the play in which Governor Andros tries to persuade Governor Treat to give him the Charter of Freedom. In this example the explicit SA functioning as a summary concerns the realization of condition (5). The reduction is made by the emitent because he thinks that it is redundant to use a requestive because it is obvious. But it is still presupposed because of the emitent's intention to make the recipient perform the action: "And now, you have only to surrender the charter to me to complete

the ceremony of submission to the order of His Majesty. Surrender it!”

#### *Functional way of ISAs formation*

This type of SAs transposition is determined by functional characteristics of a SA. A SA of a definite class can execute only those functions which are peculiar to this class. In case if SA (x) is in rhetorical relations with SA (y) which demands a textual function which is not appropriate for a class in which SA (x) is represented, transposition of SA (x) takes place.

This way of ISAs' formation is typical for all acts of an argumentative text segment, but, especially, it can be met in arguments. Argument belonging to a class depends on thesis belonging. If a SA functioning as a thesis is a representative or a commissive or an expressive, a SA functioning as an argument is a representative, since emitent's purpose is to verify the proposition or prove sincerity of emitent's intensions. If a SA functioning as a thesis is a requestive or an advisive or an interrogative or a propositive, a SA functioning as an argument is a representative or a commissive (threats included), since emitent's purpose is to persuade a recipient to perform the action or to give an answer. If a SA functioning as an argument belongs to an inappropriate class, this SA is indirect:

1) *Stop treating me like a kid brother.*  
 2) *I was in the war.* 3) *I got shot, remember?*  
 4) *I killed some Japs.* 5) ***What the hell do you think I'll do when you knock somebody off? Faint?***” (Puzo, 2002: 76).

The scheme of rhetorical relations interaction in this text segment:

1) action elicitation (thesis) – 2) evidence (argument) to 1/statement to 3 – 3) elaboration to 2/statement to 4 – 4) elaboration to 3 – 5) evidence (argument) to 1/summary to 2,3,4.

In this text fragment Michael Corleone is quarreling with his brother who does not want

to accept his help in revenging on their father's enemies. From the scheme we can figure out that an argument has an interesting feature, it can be in rhetorical relations with a thesis, though it is separated from it by several SAs. SA (5) is indirect, since it is represented in a form of an interrogative (as we stated above the argument cannot be represented in a form of an interrogative), it must transfer into a representative. SA (5) is represented by two sentences. The first sentence cannot be interpreted as an argument because it is lack of action. Meanwhile, the emitent eliminates this unknown quantity in the second sentence. So “What the hell do you think I'll do when you knock somebody off? Faint?” transfers into “I won't faint when you knock somebody off”. This SA is not only the argument to the thesis; it functions also as the summary to three preceding SAs. Still it is not a summary for the whole segment cause in argumentative texts a summary as well as a thesis can be in rhetorical relations only with arguments.

#### *Semantic way of ISAs formation*

This type of transposition is determined by semantic relations of a SA either with SAs of a previous or following context, or with other elements of a context of utterance: a speaker, a hearer, a time, a place and the world of the utterance (these elements were singled out by J. Searle and D. Vanderveken (J. R. Searle and D. Vanderveken, 1985)). Generally, in argumentative text segments such ISAs are used when an emitent makes a thesis, an argument or a summary illogical in this context that is why it cannot be treated literally (if we do not take some deviant cases):

1) *The person of the year is not Ben Bernanke, no matter how insistently Time magazine tries to hype him into its pantheon.* 2) *The Fed chairman was just as big a schnook as every other magical thinker in Washington and on Wall Street* 3)

who believed that housing prices would go up in perpetuity to support an economy leveraged past the hilt. 4) Unlike most of the others, it was Bernanke's job to be ahead of the curve. 5) Yet as recently as June of last year he could be found minimizing the possibility of a substantial economic downturn. 6) And now we're supposed to applaud him for putting his finger in the dike after disaster struck? 7) This is defining American leadership down. 8) If there's been a consistent narrative to this year and every other in this decade, it's that most of us, Bernanke included, have been so easily bamboozled. 9) **That's why the obvious person of the year is Tiger Woods** (Rich, 2009).

The scheme of rhetorical relations interaction in this text segment:

1) statement (thesis) to 2, 6, 8 – 2) evidence (argument) to 1/statement to 3, 4 – 3) explanation to 2 – 4) evidence to 2/statement to 5 – 5) evidence to 4 – 6) evidence to 1/statement to 7 – 7) evidence to 6 – 8) evidence to 1 – 9) summary to 2, 6, 8.

The author of this article criticizes the choosing process of “a person of the year” by Time magazine because Ben Bernanke, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, won this recognition during the financial crisis in 2009. The author proves by SA (2), (3), (4), (5), (6) that Bernanke is rather “the loser of the year” than “the person” because he was “a big schnook” who was “ahead of the curve” and put “his finger in the dike after disaster struck” that was defining American leadership down. Then he states in SA (7) that Bernanke has not deserved even this title because there is a person who bamboozled “most of us, Bernanke included”. According to the author, it is Tiger Woods who is a more appropriate person to be “the loser of the year”. So the author is mocking at Times magazine and the essence of the irony is represented in SA (9) which functions as a summary in this segment. It's transposed in this context, since the phrase “a person of the

year” can be interpreted as “a loser of the year” which isn't a typical meaning for this phrase. So the summary “That's why the obvious person of the year is Tiger Woods” transfers into “That's why the obvious loser of the year is Tiger Woods”.

#### *Complex ways of ISAs formation*

Finally, we singled out complex ways of ISAs formation which combine two different simple ways. There exist three complex ways of ISAs formation: a combination of reductional and functional ways, a combination of reductional and semantic ways, a combination of functional and semantic ways. In argumentative text segments the first way is extensively used:

*Sonny: 1) Johnny thinks you can't fix it, 2) that's why I thought you might want me to go out there.*

*Don Corleone (turned his head to Johnny): 3) a) (Implicit: **I will fix it**); b) **Why do you doubt me?** 4) Hasn't your Godfather always done what he said he would do? 5) Have I ever been taken for a fool? (Puzo, 2002: 33).*

The scheme of rhetorical relations interaction in this segment:

1) statement to 2 – 2) explanation to 1 – 3) a) non-agreement (antithesis) to 1/statement to 3 (b) – b) elaboration to 3 (a)/statement to 4 – 4) evidence to 3 (b) – 5) evidence to 3 (b).

In this example Don uses ISAs to express his indignation because ISAs forms are more expressive than their direct equivalents. SA (3) expresses two SAs: SA 3(a) is a reduced thesis which functions as a non-agreement to (1) and as a statement to 3(b). It can be reconstructed, since it is opposite to the thesis, so it will be: “I will fix it”; SA 3 (b) is an elaboration to 3(a). It's represented in a form of an interrogative, but an elaboration cannot be expressed by it. That is why “Why do you doubt me?” transfers into “You mustn't doubt me”. So the whole transfer of “Why

do you doubt me?” is “I will fix it. You mustn’t doubt me”.

### Conclusion

To sum up, we showed that for an adequate analysis a text must be divided into segments that should be represented as schemes of rhetorical relations interaction. Then we stated that each

act has its own textual function in rhetorical relations. Moreover, we singled out three simple ways of ISAs formation and analyzed their realization in argumentative text segments. We also mentioned that there are three complex ways of ISAs formation and gave the example of the most extensive one for an argumentative text segments.

### References

1. Asher N. and Lascares A., *Logics of conversation* (New York: CUP, 2003), 526.
2. Austin J.L., *Kak sovershat' veshi pri pomoshchi slov* [How to Do Things With Words] in *New Trends in Foreign Linguistics: V. 18*, ed. B.Y. Gorodetskiy (M: Progress, 1986), 22-131.
3. Bochkarev A.I., *Kosvennye rechevye akty v reaktivnykh replikakh voprosno-otvetnykh edinstv* [Indirect Speech Acts in Reactive Utterances of Question-Answer Pairs] *Vestnik of Surgut State Pedagogical University*, 4 (2011), 28-33.
4. Carlton H., *The Tree That Saved Connecticut* (Memphis: General Books, 2010), 26.
5. van Eemeren F.H. and Grootendorst R., *A systematic theory of argumentation* (New York: CUP, 2004), 216.
6. Geis M., *Speech acts and conversational interaction* (New York : CUP, 1995), 248.
7. Mann T. and Thompson S., “Rhetorical Structure Theory: Description and Construction of Text Structures” in *Natural Language Generation: New Results in Artificial Intelligence*, ed. G. Kempen (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1986), 279-300
8. Puzo M., *The Godfather* (New York: New American Library, 2002), 446.
9. Rich F., “Tiger Woods, Person of the Year” // On-line version of journal “The New York Times” [Electronic resource] Access at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/20/opinion/20rich.html>
10. Searle J.R. and Vanderveken D., *Foundations of illocutionary logic* (New York: CUP, 1985), 227

## **Косвенные речевые акты в аргументативных сегментах текста**

**А.И. Бочкарев**  
*Новосибирский государственный  
педагогический университет,  
Россия 630126, Новосибирск, Виллюйская, 28*

---

*В данной статье проводится изучение проблемы реализации косвенных речевых актов (КРА) в аргументативных сегментах текста. Кроме того, показана необходимость применения риторических отношений как для анализа взаимодействия речевых актов, так и для образования косвенных речевых актов. Также в статье рассмотрены простые и сложные способы образования косвенных речевых актов.*

*Ключевые слова: риторические отношения, текстуальная функция, редуционный способ образования КРА, функциональный способ образования КРА, семантический способ образования КРА.*

---