



4

Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions of Parent–Child Argumentation

This chapter examines the types of arguments used most often by parents and children and the different types of conclusions of their argumentative discussions. The conceptual tool adopted for the analysis is based on the integration of the pragma-dialectical ideal model of a critical discussion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004) with the Argumentum Model of Topics (Rigotti & Greco Morasso, 2019). The integration of these two tools of analysis permits to reconstruct the inferential configuration of the arguments used by parents and children and to identify the types of conclusions of their argumentative discussions. Exemplary argumentative sequences that bring to light the results obtained through the qualitative analysis of a larger corpus of argumentative discussions between parents and children are presented and discussed.

AQ1



18 4.1 Types of Arguments Used by Parents

19 The findings of the analyses show that the types of arguments most
20 often used by parents in argumentative discussions with their children
21 can be ascribed to four categories: quality and quantity, appeal to con-
22 sistency, authority, and analogy. In the following sections, we will look
23 at each of them in detail.

24 4.1.1 Quality and Quantity

25 A great many of the arguments used by parents in argumentative dis-
26 cussions with their children refer to the concepts of quality (positive or
27 negative) and quantity (too much or too little). These arguments were fre-
28 quently used by parents when the discussion they engaged in with their
29 children was related to food. The argument of quality was often—but
30 not exclusively—used by parents to convince their children that the food
31 was good and, therefore, deserved to be eaten. The argument of quantity
32 was used by parents with the same scope of when they used arguments
33 of quality. Typically—but not exclusively—the parents used arguments of
34 quantity to convince their children to eat “at least a little more” food. It is
35 noteworthy to observe that when parents used arguments of quality and
36 arguments of quantity, they often adapted their language to the child’s
37 level of understanding. For example, if the parents’ purpose was to feed
38 their child, the food was described as “very good” or “nutritious,” and its
39 quantity is “too little.” On the contrary, if the parents’ purpose was not to
40 feed the child further, in terms of quality the food was described as “salty”
41 or “not good,” and in quantitative terms as “it is quite enough” or “it is
42 too much.” In the following dialogue between a mother and her 5-year-
43 old daughter, Adriana, we can see how the mother used an argument of
44 quality to convince her daughter to eat the salad:

45 **Excerpt 4.1**

46 Italian family III. Dinner 3. Family members: father (DAD, 37 years),
47 mother (MOM, 37 years), Samuele (SAM, 7 years and 11 months), and
48 Adriana (ADR, 5 years and 4 months). All family members are eating,



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

67

49 seated at the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table, MOM
50 and SAM sit on the right-hand side of DAD, while ADR sits on their
51 opposite side.

1. *MOM: Adriana, devi mangiare l'insalata.
Adriana, you must eat the salad.
2. *ADR: no:: non mi piace ((l'insalata))
no:: I do not like ((the salad))
3. *MOM: Adriana, devi mangiare l'insalata perché è nutriente.
Adriana, you must eat the salad because it is nutritious.
4. *ADR: mhm::
mhm::
%act: ADR inizia a mangiare l'insalata ma sembra controvoglia
ADR starts eating the salad but seems unwilling

52

53 In this dialogue, there is a difference of opinion between the mother
54 and her daughter, Adriana. The sequence starts when the mother tells the
55 child, Adriana, that she must eat the salad (line 1). Adriana, in line 2, dis-
56 agrees with her mother (“no:: I do not like ((the salad))”). In argumenta-
57 tive terms, this phase of the discussion represents the confrontation stage,
58 since that the mother and Adriana have two different standpoints: on the
59 one hand, the mother wants Adriana to eat the salad, while, on the con-
60 trary, Adriana does not want to eat it. At this point, the mother accepts
61 to assume the burden of proof, i.e., to defend her standpoint by putting
62 forward at least one argument in its support. The argument advanced
63 by the mother in line 3 (“Adriana, you must eat the salad because it is
64 nutritious”) is based on the quality of salad, and it aims at emphasizing
65 the positive health properties of this food. Within the framework of the
66 ideal model of a critical discussion, this phase of the discussion represents
67 the argumentation stage. Although Adriana appears to be far from being
68 enthusiastic to eat the nutritious salad, the argument of quality used
69 by the mother succeeds in convincing the child, Adriana, to eat it. The
70 child clearly does not like the salad, in fact, she starts eating it unwill-
71 ingly. However, the salad has a very positive quality, i.e., it is nutritious,
72 and therefore it is worth to eat it. In argumentative terms, the non-verbal
73 act by Adriana represents the concluding stage of the argumentative dis-
74 cussion. The analytical overview of the argumentative discussion between
75 the child, Adriana, and her mother is summarized below:



68 A. Bova

<i>Issue</i>		Should Adriana eat the salad?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(ADR)	No, I do not like it
	(MOM)	Yes, you must
<i>Argument</i>	(MOM)	The salad is nutritious

76
77 In this dialogue, we have already seen that the mother emphasizes the
78 health properties of salad to convince her daughter that she should eat
79 it. The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument
80 of quality advanced by the mother (Fig. 4.1), using the AMT, will allow
81 us to identify the reasoning that underlies it.

82 Specified on the right-hand side of the diagram is the inferential prin-
83 ciple, i.e., the maxim, on which the mother’s argumentation is based:
84 “If action X leads to a positive outcome for x, then action X should be
85 done by x.” This maxim is engendered from the locus from final cause.
86 For this maxim to generate the final conclusion, which coincides with
87 the standpoint to be supported, the following minor premise is needed:
88 “Eating salad has a positive outcome for Adriana.” This leads to the
89 conclusion that “Adriana should eat salad.” The fact that “Eating salad
90 has a positive outcome for Adriana” needs further justifications; unlike
91 the maxim, this is not an inferential rule but a factual statement that
92 must be backed by contextual knowledge. In this regard, the AMT
93 representation allows consideration of the contextual premises that
94 are implicitly or explicitly used in argumentation. This may be found
95 on the left hand of the diagram, where the second line of reasoning is
96 developed to support the former one. This is the reason why the pre-
97 liminary conclusion on the left side becomes the minor premise on the
98 right side. In this way, the crossing of contextual and formal premises
99 that is characteristic of argumentation is accounted for in the AMT.
100 Looking at the left-hand side of the diagram, a second line of reasoning
101 is developed to support the former one. In this argument, the endoxon
102 can be described as follows: “Eating nutritious food leads to positive
103 outcomes for Adriana.” The datum, constituting the minor premise
104 of the endoxical syllogism, is that the “Salad is a nutritious food.” The
105 datum, combined with the endoxon, produces the preliminary conclu-
106 sion that “Eating salad has a positive outcome for Adriana.”



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

69

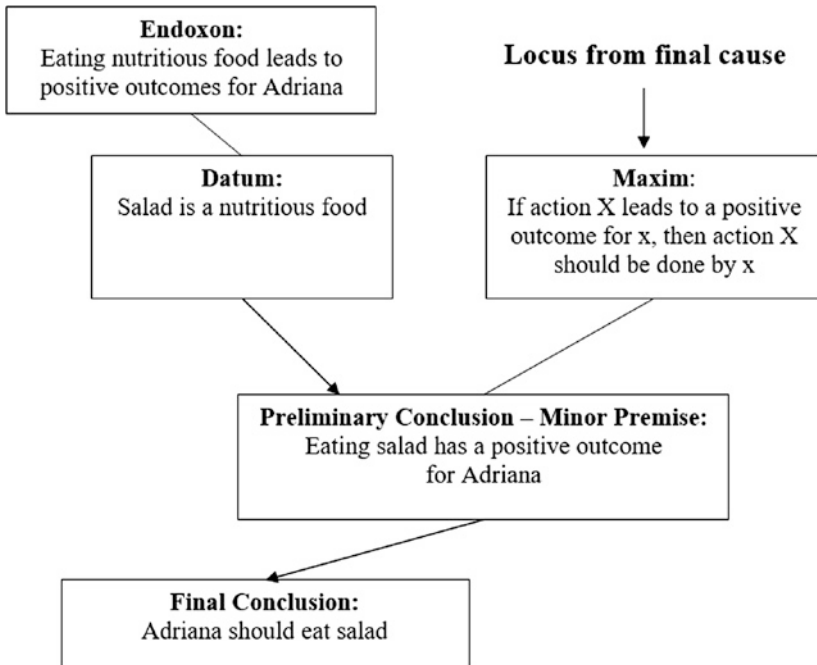


Fig. 4.1 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the mother: “The salad is nutritious”

107 The arguments of quality and the arguments of quantity were also
108 used together within the same discussion by parents, as in the following
109 dialogue between a 5-year-old child, Gabriele, and his father:

110 Excerpt 4.2

111 Italian family I. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 38 years),
112 mother (MOM, 38 years), Silverio (SIL, 8 years), and Gabriele (GAB,
113 5 years and 4 months). All family members are eating, seated at the
114 meal table, DAD sits at the head of the meal table. MOM and GAB sit
115 on the right-hand side of DAD, while SIL sits on their opposite side.



70 A. Bova

- %sit: GAB sta bevendo una bibita gassata
GAB is drinking a carbonate soft drink
1. *DAD: basta, Gabriele!
that's enough, Gabriele!
- %act: GAB smette di bere
GAB stops drinking
- *DAD: adesso ti do il riso.
now I will give you some rice.
2. *GAB: no, non voglio altro: ((sedendosi sulla sedia))
no, I do not want anything else: ((sitting on the chair))
3. *DAD: il riso col sugo di pomodoro
the rice with tomato sauce
- %pau: 1.0. sec
4. *GAB: per favore, niente. [!:facendo cenni di negazione col capo]
please, no more. [!: shaking his head in refusal]
5. *DAD: no:: non hai mangiato abbastanza.
no:: you have not eaten enough.
6. *GAB: no::
no:::
- %act: GAB si alza e corre in un'altra stanza
GAB gets up and runs into another room

116

117 This sequence starts when the father, in line 1, tells his son, Gabriele,
118 that he must stop drinking a carbonate soft drink and that he must start
119 eating some rice. In line 2, a difference of opinion between Gabriele
120 and his father arises because Gabriele replies to his father that he does
121 not want to eat anything else. Within the framework of the ideal model
122 of a critical discussion, this phase of the discussion represents the con-
123 frontation stage, since Gabriele and his father have two different stand-
124 points. In line 3, the father puts forward an argument based on the
125 quality of food: (*it is*) *the rice with tomato sauce*. In this case, we can sup-
126 pose that, according to the father, the fact that the tomato sauce is an
127 appetizing ingredient, and it is, therefore, a positive quality of this dish,
128 is an *endoxon*, i.e., a premise shared by him and his son. However, as we
129 can observe from Gabriele's answer in line 4, the argument of quality
130 advanced by the father is not effective to convince the child to accept
131 the father's standpoint and change his opinion. In line 5, the father puts
132 forward one more argument to convince his son, Gabriele, to eat the
133 rice with tomato sauce. This second argument put forward by the father
134 does not refer to the quality of the food but, instead, to its quantity.



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ... 71

135 The father tells his child that he must eat a little more rice because, until
136 that moment, he has not eaten enough. In argumentative terms, this
137 phase of the discussion represents the argumentation stage. Despite his
138 father's argumentative effort, Gabriele still disagrees with his father and,
139 in line 6, says to his father that does not want to eat the rice ("no"). The
140 concluding stage of this argumentative discussion involves the non-ver-
141 bal act of the child getting up from the meal table and running into
142 another room. We can summarize the reconstruction of the argumen-
143 tative discussion between the child, Gabriele, and his father as follows:

<i>Issue</i>		Should Gabriele eat the rice with the tomato sauce?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(GAB)	No, I do not want to
	(DAD)	Yes, you should
<i>Argument</i>	(DAD)	You have not eaten enough

145 In this dialogue, we have seen that the father tells his child, Gabriele,
146 that he must eat a little more rice because, until that moment, he has
147 not eaten enough. Figure 4.2 shows the reconstruction of the reasoning
148 behind the argument advanced by the father.

149 In this example, it is interesting to notice that the inferential princi-
150 ple is engendered from the same locus of the previous example, i.e.,
151 the locus from final cause. However, in this case, the maxim is differ-
152 ent: "If completing the action X leads to a positive outcome for x, then
153 action X should be completed by x." The minor premise of the topical
154 syllogism, "Gabriele has not yet completed eating an adequate amount
155 of food," leads to the final conclusion that "Gabriele should complete
156 eating the rice." Looking at the left-hand side of the diagram, i.e., the
157 material component, the endoxon can be described as follows: "Only if
158 the rice is eaten, the amount of food is adequate." The datum, "Gabriele
159 has not yet eaten the rice," combined with the endoxon, produces the
160 preliminary conclusion that "Gabriele has not yet completed eating an
161 adequate amount of food."

162 The argument used by the father fails in convincing the child to eat
163 the rice. Looking at the reconstruction of the inferential configuration
164 of the arguments of quantity used by the father, we can notice that the
165 endoxon on which this argument is based is not a real endoxon. The child

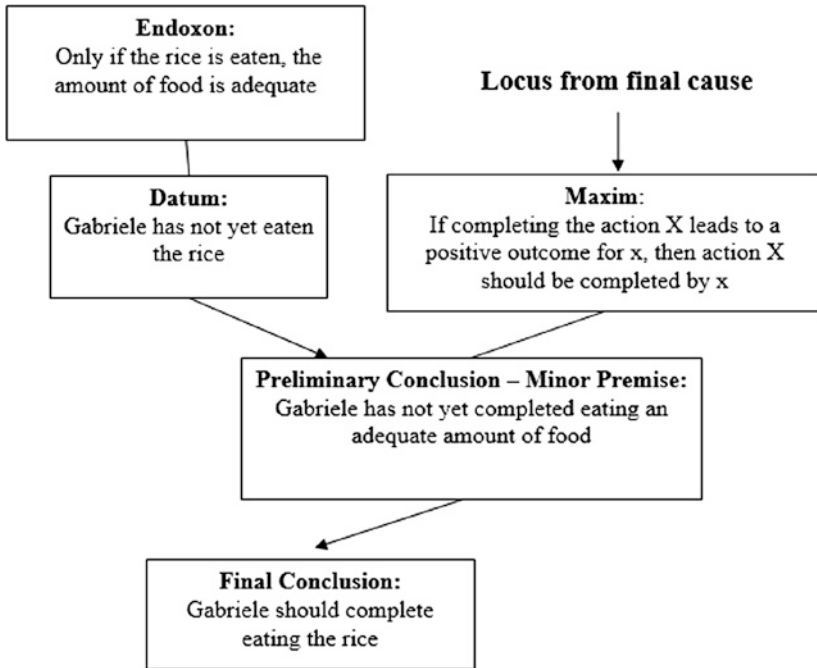


Fig. 4.2 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the father: “You have not eaten enough”

166 is not putting into doubt the datum (Gabriele has not yet eaten the rice),
167 but the fact that only if the rice is eaten, the amount of food is adequate,
168 i.e., the endoxon. Therefore, the father’s argument is based on a premise
169 which is not shared with his child.

170 The arguments from quality and quantity were not only used by par-
171 ents to convince their children to eat, but also to convince their chil-
172 dren *not* to eat, as in the following dialogue between a 6-year-old child,
173 Francesco, and his father:

174 Excerpt 4.3

175 Swiss family V. Dinner 3. Family members: father (DAD, 37 years),
176 mother (MOM, 37 years), Francesco (FRA, 6 years and 3 months), and
177 Michele (MIC, 4 years and 2 months). All family members are eating,



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ... 73

178 seated at the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table. MOM
179 and MIC sit on the right-hand side of DAD, while FRA sits on their
180 opposite side.

1. *DAD: basta mangiare fagiolini, Francesco
 stop eating the French beans, Francesco
2. *FRA: no:: voglio ancora!
 no:: I want more!
3. *DAD: no! ne hai mangiato già abbastanza ((fagiolini))
 no! you have already eaten enough ((French beans))
4. *FRA: ok:: ok:: [: sorridente]
 ok:: ok:: [: smiling]

181

182 In this dialogue, there is a difference of opinion between the father
183 and his son, Francesco, since the father does not want that Francesco
184 eats more French beans (line 1). The child, instead, wants to continue
185 to eat more (line 2: “no:: I want more!”). In line 3, the father assumes
186 the burden of proof and puts forward an argument of quantity to
187 convince his son to stop eating more French beans: *you have already*
188 *eaten enough*. As we can observe from Francesco answer, in line 4,
189 the argument advanced by his father is effective in convincing him to
190 change his opinion. In fact, in line with our dialectical perspective of
191 argumentation, one argument, or a series of arguments, put forth by A
192 is considered as ‘effective’ when B accepts the A’s standpoint and retracts
193 its own standpoint. Francesco, in this case, decides to stop eating the
194 French beans. The analytical overview of the argumentative discussion
195 between the child, Francesco, and his father is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Should Francesco eat more French beans?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(FRA)	Yes, I want more
	(DAD)	No, you cannot
<i>Argument</i>	(DAD)	You have already eaten enough French beans

196

197 Other examples of arguments of quality and arguments of quan-
198 tity used by parents in argumentative discussions with their children
199 include: “*No, you cannot eat this ((cheese)), it is too salty*”, “*They are not*
200 *that many, and are also tasty ((chickpeas))*”, “*You must eat a little of meat,*
201 *at least a little bit.*”

202 **4.1.2 Appeal to Consistency**

203 The second type of argument most often used by parents in argumen-
204 tative discussions with their children refers to the consistency with past
205 behaviors. This type of argument can be described through the follow-
206 ing question: “If you have explicitly or implicitly affirmed it in the past,
207 why do not you maintain it now?”. The next dialogue between a 7-year-
208 old child, Paolo, and his mother is a clear illustration of the use of this
209 type of argument:

210 **Excerpt 4.4**

211 Swiss family II. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 38 years),
212 mother (MOM, 36 years), Paolo (PAO, 7 years), Laura (LAU, 4 years
213 and 5 months), and Elisa (ELI, 3 years and 2 months). All family mem-
214 bers are seated at the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table,
215 MOM and PAO sit on the left-hand side of DAD. LAU sits on the
216 opposite side, while ELI is seated on the DAD’s knees.

%sit: MOM, PAO e LAU stanno mangiando, seduti a tavola. ELI sta
giocando con un giocattolo seduta sulle ginocchia di DAD
*MOM, PAO, and LAU are eating, seated at the meal table. ELI is
playing with a toy seated on DAD’s knees*

1. *MOM: Paolo, ieri sei stato bravissimo
Paolo, you had been very good yesterday
2. *PAO: perché?
why?
3. *MOM: perché?
why?
- *MOM: zia Daniela mi ha detto che ieri sei stato bravissimo
 aunt Daniela told me that you were very good yesterday
- *MOM: hai fatto tutti i compiti ((di scuola))
you did all the ((school)) homework
- *MOM: quindi domani torni da zia Daniela a fare i compiti, va bene?
*so tomorrow you are going back to aunt Daniela’s to do your
homework, ok?*
4. *PAO: no:: non voglio
no:: I do not want to
5. *MOM: andiamo, Paolo
come on, Paolo
- *MOM: ma ieri sei stato lì tutto il pomeriggio



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

75

- *MOM: *but yesterday you were there all afternoon
e oggi hai detto che ti sei divertito tanto!
and today you said that you had so much fun!*
6. *PAO: *mhm:: ((PAO ha un'espressione perplessa))
mhm:: ((PAO has a puzzled expression))*
7. *MOM: *ok, allora domani ti accompagno da zia Daniela
ok, so tomorrow I will take you to aunt Daniela*
- %act: *PAO annuiscce mostrando così di essere d'accordo con MOM
PAO nods to say that he agrees with MOM*

219

220 The dinner is started from about 15 minutes, and all family mem-
221 bers are eating the main course. In this moment of the conversation,
222 the parents' focus is not on food: they are talking about the behavior
223 of one of their children. The excerpt starts when the mother, in line 1,
224 sends a compliment to her 7-year-old son, Paolo: "Paolo, you had been
225 very good yesterday." By these words, the mother shows her intention
226 to start a conversation with her son. However, Paolo appears puzzled,
227 because he does not know the reason why, according to her mother, yes-
228 terday he was *very good* (line 2). In line 3, the mother unveils the rea-
229 son on which her compliment to his son is based: she says that aunt
230 Daniela told her that yesterday he was very good because he did all the
231 school homework. At this point of the sequence, the mother introduces
232 a sentence that reveals the logical consequence of the child's behavior:
233 she wants Paolo to go again at Daniela's home since the day before he
234 was very good working on his homework. The reasoning used by the
235 mother to justify the fact that Paolo must go again to Daniela's house is
236 based on the logic form "as X, so Y" (given the consistency of the first
237 element, the second element is then justified). The child, Paolo, in line
238 4, disagrees with the mother's proposal ("no:: I do not want to"), dis-
239 approving the mother's logic and expressing his personal feeling. Here,
240 an interesting strategy is followed by the mother, as she puts forward,
241 in line 5, an argument referring to the consistency with past behaviors:
242 "but yesterday you were there the entire afternoon, and today you said
243 that you had so much fun!" By referring to an action Paolo did in the
244 past ("yesterday you were there the entire afternoon") and emphasiz-
245 ing how good that event was for him ("today you said that you had so
246 much fun!"), the mother tries to show to Paolo that his present behavior



76 A. Bova

247 should be consistent with the behavior he had in the past. In this case,
248 the argument advanced by the mother appears to be effective in con-
249 vincing her son to change his opinion, or, at least, to accept the moth-
250 er's proposal because Paolo nods to his mother so to say that he agrees
251 with her.

252 In sustaining her argumentative reasoning, in line 5, the mother used
253 the marker “but.” Probably, this choice is because she wants to under-
254 line the contradiction between the previous behavior of his son (the
255 time spent at the aunt's home) and his non-consistent reaction (he does
256 not want to go again) to the mother's proposal. The effect of the marker
257 “but” is also reinforced through the conjunction “and” that introduces
258 the fact that Paolo said that he had fun with aunt Daniela. Finally, in
259 the concluding stage of the sequence, the mother makes explicit the
260 logic of her reasoning process, by saying “so tomorrow I will take you
261 to aunt Daniela” (line 7), as consequence of the argument used since the
262 beginning, in line 3. The analytical overview of the argumentative dis-
263 cussion between the child, Paolo, and his mother is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Should Paolo going back to aunt Daniela's to do his homework?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(PAO)	No, I do not want to
	(MOM)	Yes, you should
<i>Argument</i>	(MOM)	(Yesterday you were there all afternoon) Today you said that you had so much fun

264

265 In this sequence, I want to focus on the appeal to consistency argu-
266 ment used by the mother in the argumentative discussion with her son,
267 Paolo, in line 5: “*Today you said that you had so much fun.*” By referring
268 to an action which Paolo did in the past and emphasizing how good
269 that event was for him (*so much fun*), the mother tries to convince her
270 young son to be consistent with the same behavior he had in the past
271 now in the present. The reconstruction of the inferential configuration
272 of this argument (Fig. 4.3) permits us to explain this point more clearly.

273 The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the appeal to
274 consistency argument used by the mother with her son, Paolo, shows
275 that the maxim on which this argument is based is one of the maxims
276 generated from the locus from implication: “What has been explicitly



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

77

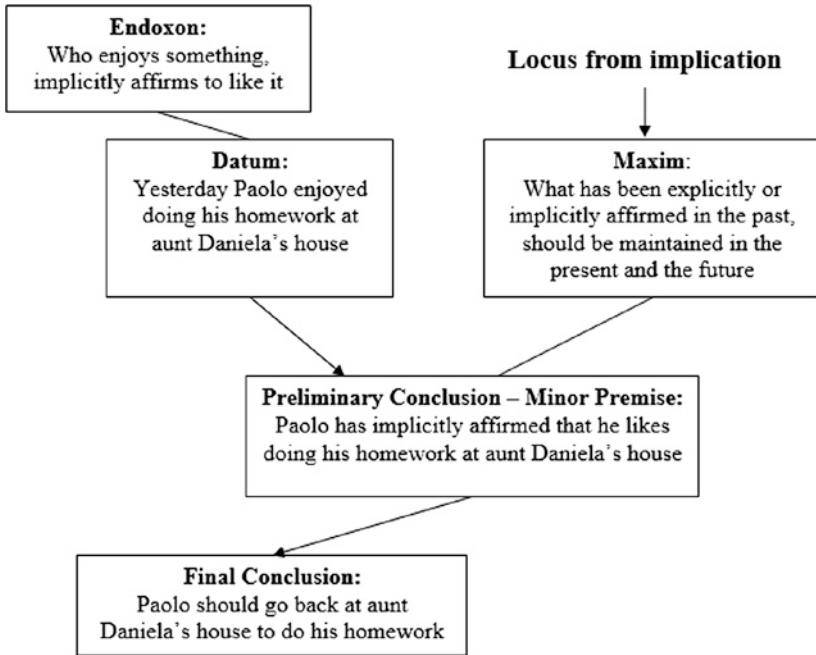


Fig. 4.3 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the mother: “Today you said that you had so much fun”

277 or implicitly affirmed in the past, should be maintained in the present
278 and the future.” The minor premise of the topical syllogism, “Paolo has
279 implicitly affirmed that he likes doing his homework at aunt Daniela’s
280 house,” combined with the maxim, produce the final conclusion that
281 “Paolo should go back at aunt Daniela’s house to do his homework.”
282 Moving to the material component of the AMT-based reconstruction,
283 we can see how the endoxon shared by Clara and her mother can be
284 described as follows: “Who enjoys something, implicitly affirms to like
285 it.” The datum, “Yesterday Paolo enjoyed doing his homework at aunt
286 Daniela’s house,” combined with this endoxon, produce the preliminary
287 conclusion that “Paolo has implicitly affirmed that he likes doing his
288 homework at aunt Daniela’s house.”

**78 A. Bova**

289 In the corpus, parents used the appeal to consistency argument also
290 in argumentative discussions with their youngest children, as in the fol-
291 lowing dialogue between a 3-year-old child, Clara, and her mother:

Excerpt 4.5

292 Italian family II. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 34 years),
293 mother (MOM, 33 years), Giorgia (GIO, 6 years and 6 months), and
294 Clara (CLA, 3 years and 10 months). All family members are seated at
295 the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table, MOM and GIO
296 sit on the right-hand side of DAD. CLA sits on the opposite side.
297

1. *MOM: bimbe, la cena è pronta
girls, dinner is ready
→ *MOM: Clara, vuoi del riso?
Clara, do you want some rice?
→ *MOM: risottino giallo con le polpette?
yellow risotto with meatballs?
2. *CLA: no:: non lo voglio il risotto.
no:: I do not want the risotto.
3. *MOM: c'è lo zafferano!
it is made with saffron!
4. *CLA: e che cos'è?
and what is that?
5. *DAD: è una polvere gialla
it is a yellow powder
6. *MOM: quand'eri piccola ti piaceva
when you were a baby you used to like it
→ *MOM: ti piaceva tantissimo!
you used to like it very much!
%act: DAD avvicina a CLA una forchettata di riso
DAD moves towards CLA with a fork full of rice
7. *DAD: assaggia
try it
8. *CLA: brucia!
it is hot!
→ *CLA: ma è buono
but it is good
%pau: 2.0. sec
%act: CLA continua a mangiare il risotto guardando la televisione
CLA continues eating the rice while watching television



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

79

299 In this dialogue, the child, Clara, and her mother have a difference of
300 opinion: the mother, in line 1, wants to give Clara some risotto (“Clara,
301 do you want some rice?”), but Clara, in line 2, clearly disagrees with her
302 mother and does not want to eat it (“no:: I do not want the risotto”). At
303 this point, in line 1 and line 3, the mother puts forward two arguments
304 of quality to convince her daughter to eat the risotto: *yellow rice with*
305 *meatballs?* (line 1), and *it is made with saffron!* (line 3). In this sequence
306 our focus is however on the argument used by the mother in line 6:
307 *when you were a baby, you used to like it.* This intervention permits the
308 mother to make clear to her daughter that what she is going to eat is
309 not something unknown, a dish to be wary of and to avoid, but rather
310 a dish she has already eaten in the past and used to like very much.
311 By referring to an action which Clara did in the past and emphasizing
312 how good that event was for her (“you used to like it very much”), the
313 mother asks her daughter to behave in a rationale way, i.e., to be con-
314 sistent with the same behavior she had in the past now in the present.
315 The reconstruction of the argumentative discussion between the child,
316 Clara, and her mother is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Should Clara eat more yellow rice with meatballs?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(CLA)	No, I do not want more risotto
	(MOM)	Yes, you should
<i>Argument</i>	(MOM)	a) Yellow risotto with meatballs?
		b) It is made with saffron
		c) When you were a baby you used to like it

317

318 I will now focus on the reconstruction of the reasoning behind the
319 argument advanced by the mother, in line 6: “*When you were a baby you*
320 *used to like it.*” The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of this
321 argument (Fig. 4.4) permits us to make this point more clearly.

322 The maxim on which this argument is based is one of the maxims
323 generated from the locus from implication: “What has been explic-
324 itly or implicitly affirmed, should be maintained.” The minor premise
325 of the topical syllogism, “Clara has implicitly affirmed that she likes
326 the risotto with saffron,” combined with the maxim produce the final
327 conclusion that “Clara likes the risotto with saffron.” In this case, the

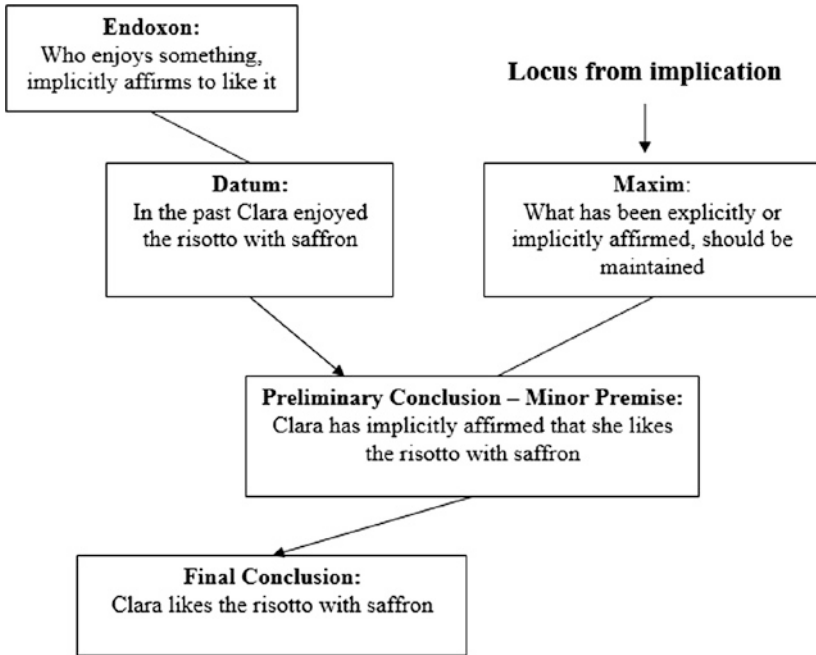


Fig. 4.4 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the mother: “When you were a baby you used to like it”

328 endoxon shared by Clara and her mother can be described as follows:
329 “Who enjoys something, implicitly affirms to like it.” The datum, “In
330 the past Clara enjoyed the risotto with saffron,” constituting the minor
331 premise of the endoxical syllogism, combined with the endoxon, pro-
332 duce the preliminary conclusion that “Clara has implicitly affirmed that
333 she likes the risotto with saffron.” This argument permits the mother
334 to make clear to her daughter that what she is going to eat is not some-
335 thing unknown, a dish to be wary of and to avoid, but rather a dish
336 she has already eaten in the past and used to like very much. Referring
337 to an action which Clara did in the past and emphasizing how good
338 that event was for her (*you used to like it very much*), the mother tries to
339 convince her young daughter to be consistent with the same behavior
340 she had in the past now in the present.



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ... 81

341 Another type of appeal for consistency by parents refers not to what the
342 child explicitly or implicitly affirmed in the past, but to what the child did
343 *not* affirm in the past. The next short dialogue between a father and his
344 8-year-old son, Marco, is a clear example of the use of this type of argument:

345 **Excerpt 4.6**

346 Italian family V. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 42 years),
347 mother (MOM, 40 years), Marco (MAR, 8 years and 6 months), and
348 Leonardo (LEO, 5 years and 7 months). All family members are seated at
349 the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table, MOM and LEO sit
350 on the right-hand side of DAD, while MAR is seated on their opposite side.

1. *DAD: lo vuoi il limone?
do you want a lemon?
2. *MAR: no::
no::
3. *DAD: ma è buono
but it is tasty
4. *MAR: a me non piace.
I do not like it
5. *DAD: ma lo hai mai provato?
have you ever tried it?
6. *MAR: no, ma non mi piace
no, but I do not like it
7. *DAD: ma come fai a dire che non ti piace, se non lo hai mai provato?
*but how can you say that you do not like it if you have never
tried it?*
- *DAD: provalo almeno!
try it at least!
8. *MAR: no: no:
no: no:
9. *DAD: ah:: come vuoi.
ah:: do what you want

351

352 In this discussion, there is a difference of opinion between the father
353 and the child, Marco. The father wants Marco to eat the lemon, but
354 Marco does not want to eat it. The child affirms that he does not like the
355 lemon, and he appears sure of his opinion, even though he has never eaten
356 a lemon in the past. We can summarize the reconstruction of the argu-
357 mentative discussion between Marco and his father is summarized below:



82 A. Bova

<i>Issue</i>		Should Marco eat the lemon?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(MAR)	No, I do not want to
	(DAD)	Yes, you should try
<i>Argument</i>	(MAR)	I do not like it
	(DAD)	a) It is tasty b) How can you say that you do not like it if you've never tried it? (you do not know if you like it or not)

358

359 In this sequence, I want to focus on the argument advanced by the
360 father in line 7: “How can you say that you do not like it if you have
361 never tried it?”. The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of
362 this argument is illustrated in Fig. 4.5.

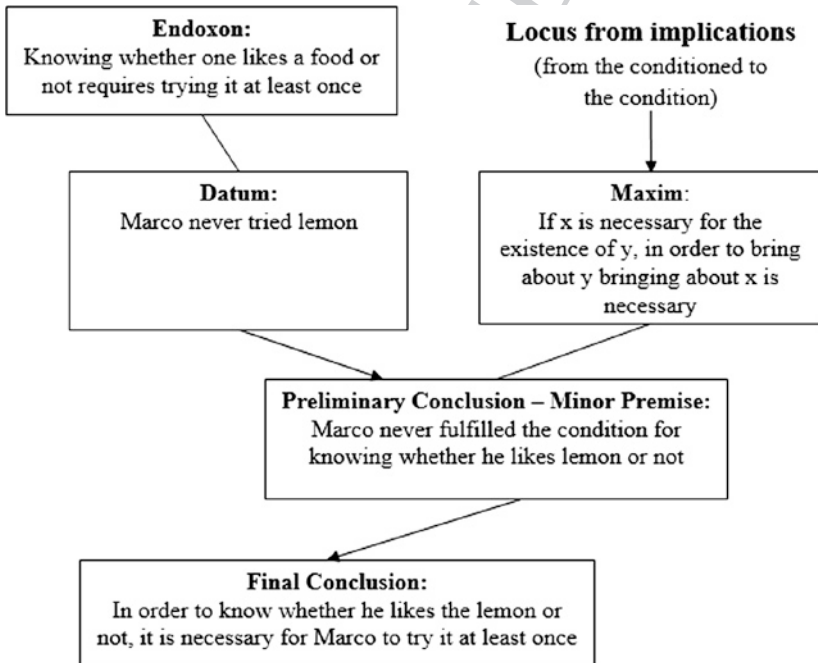


Fig. 4.5 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the father: “How can you say that you do not like it if you have never tried it?”



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ... 83

363 In this example, the maxim on which the father's argument is based
364 is the following: "If x is necessary for the existence of y, in order to
365 bring about y bringing about x is necessary." This is one of the maxims
366 engendered from the locus from implications in one of its subcatego-
367 ries, from the conditioned to the condition. The reasoning follows with
368 an inferential structure: "Marco never fulfilled the condition for know-
369 ing whether he likes lemon or not" (minor premise), which leads to
370 the following final conclusion: "In order to know whether he likes the
371 lemon or not, it is necessary for Marco to try it at least once". Looking
372 at the left-hand side of the diagram, the endoxon can be described as
373 follows: "Knowing whether one likes a food or not requires trying it at
374 least once." The datum, "Marco never tried lemon," combined with this
375 endoxon produces the preliminary conclusion that "Marco never ful-
376 filled the condition for knowing whether he likes lemon or not." What
377 emerges from the AMT's reconstruction of the father's argument is
378 that the father does not aim to highlight aspects of the child's behavior
379 that can be considered as wrong behaviors. Instead, he aims to teach
380 his son that before taking a stance he must be informed about what he
381 is going to judge. In this case, the argument put forward by the father
382 with Marco has not been effective in convincing the child to change his
383 opinion. We can try to explain the reasons why the child did not accept
384 to change his opinion by looking at the datum of the father's argument.
385 The datum, in fact, can be considered as wrong or, at least, as not com-
386 plete because even if the child had never eaten a lemon in the past, he
387 might have in some way some knowledge and expectations of this food
388 not tasting good.

389 It seems that by using the appeal to consistency argument, the par-
390 ents aim to teach children how our past actions are essential to justify
391 our present actions. This argument, in fact, shows parents desire to
392 teach their children not only proper behaviors related to food or table
393 manners but also the importance of defending their opinions through
394 reasonable and consistent arguments. Other examples of appeal to con-
395 sistency arguments used by parents in argumentative discussions with
396 their children were the following: "You ate many mushrooms last night,"
397 "You usually eat many tortellini."

398 **4.1.3 Argument from Authority**

399 The third type of argument most often used by parents in argumen-
400 tative discussions with their children is the *argument from authority*.
401 Following Walton's definition of *deontic* authority (1997, pp. 77–78),
402 with the argument from authority, I refer to a right to exercise command
403 or to influence, especially concerning rulings on what should be done
404 in certain types of situations, based on a recognized position of power.
405 Interestingly, in the corpus, when parents put forth arguments from
406 authority with their children, the authority always proves to be an adult.
407 In particular, in most cases, the parents referred to themselves as a source
408 of authority. Less frequently, the parents refer to a third party such as a
409 family friend, the grandfather or a teacher as a source of authority. The
410 following dialogue between a mother and her 5-year-old son, Filippo,
411 offers a clear illustration of the use of this type of argument:

412 **Excerpt 4.7**

413 Swiss family III. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 39 years),
414 mother (MOM, 34 years), Manuela (MAN, 7 years and 4 months),
415 Filippo (FIL, 5 years and 1 month), and Carlo (CAR, 3 years and
416 1 month). All family members are eating, seated at the meal table. DAD
417 sits at the head of the meal table. MOM and MAN sit on the left-hand
418 side of DAD, while FIL sits on their opposite side.

1. *MOM: Filippo, devi mangiare un poco di questo formaggio
Filippo, you must eat a little of this cheese
2. *FIL: no.
no.
3. *MOM: sì: perché solo il pane non è abbastanza
yes: because bread alone is not enough
4. *FIL: no, non voglio il formaggio
no, I do not want cheese
5. *MOM: questo è quello che ha comprato il Nonno però:: è delizioso!
this is the one Grandpa bought, though:: it is delicious!
6. *FIL: davvero?
really?
7. *MOM: sì, l'ha comprato il Nonno!
yes, Grandpa bought it!



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ... 85

8. *FIL: mhm:: ((sembra pensieroso))
mhm:: ((he seems thoughtful))
9. *MOM: è delizioso!
it is delicious!
- %act: MOM mette un pezzo di formaggio nel piatto di FIL
MOM puts a piece of cheese on FIL's plate

421

422 The dinner has been in progress for about 15 minutes. Frequently, in
423 the initial phase of the dinner, the parents focus their attention on feeding
424 the children. This sequence starts with the mother telling her son that he
425 needs to eat a little cheese along with his bread (line 1). The child, in line
426 2, disagrees with his mother: he does not want to eat the cheese (“no”). In
427 reconstructing this argumentative discussion, this phase of the discussion
428 between the mother and her son represents the confrontation stage because
429 in this phase of the discussion the mother’s standpoint (*Filippo must eat*
430 *a little cheese*) has been met by the child’s refusal. In line 3, the mother
431 advances an argument to convince the child, Filippo, to change his opin-
432 ion: “Because bread alone is not enough.” The child, in line 4, does not
433 provide a counter-argument to defend his opposition but he only reasserts
434 his original stance: “No, I do not want cheese.” In line 5, the mother puts
435 forward two further arguments to convince the child to change his opin-
436 ion: “This is the one Grandpa bought,” and “It is delicious.” These two
437 arguments, more than the first one, succeed in catching the child’s atten-
438 tion. To resolve the child’s doubts, the mother repeats once again these
439 two arguments in line 7 and line 9. The sequence that goes from line 3 to
440 line 9 represents the argumentation stage of the ideal model of a critical
441 discussion. The concluding stage concerns a non-verbal act—the mother
442 puts a piece of cheese on the child’s plate—which concludes the sequence.
443 The child goes on to eat the cheese willingly, showing that he accepted his
444 mother’s standpoint. The reconstruction of the argumentative discussion
445 between the child, Filippo, and his mother is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Does Filippo have to eat a little of the cheese?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(FIL)	I do not want the cheese
	(MOM)	Filippo must eat a little cheese
<i>Arguments</i>	(MOM)	a) Just bread is not enough
		b) It is delicious
		c) This is the cheese Grandpa bought

446

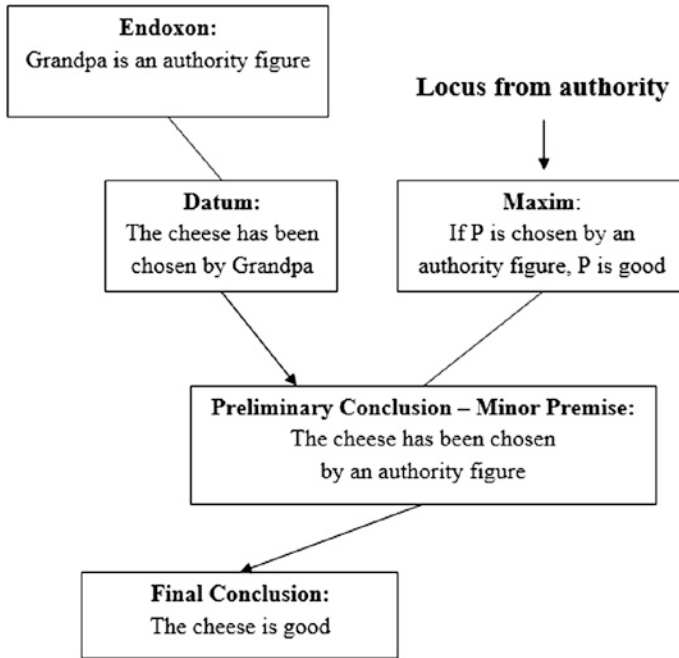


Fig. 4.6 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the mother: “This is the one Grandpa bought”

447 In the analysis of this argumentative discussion, I will now focus on
448 the reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument from
449 authority advanced by the mother in line 5: “This is the one Grandpa
450 bought.” The AMT’s reconstruction is illustrated in Fig. 4.6.

451 On the right-hand side of the diagram the maxim on which the
452 mother’s argument is based is specified: “If P is chosen by an author-
453 ity figure, P is good.” This is one of the maxims engendered from the
454 locus from authority. The minor premise of the topical syllogism is that
455 “The cheese has been chosen by an authority figure,” which combined
456 with the maxim brings to the following final conclusion: “The cheese
457 is good.” Looking at the endoxical dimension of the diagram, in this
458 argument the endoxon is as follows: “Grandpa is an authority figure.”
459 The datum of the endoxical dimension (The cheese has been chosen



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

87

460 by Grandpa) combined with the endoxon, produces the preliminary
461 conclusion that “The cheese has been chosen by an authority figure.”
462 The AMT-reconstruction of the argument from authority advanced by
463 the mother in line 5 brings to light that the mother refers to her son’s
464 grandfather as a source of authority to convince the child to accept
465 her standpoint. In this case, the child accepts the mother’s argumen-
466 tation and changes his opinion. Looking at the child reaction, in this
467 second example the endoxon on which of the argument from author-
468 ity advanced by the mother is based, i.e., the Grandfather is an author-
469 ity figure, is not put into doubt by the child. We cannot know if the
470 Grandfather is indeed an authority figure, but what matters here is that
471 in the child’s eyes his grandfather is an outstanding authority. This is
472 in line with what has been observed by Sarangapani (2003) and Bova
473 (2015), who highlighted sources that according to children possess
474 epistemic authority including teachers, grandparents, and older peers.
475 According to this author, any knowledge presented by these sources is
476 considered believable by children and rarely, if ever, questioned.

477 The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument
478 from authority advanced by the mother shows how parents can use the
479 argument from authority referring to another adult, i.e., other-oriented
480 argument, and not only to themselves, i.e., self-oriented argument.
481 When parents refer to another adult as a source of authority, a signif-
482 icant aspect concerns the level of knowledge that the child has of the
483 adult who represents the source of authority. In this regard, I observed
484 that the parents always refer to an adult who is well-known by and has
485 positive feelings towards the child such as a grandparent or a teacher.
486 For example, in the discussion between the child, Filippo, and his
487 mother, the latter based her argumentation on the nature of the grand-
488 father–grandson relationship and on the feelings that are at the ground
489 of this specific relationship, i.e., the Grandfather loves his Grandson and
490 vice versa. Therefore, it is an argument from authority based on the cer-
491 tainty of positive feelings, rather than on the fear of punishment.

492 The example described above allows moving to another significant
493 aspect I want to highlight in the discussion on the argument from
494 authority used by parents in argumentative discussions with their chil-
495 dren. I am referring to the importance of the specific nature of the



88 A. Bova

496 interpersonal relationship between parents and children. The following
497 dialogue between a mother and her 5-year-old son, Leonardo, will allow
498 making this point clear:

Excerpt 4.8

499 Italian family V. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 42 years),
500 mother (MOM, 40 years), Marco (MAR, 8 years and 6 months), and
501 Leonardo (5 years and 7 months). All family members are seated at the
502 meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table, MOM and MAR sit
503 on the right-hand side of DAD, while LEO is seated on their opposite
504 side.
505

1. *LEO: Mamma:: guarda!
Mom:: look!
→ *LEO: guarda cosa sto facendo con il limone
look what I am doing with the lemon
→ *LEO: sto cancellando
I am rubbing it out!
→ *LEO: sto cancellando questo colore
I am rubbing out the color
%sit: MOM prende dei limoni e si china di fronte a LEO di modo che
il suo viso
risulti all'altezza di quello di LEO
MOM takes the lemon and stoops down in front of LEO so that
her face is level with his
%sit: MOM posa alcuni limoni sul tavolo
MOM places the lemon on the meal table
2. *LEO: dai dammelo
give it to me
3. *MOM: eh?
eh?
4. *LEO: posso avere questo limone?
can I have this lemon?
5. *MOM: no:: no:: no:: no::
no:: no:: no:: no::
6. *LEO: perché no?
why not?
7. *MOM: perché no? perché Leonardo, Mamma ha bisogno dei limoni
why not? because Leonardo, Mom needs the lemons
8. *LEO: perché Mamma?



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

89

why Mom?

9. *MOM: perché, Leonardo, tuo papà vuole mangiare una buona insalata oggi [: con un tono di voce basso e dolce]
because, Leonardo, your Dad wants to eat a good salad today [: with a low and sweet tone of voice]
10. *LEO: ah:: va bene Mamma
ah:: ok Mom

508

509 This sequence starts when the child, Leonardo, in line 1, tells his
510 mother that he is erasing the color from a drawing by using a lemon. The
511 mother disagrees with this kind of use of the lemon made by Leonardo
512 and decides to take the lemon from him and put it on the meal table.
513 At this point, a difference of opinion arises between the child and his
514 mother. On the one hand, Leonardo, in line 2 and line 4, wants to have
515 one of the lemons, that are placed on the meal table, to play with (“give
516 it to me,” and “can I have this lemon?”). On the other hand, the mother,
517 in line 5, states that he cannot play with the lemon (“no, no, no, no”).
518 Within the framework of the ideal model of a critical discussion, this
519 phase of the discussion represents the confrontation stage. It becomes
520 clear that there is an issue (*Can the child have the lemon?*) that meets the
521 mother’s contradiction. The opening stage, in which the parties decide
522 to try and solve the difference of opinion and explore whether there are
523 premises to start a discussion is mostly implicit. Leonardo wants to play
524 with the lemon that is on the meal table, and, to do so, he asks for the
525 mother’s permission as he supposes that he needs his mother’s authoriza-
526 tion to play with the lemon during mealtime. At this point, Leonardo,
527 in line 6, asks his mother to explicit the reason on which such a prohi-
528 bition is based. The mother, in line 7, says to the child that she needs
529 the lemons, although not providing any justification for her need. As
530 we can observe from Leonardo’s answer, in line 8, the mother’s need is
531 not a sufficient reason to convince him to accept the prohibition and
532 to change his opinion (“why Mom?”). In line 9, the mother advances
533 another argument to convince the child to change his opinion; she says
534 to the child, with a low and sweet tone of voice, that she needs the lem-
535 ons because Dad wants to eat a good salad. According to the ideal model
536 of a critical discussion, from line 6 to line 9, the mother and the child



537 go through the argumentation stage. After listening to the second argu-
538 ment advanced by his mother, in line 10, Leonardo accepts to change his
539 opinion, and this behavior marks the concluding stage of this discussion.
540 The reconstruction of the argumentative discussion between the child,
541 Leonardo, and his mother is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Can the child have the lemons?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(LEO)	I want the lemons
	(MOM)	Leonardo cannot have the lemons
<i>Arguments</i>	(MOM)	a) I need the lemons
		b) Dad wants to eat a good salad today

542

543 In the analysis of this argumentative discussion, I will now focus on
544 the reconstruction of the inferential configuration of both arguments
545 used by the mother to convince the child, Leonardo, to change his
546 opinion. Figure 4.7 shows the representation based on the AMT of the
547 inferential configuration of the first argument advanced by the mother:
548 “Mom needs the lemons”.

549 On the right hand of the diagram, the maxim on which the argument
550 advanced by the mother is based is specified: “If a means admits alternative
551 uses, it is reasonable to reserve it for the use bringing to the most impor-
552 tant purpose.” This is one of the maxims of the locus from means to goals.
553 The minor premise of the topical syllogism is that “The mother intends to
554 use the lemons for a purpose that is more important than the purpose of
555 her child,” which combined with the maxim brings to the following final
556 conclusion: “The lemons are to be reserved for the mother’s need (the child
557 cannot have the lemons to play with).” In this argument the endoxon refers
558 to common knowledge about the hierarchy of needs within the family:
559 “The purpose of the mother is more important than the desire of her child.”
560 The datum, “The child wants the lemons to play with. The mother needs
561 the lemons for her purpose,” combined with the endoxon, produces the
562 conclusion that “The mother intends to use the lemons for a purpose that is
563 more important than the purpose of her child.”

564 The first argument used by the mother appears to be incomplete, or
565 at least open to different interpretations. She is saying that she needs
566 the lemons, but the reasons are not stated. She bases the strength of her
567 argument only on the authority she held as a mother, without providing

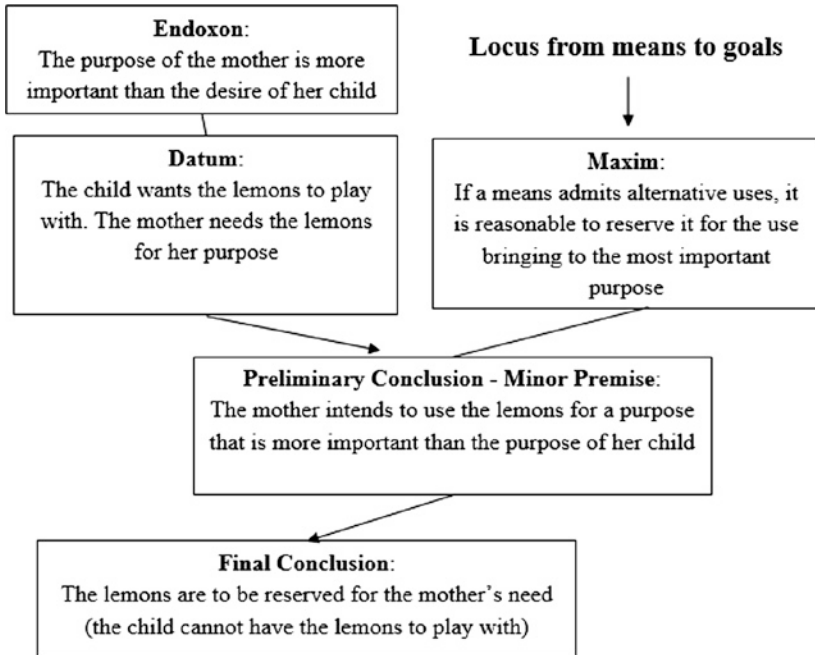


Fig. 4.7 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the mother: “Mom needs the lemons”

568 any justification for her needs though. In this case, as we can observe
569 from the child’s answer, in line 8 (“why Mom?”), the argument “Mom
570 needs the lemons” is not effective in convincing the child, Leonardo,
571 to accept the mother’s prohibition and change his opinion. By asking
572 “why” for a second time, Leonardo puts into doubt the endoxon
573 on which the first argument advanced by his mother is based. Now,
574 he wants to know the reason why the purpose of his mother is more
575 important than his desire to play with the lemons. Why? What is
576 behind Leonardo’s request?

577 Let us now focus on the reconstruction of the inferential configura-
578 tion of the second argument used by the mother to convince the
579 child, Leonardo, to change his opinion: “Dad wants to eat a good salad
580 today.” Figure 4.8 shows the reconstruction of the inferential configura-
581 tion of this argument based on the AMT.

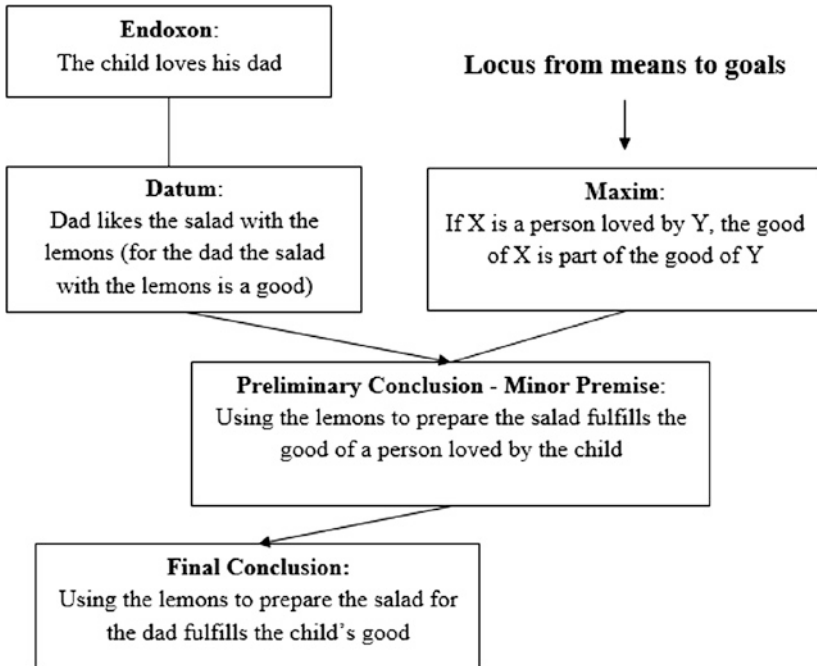


Fig. 4.8 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the mother: “Dad wants to eat a good salad today”

582 Like for the first argument advanced by the mother, the maxim on
583 which the second argument advanced by the mother is based is one of
584 the maxims of the locus from means to goals: “If X is a person loved
585 by Y, the good of X is part of the good of Y.” The minor premise of
586 the topical syllogism is that “Using the lemons to prepare the salad ful-
587 fills the good of a person loved by the child,” which combined with the
588 maxim brings to the following final conclusion: “Using the lemons to
589 prepare the salad for the Dad fulfills the child’s good.” For this second
590 argument, the endoxon is different from the endoxon of the first argu-
591 ment. Now, the endoxon refers to common knowledge about the feeling
592 that each child feels for his Dad: “The child loves his Dad.” The datum,
593 “Dad likes the salad with the lemons (for the Dad, the salad with the



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ... 93

594 lemons is good),” combined with this endoxon, produces the conclu-
595 sion that “Using the lemons to prepare the salad fulfills the good of a
596 person loved by the child.” If in answering the first argument, the child
597 had put into doubt the premise, i.e., the endoxon (“The purpose of the
598 mother is more important than the desire of her child”), in this second
599 case, the premise is fully shared between mother and child (“The child
600 loves his Dad”). Moreover, the mother does not base her argumenta-
601 tive strategy on the fear of the father’s power and authority. If that were
602 the case, she would have said something like: “Watch out, or I will tell
603 Dad.” rather, she uses with the child a low and sweet tone of voice to
604 emphasize the fact that she is not mad with him. The mother bases her
605 argumentation on the nature of the father–son relationship and on the
606 feelings that are at the ground of their relationships (“The child loves
607 his Dad”). It is an invocation to the parents’ authority based on the cer-
608 tainty of positive feelings, rather than on the fear of punishment. The
609 second argument is thus based on the authority of feelings (Bova &
610 Arcidiacono, 2013).

611 In this second argument, the mother spells out the reasons behind
612 the ban addressed to her son. She tells the child that she needs to use
613 the lemons to prepare a good salad for the Dad, or, in other words, to
614 fulfill a wish of his (beloved) Dad (“Dad likes the salad with the lem-
615 ons”). At this point, Leonardo, also not too unwillingly, accepts the
616 prohibition showing that not displeasing his father is, in his eyes, wor-
617 thier than playing with the lemons. The invocation of authority by
618 parents, defined as the *authority of feelings*, appears to be an effective
619 argumentative strategy when the following two conditions are met:
620 (1) the nature of the relationship between the person who represents
621 the authority (in our case, the parents) and the person to whom the
622 argument is addressed, that is, the child, is based on the certainty of
623 positive feelings, rather than on the fear of punishment. In this regard,
624 we are to consider the right emotion (admiration, fear, surprise, sor-
625 row, and so on) that moves the behavior of the child toward a certain
626 direction in that specific situation; (2) the reasons, which are at the base
627 of a prohibition, are not to be hidden from the child’s eyes, but are to
628 be known and shared by both parents and children. For example, the



629 argumentative discussion between the child, Leonardo, and his mother
630 shows how the child accepts the mother's ban only once he discovers
631 the underlying reason. Previously, when the mother did not clarify the
632 reasons for her ban, the child continued to demand to know why he
633 could not play with the lemons. Furthermore, the reconstruction of
634 the inferential configuration of two exemplary cases of arguments from
635 authority used by parents with their children has shown how the actual
636 effectiveness of this argument can depend on to what extent parents
637 and children share its premises (endoxa). In the corpus, the arguments
638 from authority appear to be effective only when the child believes that
639 the person referred to by the parents was indeed of authority. This
640 aspect sheds light on the nature of the authority characterizing the par-
641 ent-child relationship: the authority resides not *with* people but *between*
642 people and the way they relate to each other.

643 4.1.4 Argument from Analogy

644 The fourth type of argument put forward by parents in argumentative
645 discussions with their children is the argument from analogy. As stated
646 by Walton, Reed and Macagno (2008, p. 58), the reasoning behind this
647 argument is the following:

648 *Major Premise:* Generally, Case C1 is similar to Case C2.

649 *Minor Premise:* Proposition A is true (false) in Case C1.

650 *Conclusion:* Proposition A is true (false) in Case C2.

651 The following example offers a clear illustration of the use of this type of
652 argument by a mother during a discussion with her 8-year-old son, Marco:

653 Excerpt 4.9

654 Italian family V. Dinner 3. Family members: father (DAD, 42 years),
655 mother (MOM, 40 years), Marco (MAR, 8 years and 6 months), and
656 Leonardo (5 years and 7 months). MAR and LEO are seated at the
657 meal table. MOM is standing and is serving dinner. DAD is seated on
658 the couch watching TV.



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

95

- %act: la cena è appena iniziata. MOM serve da mangiare ai bambini, DAD invece è ancora seduto sul divano a guardare la TV
MOM dinner is just started. Mom serves the food to children, DAD instead is still seated on the couch watching TV
1. *MOM: dai vieni:: la cena è pronta [parlando a DAD]
come:: dinner is ready [talking to DAD]
2. *DAD: solo un attimo
just a moment
3. *MOM: vieni: altrimenti si raffredda
come: otherwise, it gets cold
- %pau: 2.5 sec
4. *MAR: Mamma
Mom
5. *MOM: cosa Marco?
what Marco?
6. *MAR: secondo me la maestra Marta ((la maestra di matematica)) ci dà tanti compiti da fare per le vacanze ((riferendosi alle vacanze di Natale))
I think that the teacher Marta ((the Math teacher)) will give us a lot of homework to do during the holidays ((referring to the Christmas holidays))
7. *MOM: no:: no:
no:: no:
- *MOM: secondo me no
I do not think so
8. *MAR: sì invece!
I do though!
9. *MOM: no:: secondo me no.
no:: I do not think so.
- *MOM: se la maestra Chiara ((la maestra di italiano)) non l'ha fatto, non lo farà neanche la maestra Marta
if teacher Chiara ((the Italian teacher)) did not do it, teacher Marta won't do it either
10. *MAR: speriamo! ((sorridente))
let us hope so! ((smiling))
- %act: anch'è MOM sorride
MOM smiles too

659

660 This sequence starts with the mother serving the food, while the father
661 is still seated on the couch watching TV. She asks the father to sit at the
662 meal table and enjoy the meal since the food is ready. This event, i.e.,
663 the mother announcing the beginning of the meal, represents a common
664 starting point for the activity of mealtime. In the analysis of this excerpt,
665 I will focus on the difference of opinion between the mother and her son,



96 A. Bova

666 Marco, on an issue related to the school context. Marco, in line 6, says to
667 his mother that he thinks that the Math teacher, i.e., the teacher Marta,
668 will give them—this means not only to him but to all the students of
669 his class—a lot of homework to do during the Christmas holidays. The
670 mother, in line 7, disagrees with her son (“no:: no: I do not think so”).
671 The child, in turn, in line 8, shows to disagree with his mother (“I do
672 though”), but he does not provide any argument in support of his stand-
673 point, i.e., he does not assume the burden of proof. The mother, instead,
674 advances an argument from analogy to convince Marco to change his
675 opinion. In line 9, she says to her son that if the Italian teacher did not
676 give them homework to do during the Christmas holidays, neither will
677 the Math teacher. The reasoning behind the mother’s argument can be
678 inferred as follows: because the two teachers share some similarities, i.e.,
679 they are both teachers of the same class, they will behave in a similar way.
680 In this case, the argument put forward by the mother appears to be effec-
681 tive in convincing her son to change his opinion. The child does not con-
682 tinue to defend his initial standpoint, and the discussion ends with both
683 smiling. The reconstruction of the argumentative discussion between the
684 child, Marco, and his mother is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Will Ms. Marta (the Math Teacher) give a lot of homework to do during the Christmas holidays?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(MAR)	Yes, she will
	(MOM)	No, she will not
<i>Argument</i>	(MOM)	If Ms. Chiara (the Italian teacher) did not give homework to do during the Christmas holidays, neither will Ms. Marta (the Math teacher)

685

686 In the analysis of this argumentative discussion, I will now focus
687 on the reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argu-
688 ment from analogy advanced by the mother, in line 9: “If Ms. Chiara
689 (the Italian teacher) did not give homework to do during the
690 Christmas holidays, neither will Ms. Marta (the Math teacher).” The
691 AMT-based reconstruction is illustrated in Fig. 4.9.

692 On the right-hand side of the diagram the maxim on which the
693 mother’s argument is based is specified: “If something was the case for a
694 circumstance of the same functional genus as X, this might be the case

4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

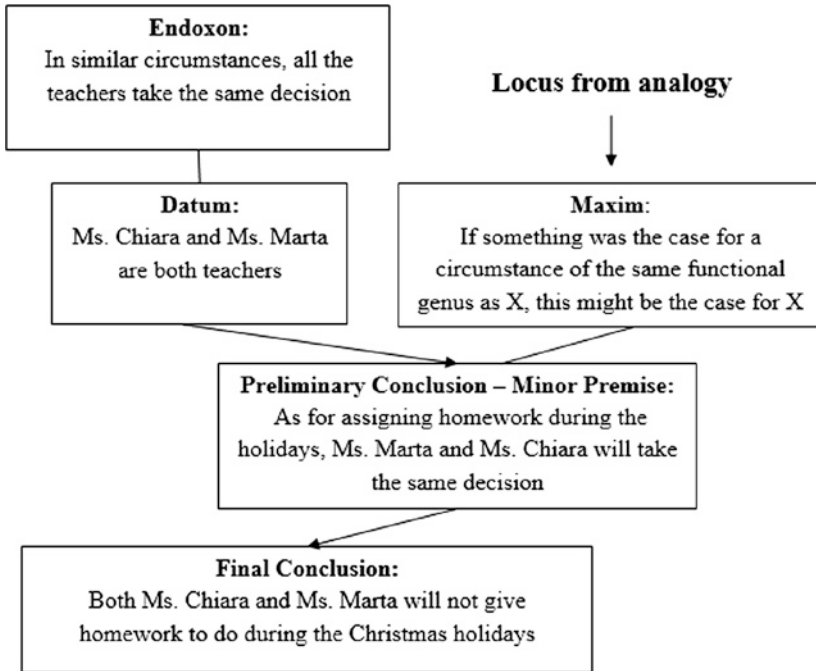


Fig. 4.9 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the mother: “If Ms. Chiara (the Italian teacher) did not give homework to do during the Christmas holidays, neither will Ms. Marta (the Math teacher)”

695 for X.” This is one of the maxims engendered from the locus from analogy.
696 The minor premise of the topical syllogism is that “As for assigning
697 homework during the holidays, Ms. Marta and Ms. Chiara will take
698 the same decision”, which combined with the maxim brings to the fol-
699 lowing final conclusion: “Both Ms. Chiara and Ms. Marta will not give
700 homework to do during the Christmas holidays”. Looking at the endox-
701 ical dimension of the diagram, in this argument, the endoxon is as fol-
702 lows: “In similar circumstances, all the teachers take the same decision.”
703 The datum of the endoxical dimension (Ms. Chiara and Ms. Marta are
704 both teachers) combined with the endoxon, produces the preliminary
705 conclusion that “As for assigning homework during the holidays, Ms.
706 Marta and Ms. Chiara will take the same decision.”



707 The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of this argument
708 permits to show how the use of the argument from analogy by parents
709 in argumentative discussions with their children introduces new elements
710 within parent-child mealtimes interactions, which are not only related to
711 the activity of mealtime, such as, for example, the evaluation of the qual-
712 ity or quantity of food. The arguments from analogy are also used when
713 parents and children discuss other important aspects concerning chil-
714 dren's social behavior. I refer, in particular, to the teaching of the correct
715 behavior in social situations outside the family context, e.g., in the school
716 context with teachers and peers. This aspect is important because it shows
717 how the argumentative discussions between parents and children during
718 mealtime open to family members a space for thinking that is not lim-
719 ited to activities related to the meal. Instead, parents and children discuss
720 everything that is relevant to them, within and outside the family sphere.

721 4.2 Types of Arguments Used by Children

722 The findings of the analyses show that the types of arguments most
723 often used by children in argumentative discussions with their parents
724 can be ascribed to three categories: quality and quantity, expert opinion,
725 and appeal to consistency. In the following sections, we will look at each
726 of them in detail.

727 4.2.1 An Opposite View on Quality and Quantity

728 Similar to what we observed regarding parents, children in defending
729 their standpoints often advance arguments which refer to the concepts
730 of quality (positive or negative) and quantity (too much or too little).
731 These types of arguments were often—but not exclusively—used by
732 children to convince their parents to let them not to eat more food.
733 Typically—but, also in this case, not only—children used arguments of
734 quality and quantity to refuse to eat the food prepared by their parents.
735 In the following dialogue between a mother and her 6-year-old son,
736 Luca, we can see how the child puts forward an argument of quantity to
737 convince her mother to let him not to finish eating the soup:

738 **Excerpt 4.10**

739 Swiss family I. Dinner 3. Family members: father (DAD, 41 years),
740 mother (MOM, 38 years), Luca (LUC, 6 years and 8 months), and
741 Luisa (LUI, 3 years and 11 months). All family members are eating,
742 seated at the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table. MOM
743 and LUI sit on the right-hand side of DAD, while LUC sits on their
744 opposite side.

1. *MOM: dai, finisci di mangiarlo ((il minestrone)
come on, finish eating it ((the soup))
 2. *LUC: no:: no::
no:: no::
 3. *MOM: dai: mangialo
come on: eat it
 4. *LUC: era troppo
it was too much
 5. *MOM: no::
no::
 6. *LUC: si, era troppo!
yes, it was too much!
 7. *MOM: la prossima volta dobbiamo cucinare molto meno ((di mine-
strone)) [: rivolgendosi a DAD]
*next time we have to cook much less ((of soup)) [: talking to
DAD]*
- %act: MOM prende il piatto con il minestrone e lo porta in cucina
MOM takes the plate with the soup and brings it in the kitchen

745

746 This sequence starts, in line 1, with the mother who wants her son,
747 Luca, to finish eating the soup (“come on, finish eating it”). The child, in
748 line 2, disagrees with his mother because he does not want to keep eating
749 the soup (“no:: no:”). In reconstructing the argumentative discussion,
750 according to the ideal model of a critical discussion, this phase represents
751 the confrontation stage, since the mother’s standpoint (*Luca must finish*
752 *eating the soup*) has been met by the child’s refusal. We have already seen
753 in several examples that in discussions between parents and children dur-
754 ing mealtime, the opening stage, in which the parties decide to try and
755 solve the difference of opinion and explore whether there are premises to
756 start a discussion, is mostly implicit. After a further invitation to finish
757 eating the soup by the mother, in line 3 (“come on:: eat it”), the child,



100 A. Bova

758 Luca, in line 4, defends his opinion by advancing an argument which
 759 aims to highlight that the amount of soup on his plate was too much
 760 (“it was too much”). The insistence of the mother, in line 5 (“no:”), has
 761 the effect of establishing an obligation for the child to provide reasons
 762 in support of his standpoint. The child, in line 6, fulfills this obligation,
 763 providing a further confirm of his standpoint (“it was too much!”). In the
 764 present case, Luca delineates an alternative to the *status quo*: he is mod-
 765 ifying the unilateral position (to do not eat more soup) into a reciprocal
 766 one (because the mother has cooked too much soup). In argumentative
 767 terms, what clearly distinguishes mother’s and child’s standpoints, in this
 768 case, is an opposite opinion regarding the quantity of soup. This phase of
 769 the discussion represents the argumentation stage. The child’s argument,
 770 in this case, can be defined as effective. In fact, we have already seen that,
 771 in line with our dialectical perspective of argumentation, we believe that
 772 one argument, or a series of arguments, put forth by A is considered as
 773 ‘effective’ when B accepts the A’s standpoint and retracts its own stand-
 774 point. In line 7, the mother appears to be convinced that the amount
 775 of food was too much (“next time we have to cook much less”), and she
 776 takes the plate with soup and brings it in the kitchen. This action repre-
 777 sents the concluding stage of the sequence and shows that, in the present
 778 interaction, mother and child engage in the process of jointly explicat-
 779 ing reasons for not eating more soup. This enlarges Luca’s and Mom’s
 780 response duties as well as their options: they are, in fact, expected to
 781 argue on an equal footing. Finally, the strategy adopted by the child is
 782 to provide a justification for his stance by using an argument of quantity
 783 and then to repeat his stance. The analytical overview of the discussion
 784 between the child, Luca, and his mother is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Should Luca finish eating the soup?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(LUC)	No, I do not want to.
	(MOM)	Yes, you must
<i>Argument</i>	(LUC)	The soup was too much

786 The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument
 787 of quantity advanced by the child, Luca, Fig. 4.10 shows that the type
 788 of reasoning behind this argument is like that of the parents when they
 789 advance arguments from quantity.

4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

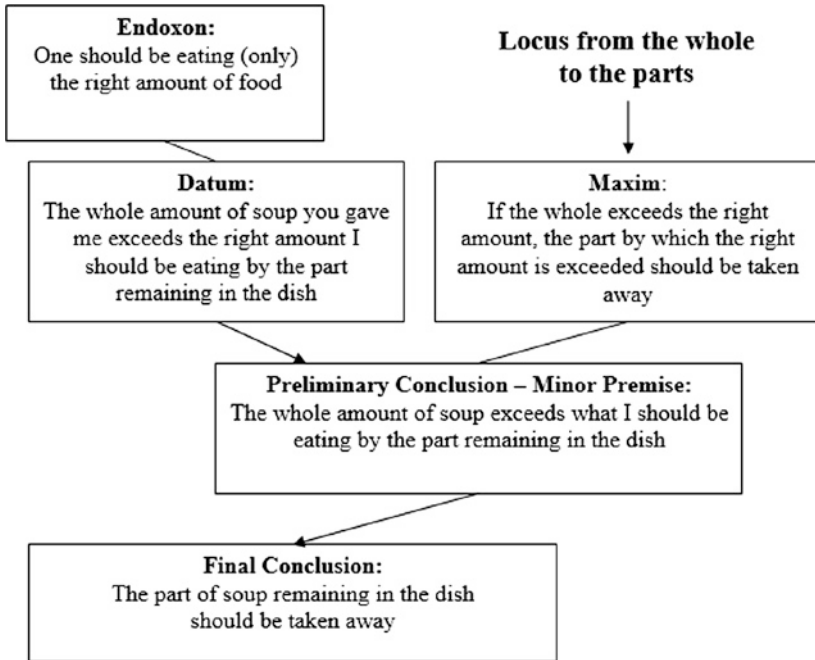


Fig. 4.10 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the child, Luca: “The soup was too much”

790 The maxim on which the argument of quantity advanced by the child
791 is based is “If the whole exceeds the right amount, the part by which
792 the right amount is exceeded should be taken away.” In this case, the
793 maxim is engendered from the locus from the whole to the parts. The
794 datum, constituting the minor premise of the endoxical syllogism, is
795 that “The whole amount of soup exceeds what I should be eating by the
796 part remaining in the dish,” leads to the final conclusion that “The part
797 of soup remaining in the dish should be taken away.” Looking at the
798 left-hand side of the diagram, the endoxon is: “One should be eating
799 (only) the right amount of food.” The datum, “The whole amount of
800 soup you gave me exceeds the right amount I should be eating by the
801 part remaining in the dish,” combined with the endoxon produce the
802 preliminary conclusion that “The whole amount of soup exceeds what I
803 should be eating by the part remaining in the dish.”



102 A. Bova

804 In the next dialogue between a mother and her 5-year-old daughter,
805 Adriana, we can see how Adriana advances an argument of quality to
806 convince her mother to change her opinion:

807 **Excerpt 4.11**

808 Italian family III. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 37 years),
809 mother (MOM, 37 years), Samuele (SAM, 7 years and 11 months), and
810 Adriana (ADR, 5 years and 4 months). All family members are eating,
811 seated at the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table, MOM
812 and SAM sit on the right-hand side of DAD, while ADR sits on their
813 opposite side.

1. *MOM: Adriana, devi mangiare un po' di pane
Adriana, you have to eat a little of bread
2. *ADR: no:: no::
no:: no::
3. *MOM: ma è buono!
but it is good though!
4. *ADR: no:: è duro
no:: it is hard
5. *MOM: ma Adriana, è davvero buono:
but Adriana, it is really good::
6. *ADR: no, è duro non mi piace
no, it is hard I do not like it
7. *MOM: no::
no::
8. *ADR: si, è duro
yes, it is hard
9. *MOM: perché fai così a mamma tua?
why are you doing that to mummy?
10. *ADR: no:: no::
no:: no::
11. *MOM: va bene, niente pane questa sera
well, no bread for this evening

814
815 The dinner is started from a few minutes, and the mother is serv-
816 ing the main course to all family members. In line 1, the mother tells
817 Adriana that she must eat a little of bread, but the child, in line 2,
818 disagrees with her mother (“no:: no::”). In argumentative terms, the
819 sequence that goes from line 1 to line 2 represents the confrontation



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

103

820 stage of the ideal model of a critical discussion, as the mother's stand-
 821 point meets with the child's opposition. In line 3, it seems that the
 822 mother puts up an argument for renegotiation, marked by the adversa-
 823 tive connective "but" ("but Adriana, it is really good:"). The argument
 824 advanced by the mother in support of her standpoint is based on the
 825 quality of the bread, aiming at emphasizing the good taste of the food.
 826 The argument used by Adriana in reaction to her mother's argument, in
 827 line 4, also refers to a quality of the food: Adriana replies to his mother
 828 that the bread is not good but, rather, it is hard. While the mother with
 829 her argument had put to the fore a positive property of the bread, try-
 830 ing to support the conversational flow by securing the interaction's con-
 831 tinuation, the use of the adjective "hard" by Adriana indicates to the
 832 mother a negative property of the bread. In the excerpt, there are two
 833 different arguments both used to highlight a specific property of the
 834 food, good vs. hard, served during the meal with the aim to convince
 835 the other party that their view is wrong. What distinguishes mother's
 836 and child's argumentation is, therefore, an opposite judgment regarding
 837 the quality of food. Within the framework of the ideal model of a criti-
 838 cal discussion, this phase of the discussion represents the argumentation
 839 stage. When the mother, in line 9, tries to imagine why Adriana might
 840 have refused, her attempt is ignored even though she possibly could
 841 have produced a space for accounting the reasons for the child's refusal.
 842 In this case, the argument of quality put forth by Adriana is effective in
 843 convincing her mother to let her not to eat the bread. In fact, in line
 844 11, the mother closes the sequence with the discourse marker "well":
 845 she does not put her position up for negotiation, making her statement
 846 beyond dispute. This is the concluding stage of the argumentative dis-
 847 cussion in which the child has provided a counter-argument about the
 848 quality of food by repeating her stance. The analytical overview of the
 849 argumentative discussion between the child, Adriana, and her mother is
 850 summarized below.

<i>Issue</i>		Should Adriana eat a little of bread?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(ADR)	No, I do not want to.
	(MOM)	Yes, you must
<i>Argument</i>	(ADR)	The bread is hard

851



852 In the analysis of this argumentative discussion, I will now focus on
853 the reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument of
854 quality advanced by the child in line 4: “The bread is hard.” The AMT’s
855 reconstruction is illustrated in Fig. 4.11.

856 The maxim on which this argument is based is one of the maxims gener-
857 ated from the locus from implication, in one of its subcategories, from
858 sign to the “signaled: “If something is signaled by its sign, it is the case.”
859 The reasoning follows with the minor premise of the topical syllogism,
860 “The bread presents a sign of badness,” which combined with the maxim
861 leads to the following final conclusion: “The bread is bad.” Looking at
862 the left-hand side of the diagram, the endoxon can be described as fol-
863 lows: “Being hard is for food a sign of badness.” The datum, “The bread
864 is hard,” combined with this endoxon, produces the preliminary conclu-
865 sion that “The bread presents a sign of badness.” The AMT reconstruc-
866 tion shows that the mother and her daughter, Adriana, have a different

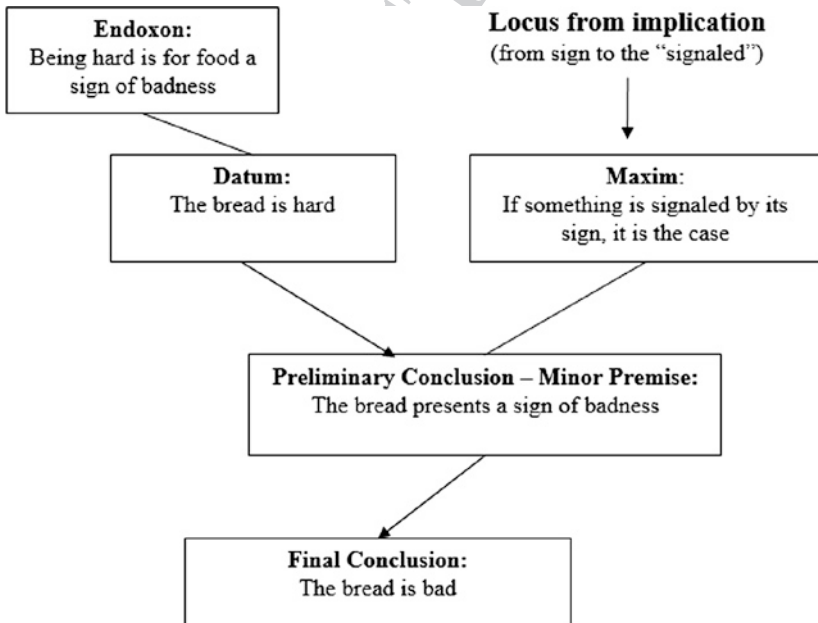


Fig. 4.11 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the child, Adriana: “The bread is hard”



867 opinion regarding the datum (“The bread is hard”), whereas they fully
868 share the endoxon (“Being hard is for food a sign of badness”).

869 The presentation of this example permits us to show how during their
870 argumentative discussions related to food, both parents and children
871 put forward arguments based on the quality and quantity of food, try-
872 ing to convince the other that their view on the quality or on the quan-
873 tity of food is wrong. Accordingly, even if parents and children have
874 opposite goals, they often use the same type of argument. What distin-
875 guishes parents’ and children’s argumentation is a different view regard-
876 ing the datum, which, in this case, coincides with their opinion on the
877 quality or quantity of food. In line with previous studies (Arcidiacono
878 & Bova, 2015; Bova & Arcidiacono, 2014, 2018; Brumark, 2008;
879 Wiggins, 2004; Wiggins & Potter, 2003), the children’s capacity to jus-
880 tify a standpoint and to advance a counter-argument with their parents
881 during mealtime conversations appears to be mostly activity-dependent,
882 i.e., related to the activity of mealtime. In the corpus, other examples of
883 arguments from quality and quantity put forward by children include:
884 “I want more French beans, I have only eaten a few,” “I do not want the
885 meatball because they are hard!”, and “I do not like the stew, it is spicy!”.

886 4.2.2 Argument from Adult-Expert Opinion

887 The second type of argument most often used by children in argumenta-
888 tive discussions with their parents is the argument from expert opinion.
889 The definition of argument from expert opinion coincides exactly with
890 the Walton’s notion of epistemic authority (Walton, 1997, pp. 77–78):
891 “The epistemic authority is a relationship between two individuals where
892 one is an expert in a field of knowledge in such a manner that his pro-
893 nouncements in this field carry a special weight of presumption for the
894 other individual that is greater than the say-so of a layperson in that field.
895 The epistemic type of authority is essentially an appeal to expertise, or to
896 expert opinion”. The issue of epistemic authority has also been addressed
897 widely within ethnomethodological and conversation analytic work.¹

¹In this regard, see the special issue of *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45(1), 1–109, and the two seminal articles by Heritage and Raymond (Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006).



898 Interestingly, in the corpus, when children refer to a third person as a
899 source of expert opinion, the expert always proves to be an adult such as
900 a teacher, a grandparent or a friend of the father, and not another child.
901 The argument from expert opinion used by children during argumentative
902 discussions with their parents can be described, accordingly, through
903 the following statement: “The adult X told me Y; therefore, Y is true.”
904 For this reason, I decided not to name this type of argument used by
905 children argument from expert opinion, but, instead, *argument from*
906 *adult-expert opinion*. The following example offers a clear illustration of
907 the use of this type of argument by a 6-year-old child, Francesco during a
908 discussion with his mother related to the child’s homework:

909 Excerpt 4.12

910 Swiss family V. Dinner 1. Family members: father (DAD, 37 years),
911 mother (MOM, 37 years), Francesco (FRA, 6 years and 3 months),
912 and Michele (MIC, 4 years and 2 months). All family members are
913 seated at the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table. MOM
914 and MIC sit on the right-hand side of DAD, while FRA sits on their
915 opposite side.

1. *MOM: devi leggere ad alta voce ((i libri di scuola))
you have to read them aloud ((the school books))
 2. *FRA: è sbagliato.
it is wrong
 3. *MOM: no! devi leggere ad alta voce
no:: you have to read them aloud
 4. *FRA: no: me l’ha detto la maestra che devo leggere in silenzio
no:: the teacher told me that I have to read silently
 5. *MOM: quando te l’ha detto?
when did she tell you this?
 6. *FRA: a scuola
at school
 7. *MOM: va bene, ma quando te l’ha detto?
well, but when did she tell you?
 8. *FRA: l’altra volta
last time
- %act: MOM inizia a servire la cena mentre continua a guardare GIO
con un’espressione perplessa
*MOM begins serving dinner while keeps looking at GIO with a
puzzled expression*



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

107

917 The sequence starts when the mother, in line 1, tells Francesco that
918 he has to read the school books aloud. The child, in line 2, disagrees
919 with his mother because, he says, reading aloud is wrong. The mother
920 does not advance any argument to defend her standpoint, thus avoid-
921 ing assuming the burden of proof, and only repeats, in line 3, her stated
922 standpoint (“no:: you have to read them aloud”). Within the framework
923 of the ideal model of a critical discussion, this phase of the discussion
924 corresponds with the confrontation stage, as there is the mother’s stand-
925 point, i.e., You have to read the school books aloud, that meets with the
926 child’s refusal, i.e., No, reading the school books aloud is wrong. The
927 opening stage, in which the parties decide to try and solve the difference
928 of opinion and explore whether there are premises to start a discussion,
929 as we have already seen in several examples, is mostly implicit. At this
930 point, in line 4, the child, Francesco assumes the burden of proof and
931 puts forward an argument in support of his standpoint: “The teacher
932 told me that I have to read silently.” In line 5, the mother asks Francesco
933 when the teacher told him to do so. The child’s answer, in line 6, does
934 not refer to the time but, instead, to the place where the teacher told
935 him to read the school books aloud (“at school”). The mother, not sat-
936 isfied with the answer is given by her son, in line 7, repeats her ques-
937 tion one more time (“Well, but when did she tell you?”). The child,
938 Francesco, in line 8, says to his mother that the teacher told him to read
939 the school books silently “last time” he saw her. In argumentative terms,
940 the sequence that goes from line 4 to line 8 represents the argumenta-
941 tion stage of the ideal model of a critical discussion. The concluding
942 stage concerns a non-verbal act—the mother begins serving dinner while
943 looking at Francesco with a puzzled expression—which indicates that the
944 mother does not want to keep discussing this issue and thus accepts the
945 child’s standpoint. The reconstruction of the argumentative discussion
946 between the child, Francesco, and his mother is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Does Francesco have to read the school books aloud?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(FRA)	No, reading the school books aloud is wrong
	(MOM)	Yes, Francesco has to read the school books aloud
<i>Argument</i>	(FRA)	The teacher, told me that I have to read silently

947

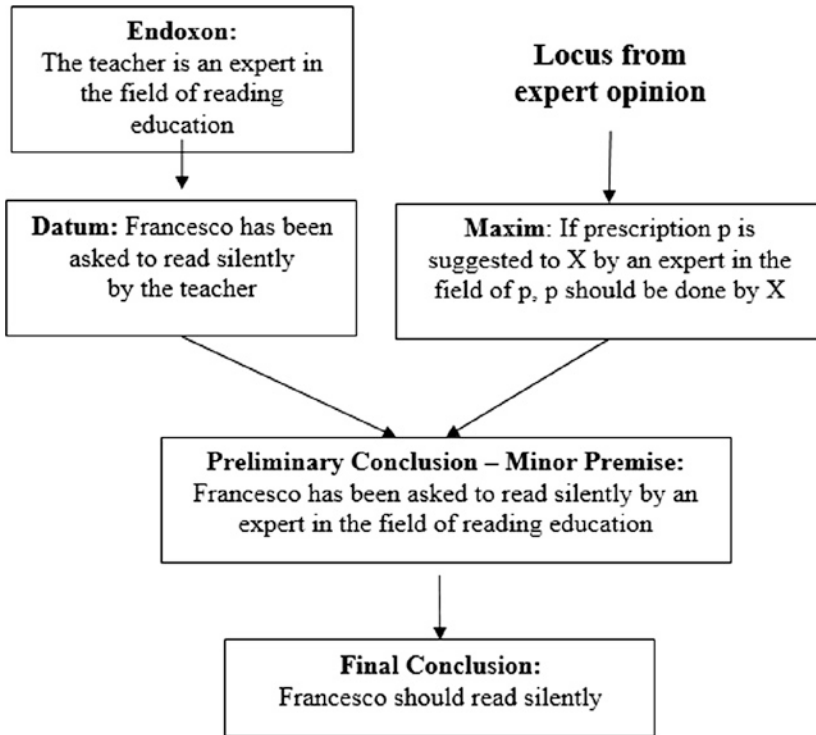


Fig. 4.12 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the child, Francesco: “The teacher told me that I have to read silently”

948 I now turn to the analysis of the inferential configuration of the argu-
949 ment put forward by the child, Francesco: “The teacher told me that I
950 have to read silently.” The reconstruction of the inferential configuration
951 of this argument is illustrated in Fig. 4.12.

952 The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument
953 from adult-expert opinion advanced by the child, Francesco, shows that
954 this argument is based on a maxim that is engendered from the locus
955 from expert opinion: If prescription p is suggested to X by an expert in
956 the field of p, p should be done by X. The minor premise of the topical
957 syllogism, “Francesco has been asked to read silently by an expert in the



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

109

958 field of reading education”, leads to the final conclusion that “Francesco
959 should read silently.” Looking at the endoxical syllogism of the diagram,
960 the endoxon is the following: “The teacher is an expert in the field of
961 reading education.” The datum, “Francesco has been asked to read
962 silently by the teacher,” combined with the endoxon, leads to the pre-
963 liminary conclusion that “Francesco has been asked to read silently by
964 an expert in the field of reading education.”

965 The argument put forward by Francesco succeeds in convincing
966 his mother of the validity of his standpoint. The expert in this field,
967 Francesco is saying, is the teacher rather than his mother. Note that,
968 in this case, we can reasonably guess that the child already knew that
969 the mother considers the teacher as an expert in the field of reading
970 education and, accordingly, decided to advance this type of argument.
971 Therefore, by referring to the teacher as a source of expert opinion, the
972 child considered the audience to whom his argument is addressed, i.e.,
973 his mother. Moreover, the child introduces his argument by saying to
974 his mother, in line 2, that her opinion was “wrong.” The use of this
975 adjective gives even more strength to the argument advanced by the
976 child afterward. In fact, if an expert in the field states the opposite of
977 what we say, we might infer that our statement must be wrong.

978 A significant aspect characterizing the argument from adult-expert opin-
979 ion concerns the level of knowledge that the child has of the adult who re-
980 presents the expert. In the corpus, in most cases, the expert is an adult who
981 is well-known by the child, such as one of the two parents, a grandfather,
982 a grandmother, or a teacher. However, the knowledge of the adult by the
983 child does not seem a necessary condition to refer to him/her as a source
984 of expert opinion. In fact, I observed several cases in which the expert is an
985 adult who does not play a significant role in the child’s life. This aspect is
986 illustrated in the following excerpt, where the opinion of a friend’s father
987 is considered, by the child, like the opinion of an expert. However, in this
988 example—where a father and his 8-year-old son, Stefano, discuss the type
989 of soccer shoes that Stefano needs to wear in a small indoor stadium—the
990 effectiveness of the argument put forward by the child is not the same as in
991 the previous example, where the expert was the teacher:



992 **Excerpt 4.13**

993 Swiss family IV. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 36 years),
994 mother (MOM, 34 years), Stefano (STE, 8 years and 5 months), and
995 Alessandro (ALE, 4 years and 6 months). DAD sits at the head of the
996 meal table, MOM and STE sit on the left-hand side of DAD, while
997 ALE is seated on their opposite side.

1. *DAD: dove giocate domani?
where are you playing tomorrow?
2. *STE: al Palazzetto, è al chiuso
at the sports hall, it is indoors
3. *DAD: allora non puoi metterti le scarpe con i tacchetti
then you cannot use the soccer shoes with cleats
4. *STE: sì che posso!
yes, I can!
5. *DAD: no! al Palazzetto puoi solo giocare con le scarpe senza tacchetti
*no! at the sports hall you can only play with soccer shoes
without cleats*
6. *STE: sì che posso! me l'ha detto il papà di Tommaso che posso
yes I can! Tommaso's Dad told me that I could
7. *DAD: no:: non puoi, ma Rudi ((il papà di Tommaso)) non capisce niente
di calcio!
*no:: you cannot, but Rudi ((Tommaso's Dad)) does not
understand anything about soccer!*

998

999 In this dialogue, a difference of opinion arises between the child,
1000 Stefano, and his father. In line 1, the father asks Stefano where he has
1001 to play soccer the day after. Stefano, in line 2, says to his father that he
1002 has to play soccer at the sports hall, which is an indoor structure. At
1003 this point, in line 3, the father says to Stefano that in such a place he
1004 cannot use soccer shoes with cleats, but Stefano, in line 4, disagrees with
1005 his father (“yes, I can!”). In line 5, the father repeats one more time his
1006 standpoint, by making it even more explicit: “At the sports hall you can
1007 only play with soccer shoes without cleats.” Within the framework of
1008 the ideal model of a critical discussion, this phase represents the con-
1009 frontation stage, since the father’s standpoint, i.e., No, you cannot use
1010 the soccer shoes with cleats, meets the child’s contradiction, i.e., Yes,
1011 I can. As far as the opening stage is concerned, also in this example,



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

111

1012 it is mostly implicit. In line 6, the child opts not to evade the burden
 1013 of proof and puts forward an argument from adult-expert opinion to
 1014 support his standpoint (“Tommaso’s Dad told me that I could”). The
 1015 father does not evade the burden of proof and, in line 7, advances an
 1016 argument in defense of his standpoint (“no:: you cannot, but Rudi
 1017 ((Tommaso’s Dad)) does not understand anything about soccer”). The
 1018 sequence that goes from line 6 to line 7 represents the argumentation
 1019 stage of the ideal model of a critical discussion. The concluding stage,
 1020 in which the child and the father establish the result of the attempt to
 1021 resolve a difference of opinion, is mostly implicit. The father and the
 1022 child, in fact, stop discussing this issue and move the discussion to a
 1023 different topic. In doing so, the child shows his unwillingness to keep
 1024 defending his standpoint. The reconstruction of the argumentative dis-
 1025 cussion between the child, Stefano, and his father is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Can Stefano play soccer at the sports hall wearing shoes with cleats?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(STE)	Yes, I can use the soccer shoes with cleats
	(DAD)	No, you cannot use the soccer shoes with cleats
<i>Arguments</i>	(STE)	Tommaso’s Dad told me that I could
	(DAD)	Tommaso’s Dad does not understand anything about soccer

1026

1027 In the analysis of this argumentative discussion, I will focus on the
 1028 argument from adult-expert opinion advanced by the child, Stefano, in
 1029 line 6: “Tommaso’s Dad told me that I could.” The reconstruction of its
 1030 inferential configuration is illustrated in Fig. 4.13.

1031 The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument
 1032 from adult-expert opinion advanced by the child, Stefano, brings to
 1033 light that this argument is based on a maxim that is engendered from
 1034 the locus from expert opinion: “If prescription p is suggested to X
 1035 by an expert in the field of p, p should be done by X.” The reasoning
 1036 follows with the minor premise of the topical syllogism, “It has been
 1037 suggested to Stefano that he should use soccer shoes with cleats by an
 1038 expert in the field of soccer,” which combined with the maxim leads to
 1039 the following final conclusion: “Stefano should use soccer shoes with

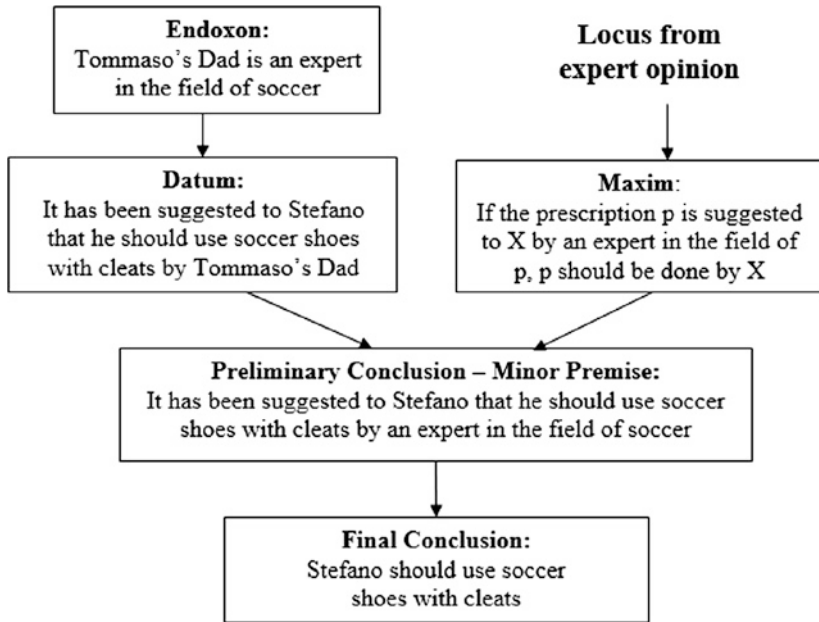


Fig. 4.13 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the child, Stefano: “Tommaso’s Dad told me that I could”

1040 cleats.” Looking at the left-hand side of the diagram, the endoxon can
1041 be described as follows: “Tommaso’s Dad is an expert in the field of
1042 soccer.” The datum, “It has been suggested to Stefano that he should
1043 use soccer shoes with cleats by Tommaso’s Dad,” combined with this
1044 endoxon, produces the preliminary conclusion that “It has been sug-
1045 gested to Stefano that he should use soccer shoes with cleats by an
1046 expert in the field of soccer.”

1047 The AMT-reconstruction shows that the child, as in the previous
1048 example, refers to what an adult told him to convince his father to
1049 accept his standpoint. However, in the previous example, the argu-
1050 ment from adult-expert opinion advanced by the child, Francesco,
1051 was effective in convincing his mother to change her opinion. In this
1052 case, instead, the argument from adult-expert opinion advanced by
1053 Stefano is not effective in convincing his father to change his opinion.



1054 Why? To try to answer this question, in my opinion, we need to look
1055 at the endoxon of both arguments. In the first case, the endoxon on
1056 which the argument put forward by Francesco is based, i.e., The teacher
1057 is an expert in the field of reading education, is shared by Francesco and
1058 his mother. In this second case, instead, the father does not agree with
1059 the endoxon on which the argument put forward by Stefano is based,
1060 i.e., Tommaso's Dad is an expert in the field of soccer. Stefano's father,
1061 unlike his son, does not consider Tommaso's Dad to be an expert in the
1062 field of soccer. By referring to an adult as a source of expert opinion, the
1063 child adapts his argumentation to his interlocutor, i.e., the parent, who
1064 is also an adult. Looking at this argumentative choice made by children,
1065 it is reasonable to assume that for them the reference to an opinion
1066 of an adult is a stronger argument than the reference to an opinion of
1067 another child. However, it seems that the effectiveness of the argument
1068 from adult-expert opinion depends on the extent to which the prem-
1069 ises, i.e., endoxon, on which the argument is based are shared by parents
1070 and children. In fact, in the corpus, this argument proved to be effective
1071 only when the parent believed that the adult to whom the child was
1072 referring was indeed an expert.

1073 4.2.3 Appeal to Consistency

1074 The third type of argument most often used by children in argumen-
1075 tative discussions with their parents refers to the consistency with past
1076 behaviors. In a previous section, we have seen that often the parents
1077 asked their children to conform to their previous behavior, as the past
1078 actions are important to justify the present actions. Similarly, chil-
1079 dren asked the same request to their parents during their argumenta-
1080 tive discussions at mealtime. The appeal to consistency argument used
1081 by children can be described through the following question: "If you
1082 have explicitly or implicitly affirmed it in the past, then why do not
1083 you maintain it now?" The next example illustrates the use of this type
1084 of argument during an argumentative discussion between a 7-year-old
1085 child, Samuele, and his mother:



1086 **Excerpt 4.14**

1087 Italian family III. Dinner 3. Family members: father (DAD, 37 years),
1088 mother (MOM, 37 years), Samuele (SAM, 7 years and 11 months), and
1089 Adriana (ADR, 5 years and 4 months). All family members are eating,
1090 seated at the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table, MOM
1091 and SAM sit on the right-hand side of DAD, while ADR sits on their
1092 opposite side.

1. *MOM: adesso, mangia un po' di frutta ((rivolgendosi a PAO))
now, eat a little of fruit ((talking to PAO))
2. *SAM: no::
no::
3. *MOM: si, Samuele
yes, Samuele
- *MOM: prima di alzarti da tavola devi mangiare anche la frutta
before leaving the meal table, you have to eat also the fruit
4. *SAM: no:: non voglio:
no:: I do not want to:
5. *MOM: ho detto di sì. Samuele
I said yes. Samuele
6. *SAM: ma se prima anche tu hai detto che non la vuoi la frutta!
but if before you also said that you do not want the fruit!
7. *MOM: sì, ma solo questa sera!
yes, but only this evening!
8. *SAM: anche io solo questa sera
only this evening also for me
9. *MOM: eh: fai come vuoi.
eh:: do what you want.

1093

1094 The dinner is going to its conclusion, and the mother, in line 1 and
1095 line 3, wants to give Samuele some fruit (“now, eat a little of fruit,”
1096 and “yes, Samuele”). The child disagrees with his mother and, in line 2
1097 and line 4, clarifies to his mother that he does not want to eat the fruit
1098 (“no:;” and “no:: I do not want to:”). In line 5, the mother does not
1099 advance any argument in support of her opinion, but she only reaffirms,
1100 one more time, her initial standpoint. According to the ideal model of
1101 a critical discussion, the phase that goes from line 1 to line 5 represents
1102 the confrontation stage. As already observed in previous studies (Busch,
1103 [2012](#); Hepburn & Potter, [2011](#)), when the adults try to settle or end
1104 a dispute with their young children quickly, their attempt may resolve



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

115

1105 only in a temporary settlement or even it may contribute to the contin-
1106 uation of dispute rather than to its cessation. This is what happens fol-
1107 lowing the mother's intervention because the child reacts by advancing
1108 an argument in support of his refusal to accept his mother's directive.

1109 In this sequence, I will focus on the appeal to consistency argument
1110 advanced by Samuele, in line 6: "but if before you also said that you do
1111 not want the fruit!" By referring to an action that his mother did in the
1112 past, the child asks the mother to behave in a rational way, i.e., to be con-
1113 sistent with the same behavior she had in the past now in the present. The
1114 reasoning used by the child to justify his refusal to eat the fruit is based
1115 on the logic form "as X, so Y," i.e., given the consistency of the first ele-
1116 ment, the second element is then justified. It is noteworthy to observe that
1117 by sustaining his argumentative reasoning, the child uses the adversative
1118 connective "but" in line 6. This choice is probably because he wants to
1119 underline the contradiction between the previous mother's behavior (pre-
1120 viously during the meal, she said that she does not want to eat the fruit
1121 that evening) and her non-consistent reaction (she wants that her son eats
1122 the fruit) to the son's refusal. In this case, the child's argument shows to be
1123 effective in convincing the mother to change her standpoint. In the con-
1124 cluding stage, in fact, the mother authorizes Samuele to do what he wants,
1125 i.e., he does not have to eat the fruit. Finally, in the exchange, the child
1126 repeats his rejection and justifies his stance by referring to his own will. He
1127 supports his claim to the right to take his own will into account by using
1128 the appeal to consistency argument. The analytical overview of the discus-
1129 sion between the child, Samuele, and his mother is summarized below:

<i>Issue</i>		Should Samuele eat a little of fruit?
<i>Standpoints</i>	(SAM)	No, I do not want to.
	(MOM)	Yes, you must
<i>Argument</i>	(SAM)	But if before you (Mom) also said that you do not want the fruit!

1130

1131 In the analysis of this argumentative discussion, I will now focus
1132 on the reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the appeal to
1133 consistency argument advanced by the child, Samuele, in line 6: "But
1134 if before you (Mom) also said that you do not want the fruit!". The
1135 AMT's reconstruction is illustrated in Fig. 4.14.

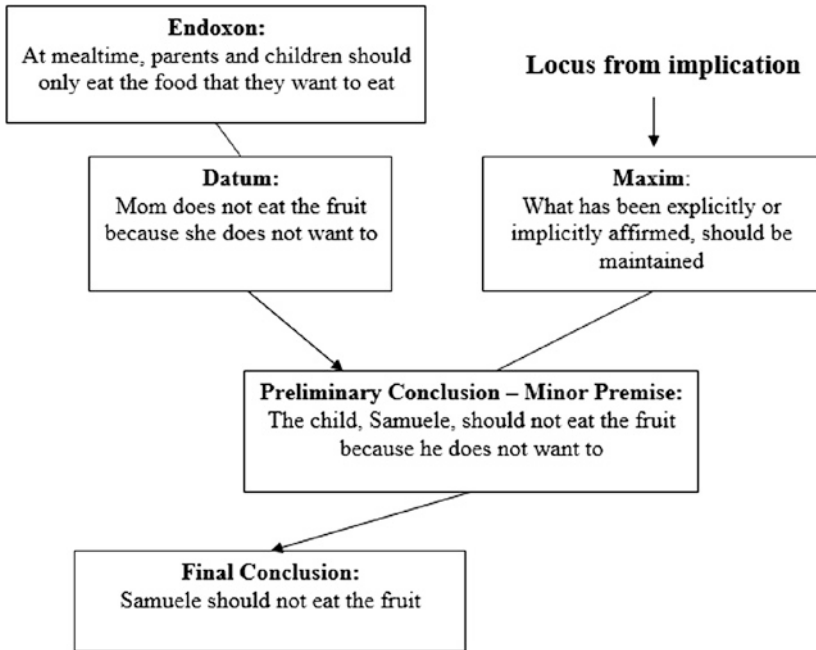


Fig. 4.14 AMT-based reconstruction of the argument advanced by the child, Samuele: “But if before you (Mom) also said that you do not want the fruit!”

1136 The appeal to consistency argument advanced by the child, Samuele,
1137 is based on a maxim that is engendered from the locus from implication:
1138 “What has been explicitly or implicitly affirmed, should be main-
1139 tained.” The reasoning follows with the minor premise of the topical
1140 syllogism, “The child, Samuele, should not eat the fruit because he does
1141 not want to,” which combined with the maxim brings to the following
1142 final conclusion: “Samuele should not eat the fruit.” Looking at the left-
1143 hand side of the diagram, the endoxon can be described as follows: “At
1144 mealtime, parents and children should only eat the food that they want
1145 to eat.” The datum, “Mom does not eat the fruit because she does not
1146 want to,” combined with the endoxon, leads to the preliminary conclu-
1147 sion that “The child, Samuele, should not eat the fruit because he does
1148 not want to.”



1149 The argument used by Samuele in discussion with his mother is log-
1150 ical. The 7-year-old child, in fact, shows to be able to relate in a duly
1151 manner a past event, i.e., Mom, you previously said that..., with a pres-
1152 ent event. Most importantly, the child uses this relation to convince the
1153 mother of the validity of his opinion. In the specific case, of his refusal
1154 to eat a little of fruit. The construction of this type of argument requires
1155 a level of logical skills that, in the corpus, I have observed in some cases
1156 in the older children, while I never did in the younger ones. The second
1157 reason to consider Samuele's argument is that, by using this argument,
1158 the child shifts the focus of his argumentation from himself and his
1159 desire of not to eat the fruit, to his mother and her, incoherent, behavior
1160 of asking him to eat. Unlike the arguments of quality and arguments of
1161 quantity, the appeal to consistency argument is not exclusively based on
1162 children themselves, but it is based on someone else. This aspect is rele-
1163 vant in terms of argumentative competences and conversational practices
1164 because it implies the capacity to decentrate from his/herself to create
1165 new contexts above and beyond sentences (Quastoff & Krah, 2012).

AQ2

1166 4.3 Types of Conclusions 1167 of the Argumentative Discussions

1168 How do parents and children conclude their argumentative discussions,
1169 after they started and engaged in them? The findings of the analysis
1170 bring to light four different types of conclusions of the argumentative
1171 discussions between parents and children during mealtime. The first
1172 two types are dialectical conclusions, in which one of the two parties
1173 accepts or rejects the others' standpoint. Therefore, in these two types
1174 of conclusions, the parent and the child reach the concluding stage of
1175 their argumentative discussion according to the ideal model of the crit-
1176 ical discussion. The most frequent type of conclusion is when *the child*
1177 *accepts the parent's standpoint*, while the second most frequent type of
1178 conclusion is when *the parent accepts the child's standpoint*. This finding
1179 does not coincide with previous works on parent-child argumentative
1180 discussions. Vuchinich (1987, 1990), for example, observed that most

AQ3



1181 of the conflicts during family dinnertime conversations ended with
1182 no resolution. How can we explain the differences between our results
1183 and Vuchinich's ones? This difference can be explained by the fact that
1184 Vuchinich does not focus his analysis on the argumentative discussions,
1185 but, instead, on verbal conflicts between parents and children. A verbal
1186 conflict takes place when there is a difference of opinion between two,
1187 or more, parties. An argumentative discussion to occur, instead, requires
1188 not only the presence of a difference of opinion between two, or more,
1189 parties but also that at least one of the two parties advances an argu-
1190 ment in support of his/her standpoint. Therefore, in the argumentative
1191 discussion at least one of the parties has shown the interest in resolving
1192 the difference of opinion in his/her favor. In the verbal conflict, instead,
1193 not always one of the parties shows the willingness to resolve the dif-
1194 ference of opinion. For this reason, it is more likely to observe the con-
1195 clusion of a conversation with no resolution in a verbal conflict than in
1196 an argumentative discussion. Examples of these two types of dialectical
1197 conclusion will be described and discussed in Sects. 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

1198 However, the argumentative discussions between parents and chil-
1199 dren did not always reach a conclusion. The conclusion of an argumen-
1200 tative discussion between parents and children in an everyday activity
1201 such as family mealtime is a phase characterized by complex dynamics.
1202 This type of activity does not impose family members to reach a defi-
1203 nite conclusion of their argumentative discussions. Parents do not sit
1204 at the meal table with the aim of convincing their children about the
1205 validity of their opinions, and vice versa. At least, this is not their initial
1206 goal. For example, this happens when *the parent shifts the focus of the*
1207 *conversation*. In such a case, there is not a real conclusion but rather an
1208 interruption of the argumentative discussion. Another type of non-dia-
1209 lectical conclusion is when *the parent or the child changes the topic of the*
1210 *discussion after a long silence (pause of a few seconds)*. I have observed this
1211 type of conclusion less frequently than the previous three types because
1212 the children often asked many questions on the same issue and, accord-
1213 ingly, the parents had to continue the discussion. Examples of these two
1214 types of non-dialectical conclusion will be presented and discussed in
1215 Sects. 4.3.3 and 4.3.4.

1216 **4.3.1 The Child Accepts the Parent's Standpoint**

1217 The most frequent type of conclusion observed in the corpus is when
1218 the child accepts the parent's standpoint. For example, the children
1219 often accepted the parents' standpoint through a clear and explicit ver-
1220 bal expression, as in the following dialogue, that we have already seen in
1221 Sect. 4.1.3, between a 5-year-old child, Leonardo, and his mother: **AQ4**

1222 **Excerpt 4.15**

1223 Italian family V. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 42 years),
1224 mother (MOM, 40 years), Marco (MAR, 8 years and 6 months), and
1225 Leonardo (5 years and 7 months). All family members are seated at the
1226 meal table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table, MOM and MAR sit
1227 on the right-hand side of DAD, while LEO is seated on their opposite
1228 side.

1. *LEO: Mamma:: guarda!
Mom:: look!
→ *LEO: guarda cosa sto facendo con il limone
look what I am doing with the lemon
→ *LEO: sto cancellando
I am rubbing it out!
→ *LEO: sto cancellando questo colore
I am rubbing out the color
%sit: MOM prende dei limoni e si china di fronte a LEO di modo che
MOM takes the lemon and stoops down in front of LEO so that
her face is level with his
%sit: MOM posa alcuni limoni sul tavolo
MOM places the lemon on the meal table
2. *LEO: dai dammelo
give it to me
3. *MOM: eh?
eh?
4. *LEO: posso avere questo limone?
can I have this lemon?
5. *MOM: no:: no:: no:: no::
no:: no:: no:: no::
6. *LEO: perché no?
why not?



120 A. Bova

- 1231
7. *MOM: perché no? perché Leonardo, Mamma ha bisogno dei limoni
why not? because Leonardo, Mom needs the lemons
8. *LEO: perché Mamma?
why Mom?
9. *MOM: perché, Leonardo, tuo papà vuole mangiare una buona insalata
oggi [: con un tono di voce basso e dolce]
because, Leonardo, your Dad wants to eat a good salad today
[: with a low and sweet tone of voice]
10. *LEO: ah:: va bene Mamma
ah:: ok Mom

1232

1233 In this sequence, there is a difference of opinion between the child
1234 and his mother because the child wants to play with the lemons, while
1235 the mother states that he cannot play with the lemon. The mother, in
1236 line 7, answers that she needs the lemons, without providing any justi-
1237 fication for her need, but the child, in line 8, keeps asking his mother
1238 the reason why he cannot have the lemon. After, the mother advances a
1239 second argument to convince her son to change his opinion. Only after
1240 listening to the second argument, Leonardo accepts to change his opin-
1241 ion providing, in line 10, a clear and explicit verbal acceptance of his
1242 mother's standpoint ("ah:: ok Mom").

1243 In other cases, children showed acceptance of the parent's stand-
1244 point not providing a clear and explicit verbal acceptance of the parent's
1245 standpoint, but only by implementing the behavior demanded by the
1246 parent. The following dialogue that we have already seen in Sect. 4.1.3,
1247 between a 5-year-old child, Filippo, and his mother offers an illustration
of these dynamics:

1248 **Excerpt 4.16**

1249 Swiss family III. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 39 years),
1250 mother (MOM, 34 years), Manuela (MAN, 7 years and 4 months),
1251 Filippo (FIL, 5 years and 1 month), and Carlo (CAR, 3 years and
1252 1 month). All family members are eating, seated at the meal table. DAD
1253 sits at the head of the meal table. MOM and MAN sit on the left-hand
1254 side of DAD, while FIL sits on their opposite side.



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

121

1. *MOM: Filippo, devi mangiare un poco di questo formaggio
Filippo, you must eat a little of this cheese
 2. *FIL:
no.
 3. *MOM: si: perché solo il pane non è abbastanza
yes: because bread alone is not enough
 4. *FIL:
no, non voglio il formaggio
no, I do not want cheese
 5. *MOM: questo è quello che ha comprato il Nonno però:: è delizioso!
this is the one Grandpa bought, though:: it is delicious!
 6. *FIL:
davvero?
really?
 7. *MOM: sì, l'ha comprato il Nonno!
yes, Grandpa bought it!
 8. *FIL:
mhm:: ((sembra pensieroso))
mhm:: ((he seems thoughtful))
 9. *MOM:
è delizioso!
it is delicious!
- %act:
MOM mette un pezzo di formaggio nel piatto di FIL
MOM puts a piece of cheese on FIL's plate

1255

1256 In this sequence, there is a difference of opinion between the child
1257 and his mother because the mother wants her child eats the cheese,
1258 while the child does not want to eat it. The mother advances several
1259 arguments to try to convince her child to eat the cheese: “Just bread
1260 is not enough” (line 3), “It is delicious” (line 5 and line 9), and “This
1261 is the cheese Grandpa bought” (line 5 and line 7). The child, in con-
1262 clusion, shows an acceptance that he should eat the cheese without
1263 advancing an explicit verbal expression of acceptance of the mother’s
1264 standpoint. In this case, the choice of continuing to object to the paren-
1265 tal rule or ban appears to be more demanding and, accordingly, less
1266 convenient than accepting the mother’s standpoint. Note that the differ-
1267 ences in roles, age, and competences between parents and children cer-
1268 tainly play an important role and must be carefully considered (see e.g.,
1269 Heller, 2014; Lareau, 2003; Tannen, 1990). Even though challenging
1270 the parents’ standpoint can be feasible for the children, it is not always
1271 possible as they are the parents who decide the extent to which their
1272 standpoint is discussable.



1273 4.3.2 The Parent Accepts the Child's Standpoint

1274 The second type of dialectical conclusion is when the parent accepts
 1275 the child's standpoint. In this case, it is important to highlight how the
 1276 children, through their arguments, can convince their parents to change
 1277 their opinion. The next dialogue between a 7-year-old child, Paolo, and
 1278 his mother offers a clear illustration of this type of conclusion:

1279 Excerpt 4.17

1280 Swiss family II. Dinner 3. Family members: father (DAD, 38 years),
 1281 mother (MOM, 36 years), Paolo (PAO, 7 years), Laura (LAU, 4 years
 1282 and 5 months), and Elisa (ELI, 3 years and 2 months). All family mem-
 1283 bers are eating, seated at the meal table. DAD sits at the head of the
 1284 meal table. MOM and PAO sit on the left-hand side of DAD, while
 1285 LAU and ELI sit on their opposite side.

1. *MOM: vuoi un po' di risotto?
do you want a little risotto?
2. *PAO: no:: no::
no:: no::
3. *MOM: ma è buono!
but it is good!
4. *PAO: no:: è un po' strano
no:: it is a little strange
5. *MOM: ma Paolo, è davvero morbido::
but Paolo, it is really soft
6. *PAO: no, è strano non mi piace
no, it is strange I do not like it
7. *MOM: no::
no::
8. *PAO: sì, è strano
yes, it is strange
- %act: MOM assaggia il risotto
MOM tastes the risotto
9. *MOM: sì, effettivamente non è tanto buono
yes, actually it is not very good
10. *PAO: è strano!
it is strange!
11. *MOM: sarà il formaggio,
maybe because of the cheese
- *MOM: sì è un po' strano.
yes it is a little strange



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

123

1287 In this dialogue, a difference of opinion arises between the child,
1288 Paolo, and his mother because the mother, in line 1, wants Paolo to
1289 eat the risotto (“do you want a little risotto?”), but the child, in line
1290 2, refuses to eat it (“no:: no::”). The mother does not evade the bur-
1291 den of proof and, in line 3, advances an argument to convince the child
1292 to change his opinion (“but it is good!”). The child, in line 4, replies
1293 to his mother’s arguments putting forward an argument which aims to
1294 highlight the bad, for him, quality of the risotto: “it is a little strange.”
1295 The mother, in line 5, puts forward another argument based on the
1296 quality of the risotto to convince Paolo to eat it (“it is really soft”), but
1297 the child, in line 6, keeps asserting his opinion, saying that the risotto
1298 tastes strange. At this point, the mother is convinced by her child’s
1299 argumentation that she should taste the “strange” risotto herself. After
1300 doing so, she agrees, in line 9, that the risotto is a little strange indeed
1301 (“yes, actually it is not very good”). In this example, we can clearly see
1302 how the argument advanced by the child, in line 4, (“the risotto is a
1303 little strange”) produces the effect of convincing his mother to taste the
1304 risotto she has prepared herself. The use of the adjective “strange” makes
1305 it clear to the mother that the taste of the risotto is not good. After hav-
1306 ing tasted the risotto herself, she also agrees with her son that the risotto
1307 is not good.

1308 This second type of conclusion, i.e., the parent accepts the child’s
1309 standpoint, occurred when the argumentative discussions between par-
1310 ents and children were related to food. In the corpus, I did not find,
1311 instead, any case where the child succeeded in convincing the parent
1312 to accept a standpoint in discussions where the issues were related to
1313 the respect by children of the proper table manners during mealtime
1314 as well as on children’s social behavior outside the family context, e.g.,
1315 the school context. Accordingly, these findings suggest that the issues
1316 related to food can at times be discussable, whereas when the issues are
1317 related to teaching table manners and how to behave in social interac-
1318 tions outside the family, e.g., in the school context, the parents are not
1319 amenable to changing their opinions.

1320 **4.3.3 The Parent Shifts the Focus**
1321 **of the Conversation**

1322 The third type of conclusion of the argumentative discussions between
1323 parents and children during mealtime is not a conclusion, but rather an
1324 abrupt interruption of the argumentative discussion. I observed, in fact,
1325 how, at times, the parents avoided continuing the argumentative dis-
1326 cussion with their children by shifting the focus of the conversation. In
1327 this way, the parents avoided facing the argumentative discussion with
1328 their children. In particular, this happened when the parents consid-
1329 ered the issue not appropriate for discussion during mealtime or when
1330 they wanted their children to focus on eating rather than engaging in
1331 a discussion. The next dialogue between an 8-year-old child, Silverio,
1332 and his mother offers a clear illustration of this type of conclusion of an
1333 argumentative discussion:

1334 **Excerpt 4.18**

1335 Italian family I. Dinner 3. Family members: father (DAD, 38 years),
1336 mother (MOM, 38 years), Silverio (SIL, 8 years), and Gabriele (GAB,
1337 5 years and 4 months). All family members are seated at the meal table.
1338 DAD sits at the head of the meal table. MOM and GAB sit on the
1339 right-hand side of DAD, while SIL sits on their opposite side.

1. *SIL: Mamma, posso andare a giocare al computer?
Mom, can I go to play with the computer?
2. *MOM: no.
no
3. *SIL: perché?
why?
4. *MOM: adesso stiamo mangiando
we're eating now
- *MOM: quando si mangia, non si gioca al computer
during mealtime, you cannot play with the computer
5. *SIL: perché no?
why not?
6. *MOM: ma oggi a scuola non avevate il compito in classe di
matematica?
but today at school you had the Math test did not you?



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

125

7. *SIL: si!
yes!
→ *SIL: era difficile:
it was difficult:
8. *MOM: davvero?
really?
9. *SIL: si!
yes
10. *MOM: su che cosa era?
what was it about?
- [...]

1342

1343 In this dialogue, a difference of opinion arises between the child,
1344 Silverio, and his mother because the child, in line 1, asks his mother
1345 that he wants to play with the computer during mealtime (“Mom, can
1346 I go to play with the computer?”), but his mother, in line 2, disagrees
1347 with him (“no”). In line 3, Silverio asks his mother why he cannot play
1348 with the computer (“why?”). Through his Why-question, Alessandro
1349 makes it clear that he wants to know the reason why he cannot play
1350 with the computer, i.e., the reason for the prohibition imposed by his
1351 mother. In doing so, the child makes no effort to defend his position
1352 by putting forward arguments on his behalf. From an argumentative
1353 perspective, by asking a Why-question, the child assumes a waiting
1354 position before accepting or putting into doubt the parental directive.
1355 Instead, he challenges his mother to explain why he cannot play with
1356 the computer. Moreover, the child shows his desire to find out the
1357 implicit reasons on which his mother’s refusal is based. The mother, in
1358 line 4, does not avoid justifying her prohibition, putting forward her
1359 argument: “we’re eating now.” Even after listening to his mother’s argu-
1360 ment, the child, Silverio, in line 5, keeps asking his mother the reason
1361 why he cannot play with the computer (“why not?”). At this point, in
1362 line 6, the mother decides to shift the focus of the conversation, chang-
1363 ing the subject and opening a new discussion on a completely differ-
1364 ent topic: “but today at school you had the Math test, did not you?”.
1365 By doing so, the mother interrupts the argumentative discussion that
1366 she was having with her child before it reaches its conclusion, and the
1367 issue of playing with the computer will not be addressed any further



1368 over dinner. This type of non-dialectical conclusion of the argumen-
1369 tative discussions between parents and children shows, again, how the
1370 parents have a structural power in the conversations with their children.
1371 Even though challenging the parents' standpoint can be feasible for the
1372 children, this type of non-dialectical conclusion suggest that they are
1373 the parents who decide whether to conclude, or not, an argumentative
1374 discussion with their children.

1375 4.3.4 A Long Silence as an Indicator of Conclusion

1376 The fourth type of conclusion of the argumentative discussions
1377 between parents and children during mealtime is when after a long
1378 silence (pause of a few seconds) of both, parents and children change
1379 the topic of discussion. An example of this type of conclusion is illus-
1380 trated in the following dialogue between a mother and her 6-year-old
1381 son, Luca:

1382 Excerpt 4.19

1383 Swiss family I. Dinner 2. Family members: father (DAD, 41 years),
1384 mother (MOM, 38 years), Luca (LUC, 6 years and 8 months), and Luisa
1385 (LUI, 3 years and 11 months). All family members are seated at the meal
1386 table. DAD sits at the head of the meal table. MOM and LUI sit on the
1387 right-hand side of DAD, while LUC sits on their opposite side.

%sit: PAO si avvicina a DAD e gli dice qualcosa parlandogli
nell'orecchio
PAO goes towards DAD and whispers something in his ear

1. *MOM: non si dicono le cose all'orecchio, Luca
Luca, you cannot whisper things in people's ears
2. *LUC: perché?
why?
3. *MOM: dobbiamo ascoltarla tutti.
because everyone must hear it
4. *LUC: no::
no::



4 Prevailing Arguments and Types of Conclusions ...

127

5. *MOM: non si parla all'orecchio.
you cannot whisper in the ear
%act: MOM and DAD sorridono
MOM and DAD smile
%pau: 3.5 sec
6. *LUI: ancora insalata
more salad
7. *MOM: amore vuoi un altro po' d'insalata?
darling do you want a little more salad?
8. *LUI: si:
yes:

1390

1391 In this dialogue, a difference of opinion arises between the child,
1392 Luca, and his mother because in line 1, says to the child that he can-
1393 not whisper in his father's ear, but Luca, in line 2, disagrees with his
1394 mother ("why?", and "no:"). The mother does not evade the burden
1395 of proof and, in line 3, advances an argument to convince the child
1396 to change his opinion ("because everyone must hear it"). The child
1397 shows, in line 4, that he still disagrees with his mother ("no:"). The
1398 mother, in line 5, repeats, one more time, her standpoint ("you can-
1399 not whisper in the ear"). After the mother's sentence, both the mother
1400 and the child do not say anything for about 3.5 seconds. This pause
1401 indicates, in this case, that the argumentative discussion between her
1402 and the child, Luca, is concluded. After this pause, the mother starts a
1403 new discussion on a different topic with her younger daughter, Luisa.
1404 Like the previous type of conclusion, this type is also a non-dialectical
1405 conclusion. Differently from the previous type of non-dialectical
1406 conclusion, where the mother wanted to shift the topic of the con-
1407 versation, in this case, both the mother and the child appear to be
1408 not interested in continuing the argumentative discussion and, after
1409 a pause of a few seconds, they start talking about a different topic.
1410 However, I observed this type of conclusion less frequently than the
1411 previous three types, as children often asked questions, in particu-
1412 lar, Why-questions, to find out the implicit reasons on which their
1413 parents' directive are and, accordingly, the parents must continue the
1414 argumentative discussion.



References

1415

- 1416 Arcidiacono, F., & Bova, A. (2015). Activity-bound and activity-unbound
1417 arguments in response to parental eat-directives at mealtimes: Differences
1418 and similarities in children of 3–5 and 6–9 years old. *Learning, Culture and*
1419 *Social Interaction*, 6, 40–55.
- 1420 Bova, A. (2015). “This is the cheese bought by Grandpa”. A study of the argu-
1421 ments from authority used by parents with their children during mealtimes.
1422 *Journal of Argumentation in Context*, 4(2), 133–157.
- 1423 Bova, A., & Arcidiacono, F. (2013). Invoking the authority of feelings as a
1424 strategic maneuver in family mealtime conversations. *Journal of Community*
1425 *and Applied Social Psychology*, 23(3), 206–224.
- 1426 Bova, A., & Arcidiacono, F. (2014). “You must eat the salad because it is nutri-
1427 tious”. Argumentative strategies adopted by parents and children in food-
1428 related discussions at mealtimes. *Appetite*, 73, 81–94.
- 1429 Bova, A., & Arcidiacono, F. (2018). Interplay between parental argumentative
1430 strategies, children’s reactions, and topics of disagreement during mealtime
1431 conversations. *Culture and Social Interaction*, 19, 124–133.
- 1432 Brumark, Å. (2008). “Eat your hamburger!”—“No, I don’t want to!”
1433 Argumentation and argumentative development in the context of dinner
1434 conversation in twenty Swedish families. *Argumentation*, 22(2), 251–271.
- 1435 Busch, G. (2012). Will, you’ve got to share: Disputes during family mealtime.
1436 In S. Danby & M. Theobald (Eds.), *Disputes in everyday life: Social and*
1437 *moral orders of children and young people* (Vol. 15, pp. 27–56). Sociological
1438 Studies of Children and Youth. Bingley: Emerald.
- 1439 Heller, V. (2014). Discursive practices in family dinner talk and classroom dis-
1440 course: A contextual comparison. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*,
1441 3, 134–145.
- 1442 Hepburn, A., & Potter, J. (2011). Threats: Power, family mealtimes, and social
1443 influence. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 50(1), 99–120.
- 1444 Heritage, J., & Raymond, G. (2005). The terms of agreement: Indexing
1445 epistemic authority and subordination in assessment sequences. *Social*
1446 *Psychology Quarterly*, 68(1), 15–38.
- 1447 Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley:
1448 University of California Press.
- 1449 Raymond, G., & Heritage, J. (2006). The epistemics of social relations:
1450 Owning grandchildren. *Language in Society*, 35(5), 677–705.



- 1451 Rigotti, E., & Greco Morasso, S. (2019). *Inference in argumentation: A top-*
1452 *ics-based approach to argument schemes*. Cham: Springer.
- 1453 Sarangapani, P. M. (2003). *Constructing school knowledge: An ethnography of*
1454 *learning in an Indian village*. New Delhi: Sage.
- 1455 Tannen, D. (1990). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*.
1456 New York, NY: Morrow.
- 1457 van Eemeren, F. H., & Grootendorst, R. (2004). *A systematic theory of argu-*
1458 *mentation: The pragma-dialectical approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge
1459 University Press.
- 1460 Walton, D. N. (1997). *Appeal to expert opinion: Arguments from authority*.
1461 University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- 1462 Walton, D. N., Reed, C., & Macagno, F. (2008). *Argumentation schemes*.
1463 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1464 Wiggins, S. (2004). Talking about taste: Using a discursive psychological
1465 approach to examine challenges to food evaluations. *Appetite*, 43(1), 29–38.
- 1466 Wiggins, S., & Potter, J. (2003). Attitudes and evaluative practices: Category
1467 vs. item and subjective vs. objective constructions in everyday food assess-
1468 ments. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42(4), 513–531.

Author Query Form

Book ID: 477538_1_En

Chapter No: 4

Please ensure you fill out your response to the queries raised below and return this form along with your corrections.

Dear Author,

During the process of typesetting your chapter, the following queries have arisen. Please check your typeset proof carefully against the queries listed below and mark the necessary changes either directly on the proof/online grid or in the 'Author's response' area provided

Query Refs.	Details Required	Author's Response
AQ1	Please check and confirm the edit made in the chapter title and running heads.	
AQ2	Reference 'Quastoff and Krah (2012)' is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please provide the respective reference in the list or delete this citation.	
AQ3	References 'Vuchinich (1987, 1990)' are cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please provide the respective references in the list or delete these citations.	
AQ4	Kindly note that the citation 'Sect. 3.1.3' has been changed to 'Sect. 4.1.3'. Please check here and in subsequent occurrence. Amend if necessary.	