

## ‘Anyway’ and ‘even’ as indicators of complex argumentation<sup>1</sup>

### ‘De cualquier forma’ e ‘incluso’ como indicadores de una argumentación compleja

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**Abstract:** In “Anyway” and “even” as indicators of complex argumentation a connection is established between the semantic descriptions of “anyway” and “even” given by linguists such as Ducrot and Anscombe, Bennett, and Kay and van Eemeren and Grootendorst’s (1984) pragma-dialectical characterization of independent and interdependent arguments. She argues that by combining linguistic insights with insights from pragma-dialectics a more systematic explanation of the indicative function of ‘anyway’ and ‘even’ can be given.

**Keywords:** Indicators of complex argumentation, argumentation structure, linguistics.

**Resumen:** En “de cualquier forma” e “incluso” en tanto indicadores de una argumentación compleja, se establece una conexión entre la descripción semántica dada por lingüistas como Ducrot y Anscombe, Bennett, y Kay, y la caracterización pragma-dialéctica de argumentos independientes e interdependientes ofrecida por van Eemeren y Grootendorst (1984). Aquí se señala que combinando elementos lingüísticos con elementos de la teoría pragma-dialéctica se puede ofrecer una explicación más sistemática de la función indicativa de “de cualquier forma” e “incluso”.

**Palabras clave:** Indicadores de argumentación compleja, estructura argumentativa, lingüística.

<sup>1</sup> This paper is an adapted version of a paper that appeared in 1996 in J. van Benthem, F.H. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst & F. Veltman (eds.), *Logic and Argumentation*, pp. 77-87. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen.

## 1. Indicators of complex argumentation

When analysing argumentative discourse, the analyst attempts to get a clear overview of the relevant elements in the text and of the relations between these elements. Crucial steps in the analysis of an argument are, *first*, establishing what the communicative function (or illocutionary force) of the different elements is (for instance, whether an utterance should be considered as a standpoint or as an argument) and, *second*, giving a characterization of the relations between the various speech acts, for instance of the relations between the arguments that are advanced in the case of complex argumentation.

In *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions*, van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) make a distinction between different types of complex argumentation. They distinguish between two types of structure, both of which consist of arguments directly supporting the standpoint, *multiple* and *coordinatively compound* argumentation. In multiple argumentation each of the arguments is 'individually sufficient' to justify or refute the standpoint, but none of them is 'by itself necessary' (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984: 91). This type of argumentation structure is described by van Eemeren and Grootendorst as 'a series of separate and independent single argumentations for or against the same [...] expressed opinion' (1984: 91). In the case of coordinatively compound argumentation, the argumentation consists of a number of arguments 'each of which is individually necessary' to justify or refute the standpoint, but 'they are sufficient only in combination' (1984: 90).

It is generally recognized that the verbal presentation of argumentation plays an important role in the identification of standpoints and arguments and the relations between arguments. Nevertheless, until recently, argumentation theorists have not paid much attention to a methodical exploration of the clues provided by the verbal presentation.<sup>2</sup> Authors of textbooks on argumentation usually restrict themselves to the most obvious indicators, such as 'because', 'therefore' and 'since'. Authors who mention

<sup>2</sup> In 2007, van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans published a book on argumentative indicators, in which an overview is provided of types of words and expressions that can be indicative of all relevant discussion moves. Chapter 7 of this book discusses indicators of complex argumentation.

indicators of *relations between arguments* that can be used to establish how the argumentation is structured, are thin on the ground. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst are an exception: they cite indicators of independent arguments such as 'by the way', 'anyway', 'moreover' and 'needless to add that', and also indicators of interdependent arguments, such as 'when it is also remembered that' and 'in addition to the fact that' (1992: 75-76, 80-81).

In this paper, I shall argue that by making use of the semantical and pragmatic descriptions of different types of argumentative connectives and operators given by linguists such as Ducrot and Anscombre, Bennett, Fillmore, Kay and others, a more complete and systematic account can be given of the way in which various words and expressions may function as indicators of argumentative relations. To make this clear, I shall discuss two potential argumentative indicators: *anyway* and *even*. These two adverbs are treated as indicators of argumentative structure both by pragmadiialecticians and by linguists. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst consider *anyway* to be a clear indicator of independent arguments, or – in their terminology – of multiple argumentation. They regard *even* as a somewhat less clear indicator of, again, independent arguments.

In order to further clarify the concepts of *independent* and *interdependent* arguments, I shall make use of the dialogical analysis of argumentation structures that I have given in *Analysing Complex Argumentation* (Snoeck Henkemans 1992). The reason for restricting myself to discussing these two types of argumentation structure is that in the literature, *anyway* and *even* are only mentioned in connection with independent and interdependent arguments. I shall attempt to show that characterizing these two argumentation structures dialogically, provides an adequate starting-point for accounting for the indicative function of *anyway* and *even*.

## **2. Multiple and coordinative argumentation in an argumentative discussion**

In most textbooks on argumentation, a distinction is made between interdependent and independent arguments. However, the definitions of the terms 'independent' and 'interdependent' differ considerably from author to author. Often they are also unclear or ambiguous.

In *Analysing complex argumentation*, I have attempted to solve some of these problems of definition, by giving a dialogical characterization of the notions ‘independent’ and ‘interdependent’. In my characterization, arguments are interdependent if the speaker attempts to overcome doubts or answer criticism raised by one or more of his other arguments. They are independent if the arguments are not designed to fulfil such a ‘repairing’ function with respect to each other.

Coordinatively compound argumentation results from an arguer’s attempt to advance additional arguments in order to remove his opponent’s doubts or criticism concerning the sufficiency of the argumentation. For this purpose, he can make use of two different kinds of defensive strategy: he can undertake a direct defence or he can give an indirect defence. A direct defence consists of adding further evidence and it results in *cumulative* argumentation. The result of applying this strategy is, that the argumentation consists of a number of arguments that are each individually too weak to support the standpoint, but might in combination provide adequate support:

- (1) The dinner was a paragon of organization, as the hall was the perfect size for the company, the table arrangement was perfectly planned, and the service was excellent.

An indirect defence consists of adding a counterargument to the opponent’s objection that the arguer’s argument has insufficient weight, and it results in *complementary* argumentation. In both cases, the arguments that are put forward must be thought of as combined, because the arguer can only convince his opponent of the acceptability of the standpoint if he succeeds in removing his doubts, or criticism, regarding the sufficiency of the argumentation. An example of complementary argumentation is:

- (2) We had to go out for dinner, as there was no food at home, and the stores were already closed.

A reaction to the first argument (‘there was no food at home’) might be that we could have bought some food. The second argument (‘the stores were already closed’) clearly invalidates such a response.

In multiple argumentation, the only connection between the arguments

is that they are all advanced as a defence of the same standpoint. Each of them is a separate attempt to defend the standpoint, and they are all motivated by the failure, or potential failure, of a previous attempt. The arguments do not require each other to lend adequate support to the standpoint. On the contrary, the reason for undertaking a new attempt to defend the standpoint is that the previous attempt has failed, or might fail. An example of multiple argumentation is:

- (3) Of course you should buy the laptop computer. It's not really expensive, and equipment for daily use can easily cost a bit more.

In (3), there are two alternative (and even somewhat contradictory) attempts to defend the standpoint. By giving his second argument, the arguer makes it clear that he anticipates that his first attempt at defending the standpoint might fail.

### 3. A semantical analysis of 'anyway'

In order to account for the fact that the adverb *anyway* may function as an indicator of multiple argumentation, I shall make use of the analysis of the French word *d'ailleurs* given by Ducrot in *Les mots du discours* (Ducrot et al. 1980). *D'ailleurs* is roughly equivalent to the English *anyway*. I shall give a brief and simplified summary of the main characteristics of *d'ailleurs* mentioned by Ducrot.

According to Ducrot, the complete semantic scheme of all uses of *anyway* is visible in example (4):

- (4) I don't want to rent this room (*r*): it is too expensive (*P*) and anyway, I don't like it. (*Q*).

In Ducrot's analysis, *anyway* always functions in an argumentative context. It is used to present an argument (*Q*) that is added to one or more other arguments (*P*). *P* and *Q* are advanced in support of the same conclusion (*r*), but are argumentatively independent<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Luscher (1989: 118-119) points out that *d'ailleurs* can also be used non-argumentatively by a speaker, to comment upon or correct a preceding speech act.

The argument *Q* constitutes what Ducrot calls a ‘second discursive movement’. By using *anyway*, the arguer gives the impression that he first only wanted to give the argument *P*, but that he has had second thoughts about it and decided to give the argument *Q* as well. *P* and *Q* are directed at different people or, rather, at different conceptions of the same person. Ducrot explains this as follows: the argument *P* is directed at an opponent for whom the argument *P* should suffice as support for the conclusion *r*. By adding *anyway*, the arguer indicates that he doubts the legitimacy of his own assumption. He anticipates the possibility that the empirical opponent might not be willing to accept *r* on the basis of *P* (1980: 217).

From this brief description, it should be clear that by the use of *anyway* the arguer can indicate that the dialogical situation he is anticipating is precisely the situation which, according to the pragma-dialectical analysis that I have presented here, gives rise to multiple argumentation: the situation in which the arguer decides to undertake a new and separate attempt to defend the standpoint, because he expects that a previous attempt might fail.<sup>4</sup> By using *anyway*, the arguer makes it clear that his first argument should have sufficed to convince his opponent. All the same, he advances a new argument, thus making it clear that he foresees that his first argument might after all not be convincing.

#### 4. A semantical analysis of ‘even’

In the French linguistic literature, *even* is generally associated with interdependent arguments. Roulet, for one, whose analysis is based on the work of Anscombe and Ducrot, thinks that one of the crucial differences between *anyway* and *even* is that *anyway* introduces independent arguments, and *even* interdependent arguments. In order to take a more well-founded decision on whether *even* is to be regarded as an indicator of multiple or as an

<sup>4</sup> Since multiple argumentation consists of separate, and often even alternative attempts at defending a standpoint, it may happen that the arguments are such that they cannot all be intended to convince the same opponent (As is the case in my example 3). As is explained in Snoeck Henkemans (1992: 141), one of the arguments may be irrelevant for an opponent who accepts the other argument. The same phenomenon is mentioned by Ducrot (Ducrot et al. 218) in his analysis of *d’ailleurs*.

indicator of coordinative argumentation, I shall compare the analysis of *even* given by some American linguists with the analysis of the French linguists of *même*, which is virtually equivalent.

In the semantical and pragmatic analysis of *even* and of its French counterpart *même*, two elements recur. In the words of Kay:

- (5) A (textual) sentence containing *even* always depends on a contextual sentence (expressed or implied) which is, intuitively speaking, less 'extreme' (1990: 92)

A correct use of *even* thus requires the implicit or explicit presence of one or more other sentences or propositions.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the sentence containing *even* indicates a more extreme case than the other sentences or propositions.

It differs from author to author what exactly is to be understood by 'more extreme'. For Fillmore (1965), Bennett (1982) and Lycan (1991), more extreme means: less expected, or more surprising. After having given the sentence 'Even Max tried on the trousers', Bennett, for instance, remarks:

- (6) One thinks of this as felicitously said in a situation where Max did try on the trousers, and so did someone else, and it is more surprising that Max did than that the other person did (1982: 404-405).

Unlike Bennett and others, Kay, just as Anscombe and Ducrot, considers the more surprising character of the sentence containing *even* neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for a felicitous use of *even*.<sup>6</sup> For Kay, 'more extreme' means: 'more informative'. This, in turn, means that the sentence with *even* unilaterally entails the other sentence or sentences:

<sup>5</sup> Adler (1992: 26) does not think this is a necessary requirement. He offers the following counterexample: 'If Arthur is one of the worst students in my class and his is the first paper I grade, I might say [...] Even Arthur got an A. But I surely would not implicate that others beside Arthur received A's. I have not yet looked at their tests'. However, I doubt whether 'even' would be correctly used in such a context.

<sup>6</sup> Lycan, although he uses the notion of 'unexpectedness' in his own analysis of the scalar properties of *even*, also points out that even does not necessarily have to introduce a more surprising event: 'Though all this talk of 'expectedness', 'likelihood', 'surprisingness' etc. is standard in the literature (...), it is misleading. Whatever scalar notion really is in play here is not always so fortrightly epistemic' (1991: 122).

- (7) In the analysis presented here, the intuition of being more extreme is explicated as greater informativeness, in turn defined by unilateral entailment in a scalar model (1990: 92).

What Kay means by unilateral entailment in a scalar model, can be explained by looking at his analysis of sentence (5):

- (8) The whole family showed up for Christmas, even aunt Irma.

When interpreting this sentence, it should be assumed that aunt Irma is located at the lowest point of a scale (for instance a scale of regular visitors), and that therefore her showing up a fortiori entails the other members of the family showing up. Intuitively, this may seem a bit strange: one would think that the entailment should go in a different direction, namely that the showing up of the whole family entails aunt Irma's showing up, and not conversely. According to Kay, this only shows that it is not entailment per se that we are concerned with, but entailment in a scalar model. That the whole family's showing up entails aunt Irma's showing up, is an entailment which, in Kay's words, 'hold(s) in a context structured by a scalar model but which owe(s) nothing to the scalar model' (80). Such fortuitous entailments should be distinguished from entailments that exploit the scalar property of the model.

Anscombe and Ducrot (1983) also analyse *even* as a scalar operator. According to them, the sentence containing *even* is not more informative, but it has greater argumentative force. When evaluating their proposal, one should bear in mind that Anscombe and Ducrot use the term 'argumentative' in a broader sense than argumentation theorists generally do. They consider as argumentative all utterances that lead the listener or reader, often implicitly, to a certain conclusion. Any evaluative meaning that transcends the purely informative (quantitative) meaning of a sentence is regarded as 'argumentative' by these authors.

I shall not concern myself further with the question as to whether or not *even* always has an argumentative function, since it is indisputable that it *can* be used in an argumentative context to indicate that the argument that follows is the strongest argument for a conclusion. According to Kay (1990:

91), the fact that *even* marks an assertion as more informative makes it particularly suited to be used in service of argumentative goals, but this does not mean that it can be used exclusively for argumentative purposes.

In an argumentative context, the conjunct with *even* usually introduces the strongest argument. However, as both Anscombe and Ducrot and Kay point out, there is an exception to this rule. There are cases in which *even* does not refer to the last argument or proposition, but tells something about the group of arguments as a whole. An example is (9):

- (9) George drank a little wine, a little brandy, a little rum, a little calvados, and even a little armagnac.

According to Kay, in a sentence like this, *even* does not indicate that the last proposition, in this case, drinking armagnac, is the more extreme:

The final conjunct is not interpreted as more extreme than the preceding one(s), rather the whole sentence is seen as more extreme than the initial conjunct(s) (1990: 74).

The full conjunction, including armagnac, is more informative, or stronger, in a scalar model than the conjunction which lacks armagnac. If (9) were used as support for the claim that George drank a large quantity or a large diversity, mentioning five beverages would produce a stronger argument than mentioning just four. In cases like this, *even* seems to have a similar meaning as the word *plus*.

According to Anscombe and Ducrot (1983), *even* can only be used to refer to the group of arguments as a whole, if each of the arguments by itself can lend some support to the standpoint. Since this condition is not fulfilled, sentence (10) is not acceptable:

- (10) \*John can speak exactly three languages: English, French and even German.

In a case like (10), the standpoint requires a purely quantitative interpretation. None of the arguments by itself can be seen as an argument for

the standpoint that John can speak exactly three languages. If *exactly three* were replaced by a more vague and qualitative expression like *quite a few*, the use of *even* would be appropriate.

One would think that in cases in which *even* serves as an indication of the argumentative force of the combined arguments, as in example (9), the order in which the arguments are presented is of no importance. Since the final argument is then not interpreted as more extreme or more strong, any other order of the arguments should also be acceptable<sup>7</sup>. In example (9) this seems to be true. However, there are also cases which have the same property as example (9) that none of the arguments by itself can support the standpoint independently, but where the order of the arguments is nonetheless not arbitrary. This is illustrated by the examples (11a) and (11b):

- (11a) \*Mary can speak quite a few languages: she speaks French, Chinese and even English.  
 (11b) Mary can speak quite a few languages: she speaks English, French and even Chinese.

In a context where Mary is a native speaker of English, (11a) seems to be less acceptable than (11b). According to Anscombe and Ducrot, examples such as these make it clear that the primary function of an expression like *quite a few* is not to indicate a certain quantity, but rather to give an evaluation. Being able to speak Chinese is presented as a stronger argument for a positive evaluation of Mary's talent for learning languages than the other arguments that are advanced.

According to Anscombe and Ducrot (1983: 63), the relations between the arguments in contexts in which *even* is used may vary from complete interdependence (as in example (9)) to something between interdependence and independence (as in example (11b)). Even if the argument that is introduced by *even* is presented as the strongest argument for the standpoint, it can still be the case that the arguer considers the combination of the arguments as stronger than the strongest argument seen in isolation.

<sup>7</sup> This is, in fact, Fauconnier's (1976: 262) argument for attributing a different effect to the presence of 'even' in the final conjunct in such cases: the effect is then not to indicate that the final conjunct is improbable to the highest degree, but 'to underline the increasing improbability of each proposition, given the presentation of the preceding one'.

Apart from the feature that *even* either introduces the strongest argument, or refers to the arguments as a whole, Anscombe and Ducrot also mention the feature that the proposition in which *even* is introduced and the propositions preceding this proposition, should be located on one and the same scale. How one can establish what type of scale this should be they do not discuss in any detail. They only indicate that the standpoint supported by these arguments is an important factor. This can be shown by comparing the examples (12a) and (12b):

- (12a) Christmas was awful this year: my parents came to visit and even aunt Irma came.
- (12b) Christmas was wonderful this year: my parents came to visit and even aunt Irma came.

In (12a), the dimension involved is one of awfulness, and aunt Irma's visiting is considered to be more awful than the visiting of the parents. In (12b) the dimension involved is one of wonderfulness, and aunt Irma's visit is presented as a stronger argument for the success of the occasion than the visit of the parents.

In my opinion, there is still another factor that influences the determination of the scalar dimension at issue. This factor consists of the arguments themselves. My point can be illustrated with the help of the examples (13a) and (13b):

- (13a) My cat has barely eaten anything for two days, and today not even anything, so it must be ill.
- (13b) My cat hasn't eaten anything for two days, and today it hasn't even drunk anything, so it must be ill.

In example (13a), the amount of food is presented as an indication of illness, and eating nothing is considered to be a stronger argument for the cat's being ill than eating barely anything. In (13b), the general consumption of the cat is under consideration, and not drinking is taken to be a more reliable sign of illness than not eating.

## 5. Conclusion

I would now like to return to the issue of whether the operator *even* should be considered as an indicator of independent arguments or as an indicator of interdependent arguments. In my opinion, if the different semantic properties of *even* are taken into consideration, it becomes apparent that *even* can function as an indicator of interdependent or – in the pragma-dialectical terminology – of coordinatively compound arguments.

I have shown that there are two ways in which *even* can be used. First, it can be used to indicate that the sentence as a whole is a stronger argument for the conclusion than the sentence minus the conjunct containing *even*. In that case, it is clear that the arguments should be taken together, and are thus interdependent: the combination of arguments is stronger than any of the arguments considered in isolation, or any other combination of the arguments.

Second, *even* can be used to indicate that a particular argument constitutes the strongest evidence for the conclusion. In theory, it could be the case that the argument concerned is so strong that it could, by itself, be a sufficient defence for the standpoint. By using *even*, however, the arguer indicates that he has more arguments that are situated on the same scale. The final argument may tip the scale in favour of the standpoint, but the other arguments still play a reinforcing role. Unlike in the case of multiple argumentation, the arguments are not of a different order or type. Therefore, I think that in that case, analysing the arguments as interdependent is also to be preferred.

*Even* can be an indicator of *cumulative* argumentation: then each of the arguments lends some support to the conclusion by itself, but only the combination of arguments can be intended by the arguer as a sufficient defence of the conclusion.

*Even* can also be used as an indicator of *complementary* argumentation, as in the following example given by Kay:

- (14) He worked hard, and the boss wasn't even there.

The implicit conclusion that he deserves praise, is supported by two ar-

guments. The argument introduced by *even* can be seen as an attempt to counter the objection that he only worked hard because his boss was around.

I hope to have shown that by combining the semantical analyses of linguists such as Ducrot and Anscombe and Kay with the theoretically motivated distinctions of the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, a more systematic explanation of the function of specific indicators of argumentation and argumentation structure can be given. *Anyway* does indeed seem to be particularly suited to function as an indicator of multiple argumentation, whereas *even* should rather be seen as an indicator of coordinatively compound argumentation.

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