Introduction to the Special Issue "Boundaries between dialogic pedagogy and argumentation theory"

Chrysi Rapanta
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

Fabrizio Macagno
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

Abstract

Dialogue and argumentation are two processes that complement and mutually influence each other. However, this essential relationship is not sufficiently acknowledged by current educational research. This neglected relation is also mirrored by the lack of sufficient dialogue between two fields that are defined by the dialogical approach to education and argumentation, namely dialogic pedagogy and educational argumentation. In this Special Issue, we argue that dialogue pedagogies and argumentation theory and practice should communicate more, bridging their somehow different perspectives for the common goal of engaging learners in productive and constructive discussions.

Keywords: dialogue, argumentation, dialogic pedagogy, education

Chrysi Rapanta (Ph.D. in communication, 2011) works as a researcher in the field of Argumentation and Education at the Institute of Philosophy at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She has coordinated national and international projects on argumentation and dialogical practices in education, closely collaborating with teachers from various contexts and educational levels. She has authored several papers on argument-based teaching published on major international peer-reviewed journals such as *Review of Educational Research, Educational Research Review, Educational Psychology Review, Teaching & Teacher Education*, and *Learning, culture & social interaction*. She is also the author of "Argumentation strategies in the classroom" (2019, Vernon Press).

Fabrizio Macagno (Ph.D. in linguistics, 2008) works as an assistant professor in the departments of Philosophy and Communication at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. He has coordinated national and international projects on dialogical practices in different contexts, including education and medical communication. He authored several papers on definition, informal fallacies, argumentation schemes, and dialogue theory published in major international peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *Argumentation*, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *Informal Logic*, and *Pragmatics and Cognition*. His most important publications include the books *Argumentation Schemes* (Cambridge University Press 2008), *Emotive language in argumentation* (CUP 2014), *Interpreting straw man argumentation* (Springer 2017), and *Statutory interpretation: Pragmatics and argumentation* (CUP 2021).

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Dialogue and argumentation are two processes that complement and mutually influence each other. On one hand, engaging students in dialogic interactions helps them produce more dialogic moves (i.e., moves manifesting dialogicity), as the emergent multiple understandings that take place within a

dialogic space foster learners to think 'intersubjectively,' i.e., taking into consideration the others' viewpoints. Argument moves are considered high-dialogical moves because, for an argument to make sense, it always needs to include a different or contrary perspective, which is the core of argumentative reasoning (Kuhn, 1991; Kuhn et al., 2016a; Macagno, 2016).

The idea that dialogue improves thinking is well-established in the educational literature through the socio-constructivist learning theories of Vygotsky (1962) and Wertsch (1991). According to these authors, any learning taking place within the inter-mental zone, i.e., through dialogic interactions with significant others, can then be transferred to the intra-mental zone as a result of a process of skills' interiorization. Significant research shows that engaging in dialogue helps learners be more argumentative when they argue individually, namely in their writing (e.g., Kuhn et al. 2016b; Reznitskaya et al. 2012). Research has also shown that the types of oral arguments produced during systematic dialogic interactions improve (becoming more sophisticated) over time as a result of learners' engagement in the dialogue (Iordanou & Rapanta, 2021). Therefore, *dialogue can lead to improving argumentation skills*.

On the other hand, argumentative reasoning is dialogic by nature because it necessarily includes the skill of "antilogos" or counter-argumentation (Billig, 1987; Kuhn, 2018; Larraín & Haye, 2012). This means that dialogue, under a dialectical perspective, is an inherent aspect of arguing, as the duality of perspectives is an essential condition for effective argumentation. In argumentation and education, two similar concepts refer to this dialogical dimension of argumentation. The notion of "dual" or "two-sided arguments" captures the speaker's consideration of the opposing-side claims and arguments in one's own reasoning. Thus, a dual argument mentions the perspective(s) incompatible with the speaker's, provides rebuttals thereto, and qualifications to the speaker's claim (Felton & Herko, 2004). The notion of "integrated arguments" refers to different strategies through which a speaker (or writer) takes into account both sides of an issue – by refuting the opposing perspective, developing both positions into a compromise, or weighting the evidence on both sides and assessing the strength of the arguments in favor of both positions (Nussbaum & Schraw, 2007). Significant research shows that the more learners understand the dialogic nature of arguing, the more they are able to produce integrated arguments in the form of "however" statements (Kuhn et al., 2014; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011). The highest evidence of skilled argumentative reasoning has been identified with the ability to recognize the restrictions of one's own reasoning through counterarguing against oneself but then integrating these counterarguments in one's own reasoning (Nussbaum, 2021; Rapanta, 2019). This ability is also manifested in the academic writing (Macagno & Rapanta, 2019). Therefore, (skilled) *argumentation presupposes dialogue*.

However, this essential relationship between dialogue and argumentation is not sufficiently acknowledged by current educational research, as shown by the lack of a sufficient dialogue between two fields that are defined by the dialogical approach to education and argumentation, namely dialogic pedagogy and educational argumentation. Both research areas are developed by considering only their own perspective without integrating the complementary view, as explained below.

Dialogic pedagogy (DP) is a broadly defined field, with several traditions and practices being involved (Asterhan et al., 2020) that highlight the need to speak of pedago*gies* rather than pedagogy (Teo, 2019). The term "dialogue" has often been used interchangeably with the terms "classroom talk," "discussion," "communication," and "dialogical inquiry;" the authors commonly follow a strict dialogical paradigm mostly grounded on Bakhtin's works and a communication paradigm based on Habermas or the Philosophy for Children program (Lin, 2013). Different theories and paradigms of dialogue emphasize its different aspects and functions; however, put together, DP studies tend to focus on the features of classroom discourse and the climate that favor equal access and participation, legitimization of voices, accountability, community building, and critical thinking (Lin, 2013; Marttunen & Laurinen, 2009; Resnick et

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al., 2010). In particular, DP scholars tend to consider critical-argumentative reasoning as a by-product of dialogic behavior, meaning that when partners in dialogue engage in mutually exploring each other's ideas and negotiating meanings, a great part of such negotiation is potentially critical and constructive, resulting in deeper argumentation. However, DP studies explicitly focused on argumentation as a learning goal are scarce.

Dialogic argumentation has been largely defined as a "social and collaborative process necessary to solve problems and advance knowledge" (Duschl & Osborne, 2002, p. 41). Although eristic (disputative) argumentation exists – and it is highly common both in everyday and classroom peer-to-peer contexts – usually scholars identify argumentation as a pedagogical method with the types of argumentation dialogue called "inquiry" or "deliberation" (see, for example, Felton & Crowell 2022; Reznitskaya & Wilkinson 2017). Within the growing field of argumentation and education, two main currents are recognized (Muller-Mirza & Perret-Clermont, 2009): the first one, known as "arguing to learn," is characterized by the use of argumentation as an "instrument" for learning; the other, known as "learning to argue," aims at using dialogue to incentivize argumentative reasoning. For both, dialogue is "just" a vehicle for learning; as a consequence, the principles leading to a good dialogue are often neglected by argument-oriented literature.

In this Special Issue, we argue that dialogue pedagogies and argumentation theory and practice must communicate more, bridging their somehow different perspectives for the common goal of engaging learners in productive and constructive discussions. We base this argument on a recent literature review by Rapanta and Felton (2022), which showed that pedagogical framings vary from less to more task-focusing when considering arguing as a learning task. Most of the studies, largely defined by their "learning to argue" goal, emphasize the sensemaking and articulation aspects of argumentative dialogue much more than its deliberative and persuasion dimensions. This suggests that an increasing number of argumentation researchers tend to avoid a purely instrumentalist view of argumentation (winning a discussion) to include ontological aspects of engaging in authentic interactions with others (for the distinction between "instrumental" and "ontological" learning see Matusov, 2021). The benefits of this "marriage" between dialogic pedagogies and educational argumentation are also emphasized by Schwarz and Baker (2016), who stress the need to combine a dialectical approach (in which a normative approach to arguments and argumentative discussions is developed) with a dialogical one, through instilling dialogical norms or a dialogic ethos (Howe et al., 2019) when engaging students in argumentative practices.

Inspired by these ideas, this Special Issue breaks new ground through theoretical and empirical studies that make the connections between dialogue and argumentation explicit and equally meaningful for classroom practice. The first article by Michael Nussbaum, Ian Dove, and LeAnn Putney, entitled "Bridging dialogic pedagogy and logic through critical questions," explores the relationship between argumentation theory and dialogic pedagogy through a focus on critical questions. In particular, the authors present the Critical Questions Model of Argument Assessment (CQMAA) as a framework for evaluating arguments emerging in classroom discussions.

The second article is a theoretical reflection by Christine Howe, inspired by the latest research conducted by the author and colleagues in the field of dialogic teaching. In her contribution entitled "Classroom interaction and student learning: Reasoned dialogue versus reasoned opposition," Howe offers a thoughtful analysis of recent empirical research findings on students' reasoned dialogue, putting forward the idea that it is reasoned opposition more than dialogue that has significant learning effects.

In the third paper, Kiyotaka Miyazaki offers a theoretical contribution towards a connection between "Questioning in Bakhtinian dialogic pedagogy and argumentation theory." The author establishes theoretical connections in the view of questioning from an argumentation theory and a Bakhtinian

perspective and showcases his integrative approach through Japanese pedagogical scenarios. His innovative proposal aims at showing how dialogue – and, in particular, questions – are characterized by a continuous negotiation of meaning, where the process of interpretation becomes crucial.

The fourth contribution by Chrysi Rapanta and Fabrizio Macagno bears the title "Authentic questions as prompts for productive and constructive sequences: A pragmatic approach." In this empirical article, the authors offer an innovative view of the so-called authentic questions as pragmatic constructs emerging from types of argumentation dialogue. They conclude their analysis of a large multi-country classroom interaction corpus with a focus on discovery questions and their function for promoting more productive and constructive student participation.

The fifth article by Jonathan Kilpeläa, Kaisa Jokiranta, Jenna Hiltunen, Markus Hähkiöniemi, Sami Lehesvuori, Pasi Nieminen, and Jouni Viiri is an empirical and methodological contribution to "Analyzing science teacher support of dialogic argumentation using teacher roles of questioning and communicative approaches." Through an innovative analysis of classroom argumentative episodes, the authors identify different teacher roles accompanied by types of talk moves that function positively or negatively towards students' quality of contributions.

The last article of this Special Issue is "Advancing group epistemic practices in the resolution of interdisciplinary societal dilemmas," by Ehud Tsemach, Baruch Schwarz, Mirit Israeli and Omer Keynan. The authors present an intervention designed to resolve interdisciplinary societal dilemmas through dialogic argumentation with the goal of advancing classroom epistemic practices. Their use of Actor-Network Theory for analysing the discussions is an innovative and promising tool for bridging dialogic pedagogies with argumentation.

All in all, this Special Issue attempted to address the missing dialogue between dialogic pedagogy and educational argumentation. In particular, we tried to bring to light some aspects of a common agenda and overall mission between these two fields. For this purpose, we brought together scholars from these two research trends, engaging them to work on a common topic. In this Special Issue, three contributions (articles 2, 3, and 4) are by scholars who identify themselves more with the community of dialogic pedagogy and teaching, while the other three (articles 1, 5, and 6) are authored by scholars more familiar with argumentation theory and research. A common aspect between all contributions is that they represent the research conducted at the "boundaries" between dialogue and argumentation, pursuing research objectives that need a combination of methods and concepts from both fields. We encourage more scholars to promote this "frontier" research work and engage in a dialogue between the two disciplines for the sake of more meaningful classroom discussions and learning.

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