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## **From semantics to pragmatics: analysis and interpretation of some adversative connectors according to Ducrot and Anscombe**

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### **Abstract:**

Between the potter who shapes his piece with the genius of the skilful movements of his fingers and the researcher who shapes his writing with the genius of the skilful movements of his cognitive operations, the text offers itself more to interpretative complexity. From Ducrot and Anscombe to Moeschler and Reboul, a semantic-pragmatic conception where meaning and interpretation come from semantic immanence is built at the crossroads of approaches aimed at the construction of meaning. We try, in a strongly reductionist approach (discourse is reduced to the statements that compose it) and strongly contextualist (the principles that govern the interpretation of discourses are the same as those that govern the interpretation of statements), to explain how the speaker represented in the statement can become, in the complexity of the speeches, a source of confusion on the part of the reader or the listener in certain argumentative movements.

We will explain, for example, the cases where the speaker uses the opinion of a third person to support his own thesis, or when he presents the thought of others in a negative way in order to indicate his disagreement, or again, when he agrees to make a concession to an opposing idea but in reality it is only to refute it with another statement. If we have chosen to work on politic discourse, it is because that politics is the excellent meeting place, the breeding ground for conflicts of opinions in polemical and controversial aspect.

**Keywords:** interpretation, adversary, argumentative orientation, enunciation, supposition-presupposition.

### **Riassunto:**

Tra il ceramista che plasma il suo pezzo con la genialità dei movimenti sapienti delle sue dita e il ricercatore che plasma la sua scrittura con la genialità dei movimenti sapienti delle sue operazioni conoscitive, il testo si offre maggiormente alla complessità interpretativa. Da Ducrot e Anscombe a Moeschler e Reboul, si costruisce una concezione semantico-pragmatica dove significato e interpretazione provengono dall'immanenza semantica,

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all'incrocio di approcci finalizzati alla costruzione del senso. Cerchiamo, in un approccio fortemente riduzionista (il discorso è ridotto agli enunciati che lo compongono) e fortemente contestualista (i principi che regolano l'interpretazione dei discorsi sono gli stessi che regolano l'interpretazione degli enunciati), di spiegare come il parlante ha rappresentato nell'enunciato può diventare, nella complessità dei discorsi, fonte di confusione da parte del lettore o dell'ascoltatore in certi movimenti argomentativi.

Spiegheremo, ad esempio, i casi in cui il parlante utilizza l'opinione di una terza persona per sostenere la propria tesi, o quando presenta il pensiero di altri in modo negativo per indicare il suo disaccordo, o ancora, quando è d'accordo fare una concessione a un'idea contraria ma in realtà si tratta solo di confutarla con un'altra affermazione. Se abbiamo scelto di lavorare sul discorso politico, è perché quella politica è l'ottimo luogo di incontro, il terreno fertile per i conflitti di opinioni sotto l'aspetto polemico e controverso.

**Parole chiave:** interpretazione, avversario, orientamento argomentativo, enunciazione, supposizione-presupposizione.

### ملخص

الهدف الأساسي لهذا العمل هو الإحاطة بالمجال الأكثر ممارسة بشكل لا يصدق في كل مكان في التفاعلات البشرية من خلال التجربة اليومية إلا أن تعميمه غالبًا ما يمر دون أن يلاحظه أحد ، أي الجدل . يعتمد مبدأ عملنا على حقيقة أن أي بيان جدلي . يعتبر كل قول حجة لاستنتاج ما، وعادة ما يعطي الكلام للمؤول تعليمات تدعوه إلى استخلاص استنتاج ما في موقف ما على مستوى الخطاب . الهدف هو القيام بعملية تفكيك باستعمال أدوات استنباط لغويه قصد إظهار البيان ثم مرة أخرى للتجميع وفقاً لمبادئ الجدل للوصول إلى نوع من الدلالات المدمجة براغماتولوجيا (semantic-pragmatic)<sup>†</sup> حيث لا يتم استنساخ الفعل اللغوي إلا فقط في اللغة و بواسطتها .

## 1. Introduction

### 1 – Introduction

Our work wants to approach the idea that appoint "pragmatic" as all the semantic aspects of a discourse that is not directly predictable from its linguistic structure, in other words, from the combinations of words that constitute it, and these aspects are only understood only if we consider the situation in which the speech is produced. In this first meaning, it has become more and more evident that everything or almost everything, in terms of concerns the meaning of a discourse, is pragmatic - even if we stick to the simpler, composed of a single statement. We realize that the meaning of a word is always constructed by taking into account the context in which it appears.

In this paper, we will try to discuss the question of adversative connectives while analyzing the contribution they have to linguistic argumentation. For this we will work on political discourse, because politics is the excellent meeting place and the fertile ground for the conflict of opinions. The starting point in any political discourse is current events. We follow political

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<sup>†</sup>For the sake of popularization, but also for linguistic flexibility, we opt for براغماتولوجيا to designate the semantic-pragmatic concept .

developments every day and we react in one way or another to the flow of news which, in many cases, takes on a polemical and controversial aspect.

« *L'idée sera que, dans tout énoncé concessif, on perçoit, sous-jacente, inscrite dans une image d'univers, une relation hypothétique dont l'antécédent est vrai et dont le conséquent est faux.* »<sup>‡</sup> (The idea will be that, in any concessive statement, we perceive, underlying, inscribed in an image of the universe, a hypothetical relationship whose antecedent is true and whose consequent is false) traduction

It would not be appropriate to deal, to begin, with the argumentative question without going through the opposition and the relationship between concession and opposition. For that, we undertake a syntactic and semantic study of the use of connectors by revealing their role in the articulation of textual and discursive units on the basis of their logical sequence. Our work will end with a proposal born from an enlargement of the interpretative process and from personal work on language units that apparently not very argumentative words, but subjecting them to adversarial statements to use them for argumentative purposes.

Example “President Kais Said uttered this statement: '*We are not pupils to receive lessons from others, we strongly condemn any interference in our internal affairs*' ”<sup>§</sup>.

### **Negation in contact with the appositives conjunction: issues of argumentative orientation.**

As we can see, and almost in the majority of his speeches, President Said inaugurates his speech with a statement that is certainly provocative but polemical which can, in the worst restrictions, admit more than an augmentative orientation.

*“We are not pupils to receive lessons from others”*

It is true that the president is the physical producer of the statement but cannot be assimilated to the only state authority, namely the President of the Republic, on the other hand, la. It can be assimilated to the voice of the Tunisian street, to any Tunisian being, ineluctably affected by the non-acceptance of more than a billion dollars from the International Monetary Fund. In this case the speaker is therefore different from the enunciator  $L \neq E$ .

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<sup>‡</sup> R. Martin, Op.cit., p 81.

Pour savoir encore plus sur l'hypothétique et les univers de croyance, on renvoie le lecteur à Robert Martin, dans *Langage et croyance*, où la relation concession / hypothèse est très bien illustrée.

<sup>§</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%B3+%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AF+%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86+%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84+%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%B6+%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A4%D9%84](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%B3+%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AF+%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86+%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84+%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%B6+%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A4%D9%84)

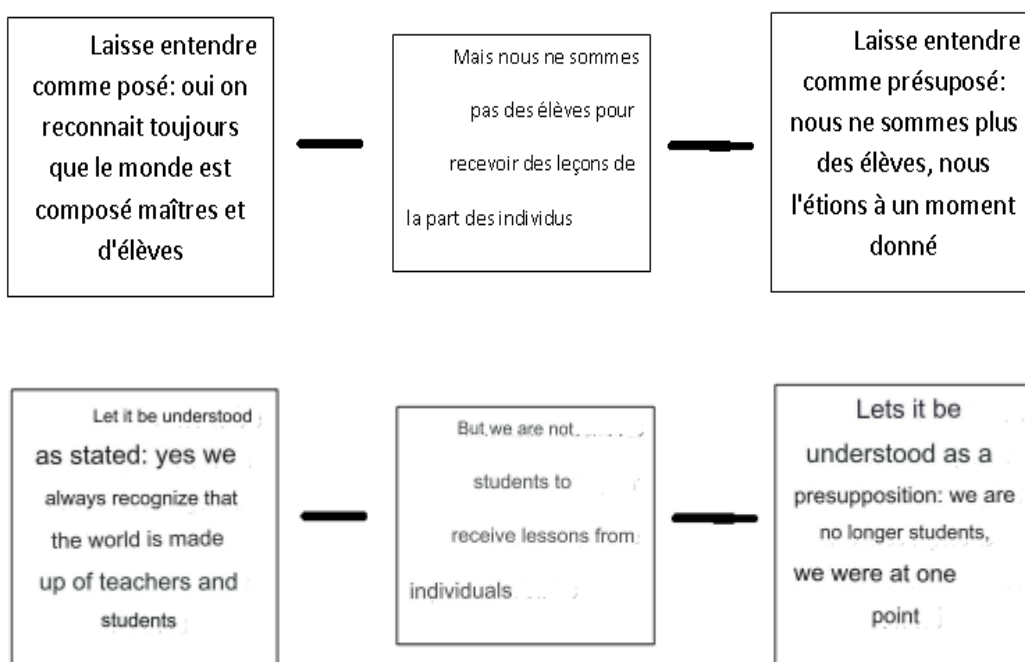
**From semantics to pragmatics: analysis and interpretation of some adversative connectors according to Ducrot and Anscombe**

The statement, being pronounced at the beginning of a speech leaves the universe of expectations open to all suppositions: to suppose that the president, by saying this, will certainly refuse without reminder any recourse to the IMF, which does not assimilate, in this case to the physical interlocutor of the statement, but to the international body targeted by the argumentative movement. It is precisely this movement that we attempt to elucidate in what follows.

The movement changes from one universe of expectation to another. In the first, the recipient of the statement is all Tunisians affected by austerity measures. On the other hand, in the second, the addressee of the utterance can refer to everyone who suffers the consequences. In any event, the physical addressee of the President's speech cannot be assimilated to the sole addressee of the statement.

*But we are not students\*\* to receive lessons from a few individuals.* It is an assertion which, although apparently justifying, can, on the level of analysis, be doubly interpretable.

Here is what we can achieve schematically:



Let's start from the principle that any negation cuts off the reality of a part of the possible, the statement leaves intact the hypothesis that in some existing world, the Tunisians bow or rather will bow to the conditions of the masters. “ *The negation [...] preserves the presuppositions* ”

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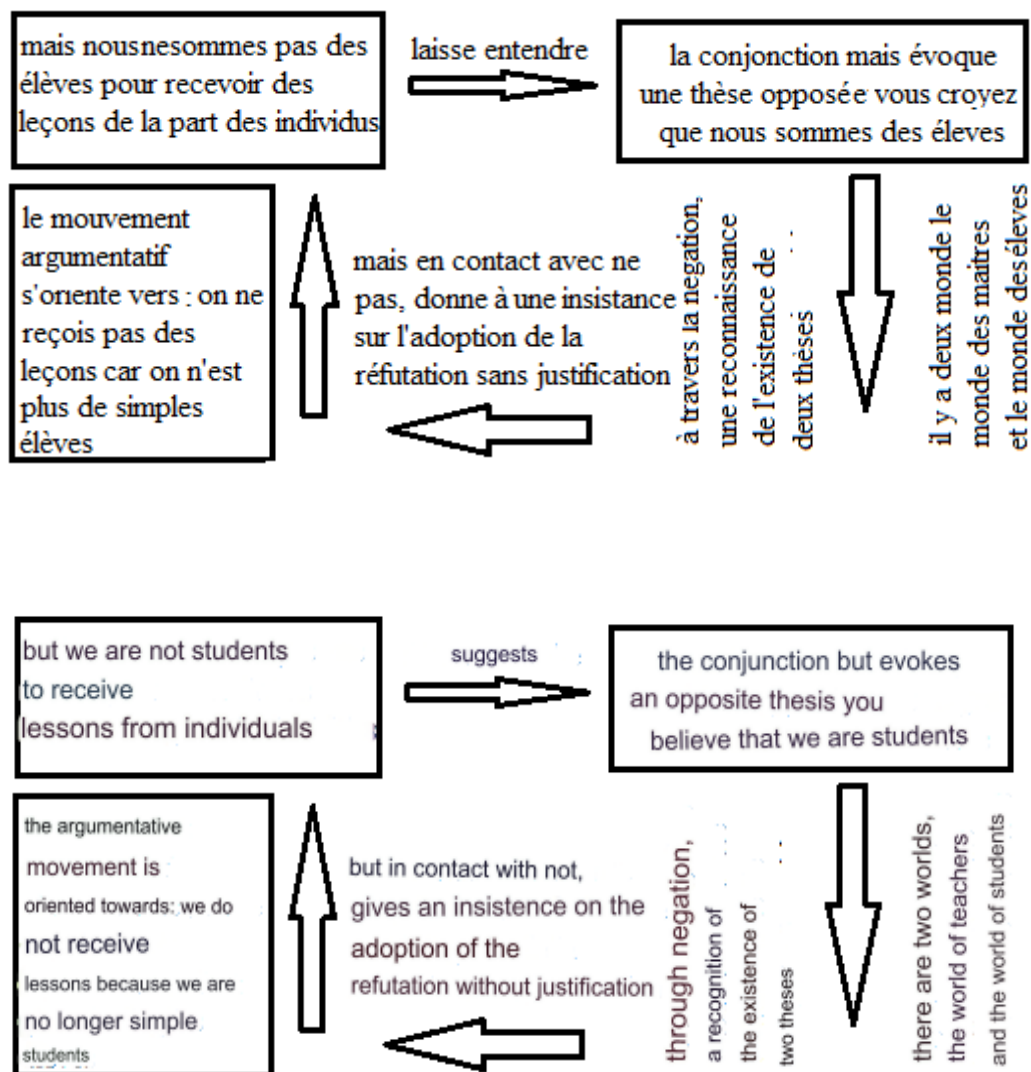
\*\* In Freud's work, the question of the voice is more or less posed in terms of superego. After some remarks in the letters to Fliess on the role of auditory traces in the construction of fantasies, Freud turns to the superego and the way it is constructed during childhood. He argues that this construction is related to the process of parental voice introjection. In the *ego and the id* , he explains how verbal residues are derived from auditory perceptions and constitute the superego, defined as: “A residue of the punitive instance of childhood. The inner voice of the superego berates us, but also encourages us to pursue impossible tasks, while the consequences of these conflicting imperatives fall on the ego .

of the negated statement. Admitting, in effect, that the presupposition is itself, following Berrendonner<sup>††</sup>, a fact of polyphony.<sup>‡‡</sup>

The negation “We do not...” comprises two acts of utterance. The first by a non-reducible enunciator who asserts that “The president is we are not students (the Tunisians)”. This time  $L \neq E$ . The second includes the explicit act of refusal implying the opposite act But we are not masters either, and this time  $L=E$  but  $E_1 \neq E_2$ .

It is here, as it is agreed to admit the connector but as an introduction to a refutation of the previous thesis and implied (we are students and we receive lessons.

Schematically, I can represent the movement as follows.



<sup>††</sup>For more knowledge on polyphony, see *Elements of linguistic pragmatics*, Paris, Minuit, ed.1981.

<sup>‡‡</sup>O. Ducrot, Op.cit., p. 51. Ducrot found himself influenced by Berrendonner. In some cases, the argumentative orientation of the sentence can be clarified by taking into account the speaker/receiver and enunciator/receiver pairs. Ducrot says that "the central idea is that one must, in this description of the enunciation which constitutes the meaning of the utterance, distinguish between the author of the words (speaker) and the agents of the illocutionary acts (enunciators), and (recipient) and those who are the patients of the addressee acts".

The whole argument rests on the explicit negation which comes to inaugurate the discourse and on a dissociation, implicit at the level of the spirits, of the universes of expectations, leaving the concluding process open to all suppositions. On the other hand, the sequence bears, by means of an argumentative but, on the restriction. We see ourselves finally led towards an argumentative movement which will be reaffirmed by this contact of a but and the two morphemes of negation.

### **From the hypothetical to the concessive: issues of argumentative orientation**

From Chirac to Macron and from Boutef to Said, presidents make the same argumentative mistakes when they rush to their constituents and anticipate possible demands by making these kinds of statements .

Example: “ *If the people say yes. I will be there .* ” §§(The statement concerns the referendum of September 2005 on the yes or no to the law of amnesty and national reconciliation) In this example, we will try to explain the difference in logical and interpretative implication between concession and hypothesis.

By stating *If the people say yes*, the president, promoter and very initiator of the reconciliation project, advocates and encourages the people to vote yes in the referendum. But when he continues: (I will be there) the hypothetical contribution decreases, increasing the threat, because by saying: *If the people say yes, I will be there – you* automatically leave the opposite hypothesis valid: *if the people say no, I won't be there.*

The threat, implied, can be expressed as follows: *If you say yes, I will be there* and I will put all my strength to erect the country in the deserved place otherwise ( *if you vote no and therefore you disavow me* ) *I will no longer defend the country, and I will no longer move the interests of the people* . In this case the fact of saying "yes" can balance in the hypothetical and the idea is directed much more towards the fear of "no"; which reflects the lack of assurance on the part of the speaker towards the interlocutor. However, you cannot vote for someone who is not sure of himself.

So he could have been better and more rational and persuasive if the President's point of view was expressed through the concession. Bouteflika could have said: *even if the people say no, I will remain the President and I will defend the interests of all Algerians* .

In this case the concessive comes to the service of the hypothetical especially when the speaker is certain and reassured of the opinion of his interlocutor. By the concession, it only brings back more alliance and confidence. To further explain the process of involvement, consider the following example: “ *No matter how clumsy this speaker is, he is always listened to* ” \*\*\* . By the concession the report of implication, even hypothetical, to know if it *is clumsy, it is not listened to* and denied. What the example declares by means of the concession is precisely that this expected implication is false here, *he is clumsy and yet he is listened to* .

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§§The daily “ *El Moudjahid* ”, September 3, 2005, p. 4.

\*\*\* Denis D. Sancier-Château A., *Grammar of French* , Paris, LGF, ed. 1994, page 127.

## "Well" a decisive connector in argumentative orientation

In fact, saying "well" assumes that a speaker, in his reaction to an overt situation (situation which may or may not be verbally explained), acts by saying "Well Q!" Q is an unexpected sequence of the situation S, which shows the spontaneous character of the reaction. Indeed the speaker of "well" can in no way be responsible for Q' which represents the expected reaction and which takes the addressee as the enunciator. By saying:  $S \rightarrow Q$  intends to suggest to the addressee a conclusion C.

It is in this sense that "well" is argumentative.

Consider the following example: *It is true that the Jews grant themselves the arsenal never seen and strike on all sides illegitimately, illegally and even criminally. As usual, the United States is only supporting their desires, otherwise how does this famous ogre claim to see his dream come true? Well, he's just fighting flanks .*

The whole statement preceding "well" is in any case, figurative but revealing of a kind of thought marked by an overvaluation of the Israeli enemy. This is the situation that many Arab and Muslim countries experience. I will call this situation S as the explicit continuation of the statement.

S = It is true that the Jews grant themselves the arsenal never seen and strike on all sides illegitimately, illegally and even criminally. As usual, the United States is only supporting their desires, otherwise how does this famous ogre claim to see his dream come true?

Q: Well, he's just fighting flanks.

It is clear, from the divergence of the two universes of expectation preceding and following "well", that the enunciator of S is different from that of Q and therefore  $E_1 \neq E_2$ . In the situation S,  $E_1$  does not assimilate to the speaker (physical producer of the statement) but to all those who believe in the pontiff of the Israeli therefore  $L \neq E_1$ ,  $E_2$  can be assimilated to the speaker of the utterance and,  $E_2 = L$ .

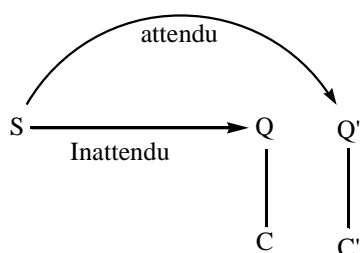
This difference is born from the counterpoint of an utterance and a reaction against the expectations of a recipient who judges another utterance to be more relevant.

**Noticed :** " It's true" explains the polyphonic character.

Q' can be imagined like this: the Israelis destroy everything in their paths to grab land and wealth.

C = Q's conclusion must be: the Israeli enemy can never colonize us.

C' = The conclusion of Q': we will sooner or later be colonized by the Israeli enemy.



"Well", like the other argumentative connectors, mobilizes not only an analysis in strictly linguistic terms but a reflection on the discursive technique in its different voices. "well" marks the opposition by a point of view which goes against another previous point of view. It happens that the two points of view have the same physical producer speaker but not the same enunciator.

### Punctuation and metalinguistic signs: argumentative orientation issues

We attempt to illustrate in what follows the importance of parentheses in argumentative orientation and their role in affecting universes of belief by changing the very nature of the conclusion from one direction to another.

#### *Few motorists exceed 120 km/h (almost 20%)*

It should be noted that through humor, this kind of statement appears in the speech it is generally to underestimate completely invalidate the opposing thesis. In saying *little* apparently agrees with the opinion of its antagonist not seriously but in jest

The apparent interpretation which seems convincing is the following: the fact of reducing, by sanction measures, the speed on the motorways does not change the French consumption of oil in any way because there are few motorists who exceed 120 km/h.

With thoughtful reading, we pause for a moment on the parentheses to see the bizarre fact entailed by their unusual use. Parentheses are generally used for explanatory and metalinguistic purposes; they include, in this case, a value of concession by bringing a restriction to the thesis initially accepted, that is to say to the affirmation that few motorists exceed 120 km/h and that an authoritarian limitation of the speed would therefore have no effective impact on energy expenditure. This restriction can be expressed as follows : despite everything there is about 20%, so it's still a lot and the tension immediately takes shape between a little ↔ a lot [almost]

Indeed Ducrot arrives at the following conclusion :

*For us, in fact, a statement with a quantitative indication almost X is directed towards conclusions such that the same statement where we would have substituted X for almost X would be in favor of this conclusion, a stronger argument. Hence, it immediately follows that almost 20% cannot be used to justify a conclusion of the "little" type, since the indication 20% would obviously be a less strong argument for this conclusion. The conclusion permitted*

*by the parenthesis is therefore obviously of the type, many, so that this parenthesis must, in the context, have the value of conclusion.*

**Other words can serve as an argumentative orientation modifier.**

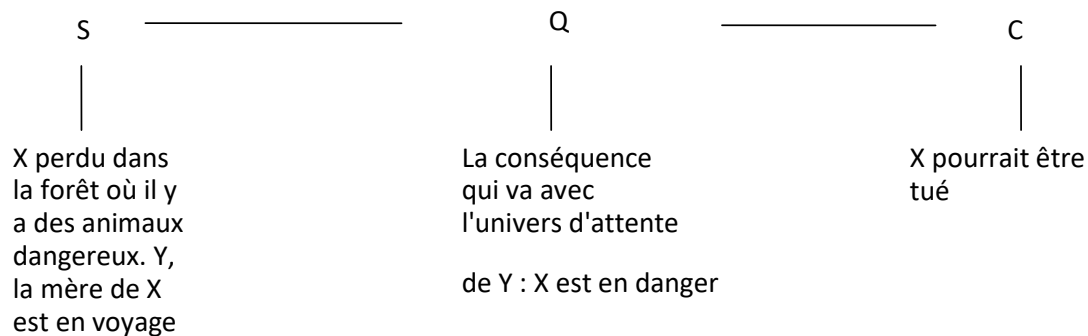
An adverb like "fortunately" or a noun like "damage", if only in a colloquial register, can be used as adversative connectors. The adverb "fortunately" or "unfortunately" can each direct the direction of the universe of expectation from Q to Q' where Q is what is expected and Q' is what is unexpected.

In a dialogue where the premises lead to unfortunate results and in a situation where the interlocutor believes, on the basis of the preliminary facts, in a piece of news that goes in the opposite direction of his universe of expectation, "fortunately" comes to play the role of a modifier of this waiting universe.

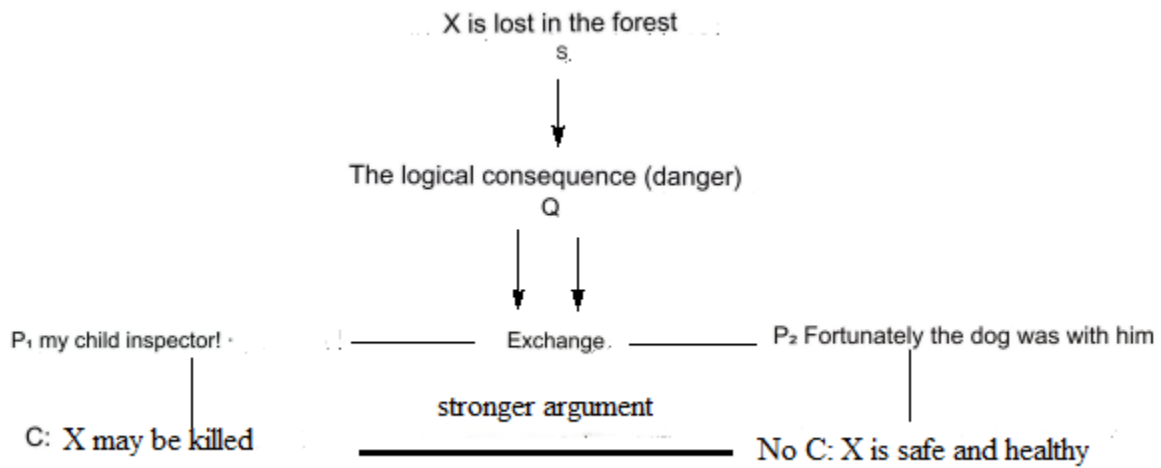
Imagine the following scene:

An information comes to Mrs. Y (the mother of X who has been traveling for a few days) saying that X is lost in the forest all day and she must cut her mission and return to the place.

The incident is serious considering the atrocity of the forest full of wild and dangerous animals. The hypothesis that goes the most with Y's waiting universe can be summed up in the fact that X is in danger (X is attacked by a dangerous animal, for example the lion). It is the consequence (let's call it Q) expected in such a situation S. It is this same consequence Q which automatically leads to the conclusion C which can be summed up in this: X could be killed. This first orientation in the general argumentative movement can be schematized in this way.







Y says P<sub>1</sub> with the fear (and with the hidden certainty) of receiving very bad news, namely the child is killed. The statement can be interpreted as follows: I know that my child is lost in the forest, he may be attacked by a dangerous animal, and I think he is dead, that's what you are going to tell me!

Z says P<sub>2</sub> with the intention of shifting Y's argumentative focus to a new conclusion that the child is safe. The statement can be interpreted as follows: it is true that the situation leads to a dramatic end, it makes you believe that X is in mortal danger, he may be killed. We must not believe it because, fortunately, the dog was with him and he is spared from any unfortunate incident.

### Conclusion

The expression of adversativity cannot in any case be limited to a very limited number of conjunctions or connective phrases. But an adjective like " *sorry*" or an adverb like " *fortunately*" can very well be elements of adversity.

The act of adversity is the dialogical act par excellence because it includes, with the admitted and accepted idea, another idea not admitted and refuted, this one does not belong to the universe of belief of the speaker but rather to that of the interlocutor. The two universes can merge to be apparently produced by the same speaker but on the enunciative level, the enunciator of the first idea cannot be that of the second.

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