
“IT WAS PROBABLY THAT GUY?” – THE FUNCTIONS OF RECONSTRUCTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN INVESTIGATIVE TRAINING INTERVIEWS

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Abstract*

This paper explores the pragmatic and interactional functions of reconstructive speech acts in mock police interviews, based on a model of argumentative dialogue. The aim of the paper is to illustrate how the reconstructions apparently contribute to both the interaction between the police officer and the mock suspect in the interview activity and to the interaction in the training activity, i.e. between the participants attending the training course. Drawing on functional pragmatics and grammar, the analysis seeks to examine how reconstructions on the one hand function in the socially non-cooperative interaction in the mock interview, questioning the truth value of propositions and trustworthiness of the suspect, and, on the other hand seem to fulfil a supportive purpose in the training activity.

Keywords: Investigative interviewing, training activities, reconstructive speech acts, pragmatics, semantics, questions, forensic linguistics

1. Introduction

Taking its point of departure in speech act theory and functional grammar, this study focuses on *reconstructive speech acts*’ (see section 3) questioning and evaluating functions across different activity types embedded in simulated police interviews.

Police interviews with witnesses and suspects are one of the main sources for information during criminal investigation. In Denmark, such investigative

interviewing is inspired by the British PEACE-model¹ and principles from cognitive interviewing (Fischer and Geiselman 2010) and follows four stages: *Preparation, free account, questioning* and *closure* (Bitsch and Modin 2016:82, Gibbons 2003:145-146). The excerpts in this paper are from the stage of questioning, in which the interviewer “in the following order (...) will tend to use a lower question type if a higher one does not work (a) open questions (b) either/Or multiple choice questions (c) Specific but not leading questions (d) leading questions” (Gibbons 2003:145-146). The aim of the investigative interview is to clarify the circumstances of the event under investigation and as objectively and accurately as possible, elicit “correct information in an unbiased and open-minded manner compared to a question-answer approach” (Hviid 2017:30).

Since 2005, the Danish police has conducted investigative interviews based on the Danish interview model. Furthermore, interview training is a substantial part of the education and ongoing training of police officers. Part of the training is conducted as simulated investigative interviews with police officers playing the roles of witnesses, suspects, and interviewer. How the participants of such training interviews handle the shifting communicative roles, and how they make sense of the contributions to this complex kind of interaction, has not yet been studied in a Danish context. Similar aspects of this kind of complex communication have been the focus of other studies, though, among others Linell and Thunqvist’s study of simulated job interviews. Linell and Thunqvist (2003:413) describe how participants involved in communication that involves teaching are often “inquiring about what is going on, and rehearsing, evaluating, and making meta-comments on activities and happenings”. Thus, Linell and Thunqvist (2003:431) notes, the participants move in and out of framings² and “build their utterances to fit a specific activity context, or to fit several such contexts at the same time, and they enact role identities associated with these activities”.

In the data of the present study, the participants also seem to orient to different framings and the *activity types* (Levinson 1992) embedded in the interview training-situation. Most of the time, though, evaluation and meta-comments are phrased as utterances that can count as contributions to both the training activity and the interview activity. The excerpts presented in this paper are illustrative of how interlocutors in complex communicative activities, with distinctly different inferential frames to derive inference from, manage to navigate and switch between activities. Reconstructive speech acts seem to be a helpful tool for this. Thus, the analysis serves to illustrate how different activity types make certain inferences possible and acceptable, and to demonstrate how a model of argumentative dialogue holds useful concepts for analysing the negotiation of meaning across activities.

In authentic as well as mock investigative interviews, the reconstructive speech acts seem to serve the purpose of open questions well as they invite the interviewee to provide a more or less free account. However, a police

interview is an activity type where “police officers tend to use questions to glean information, query, accuse, etc., with the ultimate aim of testing the veracity of a witness’s or suspect’s account of events (Archer 2020, this issue, see also Vrij 2008). That is, an activity type with a built-in conflict or divergent points of view. On that basis, Nielsen’s *model of argumentative dialogue* (Nielsen 2005) establishes a useful starting point for the analysis of the interaction in training interviews, in particular the notions of *reconstruction* and *criticism*. Among others, Nielsen’s model draws on Searle’s (1976) speech act theory and Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle that, accordingly, form the theoretical and analytical framework of the present study. In addition, the analysis of the contextual pragmatic functions of the reconstructions draws on Danish Functional Grammar (Hansen and Heltoft 2019) and studies of epistemic stance in Danish spoken language (Mortensen 2012) and in courtroom interaction (Mortensen and Mortensen 2017).

An evaluating function of reconstructions is the focus of this paper, that is, reconstructions that function as questions while at the same time evaluate certain aspects of the interviewee’s³ utterances – apparently across the activities embedded in the training interview. My labelling of the reconstructions as questions is based on semantic and contextual interpretations (see also section 4.1), but since the aim of this paper is not to determine whether the reconstructions are to be considered questions or not, I will refrain from discussing ways to identify and classify questions.

2. The training interview activity

The interaction analysed in this study takes place as a mock police interview during a training course for police officers. Thus, there are, at least, two different activity types (Levinson 1992), the *interview activity* and the *training activity*, embedded in the overarching and complex activity, the *training interview*.

The participants in the training interview probably know each other, at least from attending the same training course for some days. Within the context of the training activity, the relation is symmetric, and the goals for the participants are probably more or less the same; that is, training and improving their interviewing skills and performing well in order to make the mock interview proceed the best way possible. Consequently, the participants have a common interest in keeping the mock interview on the right track and play their roles as they are instructed to do.

In the context of the interview activity, the interviewees follow their instructions about what they are supposed to tell the interviewer – and what they do not want to tell. The participants try to simulate an asymmetric relation, but obviously, the conditions for the interaction in the interview activity are not the same as the conditions for an authentic police interview, neither regarding the relation between the participants or possible conflicting goals and interests.

As already mentioned, the training interview holds two different activity types. On the one hand, these activities constitute different framings for the interlocutors to act within, and on the other hand, they intertwine. Activity types are "a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded, events with *constraints* on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions" (Levinson 1992:69). Hence, the notion of activity types is a useful tool for distinguishing and analysing the interaction and the interlocutors' speech acts in the training interview.

Activities hold distinctive structural elements that are "rationally and functionally adapted to the point or *goal* of the activity in question, that is the function or functions that members of the society see the activity as having" (Levinson 1992:71). Thus, the activity type constrains which roles it is possible for the interlocutors to have, and how they are able to contribute to the interaction, linguistically as well. Speech can be a more or less integrated part of an activity, and the organisation of the activity both constrains "what will count as an allowable contribution to each activity", and constitutes certain *activity-specific rules of inference* that "help to determine how what one says will be "taken" – that is, what kinds of inferences will be made from what is said" (Levinson 1992:97). As regards rules of inference, the training activity and the interview activity constitute quite different framings for the participants to derive meaning from. In addition, the interview activity simulates a relation between participants with assumed conflicting goals and assumed lack of *social cooperation*⁴ (Archer 2005:58). Even so, Levinson (1992:77) notes, "there could be some quite interesting relations between Grice's maxims and different kinds of activities, of a sort where some of the maxims are selectively relaxed to varying degrees in activities of specific types". Levinson (1992:78) argues that even in conversations that are not inherently cooperative, i.e. in the social sense of the word, it is possible to talk about relations between specific activity types and Grice's maxims, if one "accept[s] Grice's maxims as specifications of some basic *unmarked* communication context, deviations from which, however common, are seen as special or *marked*".

3. Theoretical background

The notion of *reconstruction* employed in this study, is inspired by the model of argumentative dialogue put forward by Nielsen (2005, 2010), in which the counter argumentative speech act types *reconstruction* and *criticism* are discussed in detail. The model is rooted in the pragma-dialectical school of argumentation studies (e.g. van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984, van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, Grootendorst et al. 1996, Nielsen 2005) that combines "the pragmatic focus on language as social action with the dialectical focus of rule-based conflict resolution" (Nielsen 2005:26). In the pragma-dialectical approach, arguments are identified as *external*, *functional*, *social* and *dialectical*. Consequently, studying argumentation builds on four

corresponding methodological premises that “are the basis for integrating the descriptive dimension of argumentation as an actual phenomenon of argumentative discourse with the normative dimension of argumentation as an essential ingredient of critical discussion” (Grootendorst et al. 1996:276). Briefly outlined, the methodological premise of *functionalisation* points to the focus on “the function of argumentation in the verbal management of disagreement” (Grootendorst et al. 1996:278) and as persuasive acts (Nielsen 2005:27). The notion of *externalisation* covers the focus on language and what interlocutors “have expressed in discourse, whether directly or indirectly” (Grootendorst et al. 1996:276). Considering arguments as communicative and interactional acts, psychological dispositions and motives should not be the focus of analysis. Rather, the analysis of arguments is supposed to concentrate on the “externalized-or externalizable-commitments” of the interlocutors (Grootendorst et al. 1996:277) and “distinguish what commitments follow from the discursive contributions” (Nielsen 2005:27).

Identifying arguments as *social*, signals that argumentation is a dialogical process involving two or more interlocutors participating in argumentative interaction, “switching the communicative roles of speaker and hearer, and the interactional roles of protagonist and antagonist” (Nielsen 2005:27). Finally, according to Nielsen (2005:28) “*dialectification* of argumentation refers to van Eemeren and Grootendorst’s philosophical position in critical rationalism” and the idea that argumentation is dialogical in the sense that it is not just a process of “*advancing* standpoints, but just as much *criticising* standpoints”. Accordingly, the dialectification of argumentation analysis covers a set of rules for the dialectical conduct of critical discussion.

Nielsen (2005:185) notes that his approach to argumentative dialogue “can be approximately characterised ‘a pragma-dialectical approach’”, stressing that “Argumentation is a pragmatic phenomenon and should be studied as such. Argumentation should be evaluated in terms of its critical adequacy as a dialectical process, according to critical rationalist principles”. However, the pragma-dialectical approach is normative while the purpose of Nielsen’s approach is descriptive, aiming to “show that language users *do* in fact occasionally reconstruct unexpressed premises in rational (co-operative/ reasonable) ways” (Nielsen 2005:188).

3.1. A model of argumentative dialogue

Argumentative dialogue involves a *protagonist* who expresses and defends a point of view, and an *antagonist* who challenges and criticises the protagonist’s argument (Nielsen 2005:204). Nielsen proposes a model that illustrates these two roles and the linguistic actions typically connected to them, including the speech acts’ linguistic expressions and functions:

	PROTAGONIST	ANTAGONIST	
Linguistic expression	Object linguistic	Meta-linguistic referents and verbs	Meta-linguistic operators
Illocution	Claiming entailment and soundness	<i>Reconstruction</i> by Paraphrases Implicata	<i>Criticism</i> by Formal refutations Factual refutations
Perlocution	Persuasion/ conflict resolution	Clarification	Meta-persuasion
Type of argument	Argument	Warranting counter argument	Counter argument

Figure 1: Model of argumentative dialogue (Nielsen 2005:204)

The antagonistic argumentation involves the meta-linguistic utterance *reconstruction* and the meta-argumentative *criticism*. Neither of these are “committed to particular direct speech act types”, but “may be phrased as assertions, questions, etc.” (Nielsen 2005:198). The purpose of reconstructions is to clarify the protagonist’s argumentation by reproducing what the protagonist has literally uttered or by “indicating what the protagonist *meant* by what he said, or what he is further *committed* to mean in the given situation” (Nielsen 2005:36). The reconstruction forms the basis of the antagonist’s criticism, which is the core of the counter argument and *criticises* or *evaluates* the protagonist’s argument (Nielsen 2005:209).

Following Searle’s taxonomy reconstructions are “a special type of representative speech act. But whereas the typical representative speech act aims at bringing ‘the words to fit the world’, this type aims at bringing the words to fit some other words” (Nielsen 2005:206). Furthermore, Nielsen (2005:206) argues, the essential condition regarding the reconstruction, is more complex because “the speaker/antagonist is non-committed to the truth of the propositional content conveyed by the meta-linguistic referents, while he is committed to the truth of the meta-linguistic verbs and operators”. That is, the antagonist is committed to the consistency between the propositional content, or the intended meaning, and his reconstruction of this. Consequently, a reconstructive speech act “can never in itself add up to critical argument” (Nielsen 2005:209).

Hence, Nielsen (2005:206) proposes the following felicity conditions for reconstructive speech acts,⁵ stressing that “it is crucial to operate with two different propositional contents, the propositional content of the reconstructive speech act itself, *p*, and the propositional content of the reconstructed utterance, *p*”.

1. *Content condition (or propositional act.)*⁶

Any proposition *p* describing any proposition *p*'.

(This is a deviation from the representative speech act whose propositional content is simply 'Any proposition *p*'. But reconstruction is meta-linguistic, so in order to count as a reconstruction, the content of the utterance should be about some other utterance, either its literal expression (paraphrase) or its implicit meaning (implicatum)).

2. *Preparatory condition*

2.1 Proposition *p*' has been uttered (directly or indirectly) at some time prior to the utterance of proposition *p*.

2.2 *S* has evidence for *p*. It is not obvious to *S* and *H* that *H* already knows *p*.

2.3 Insofar as *p*' has been uttered by *H*, *H* is prepared to have *p*' reconstructed or interpreted.

(Ad 2.1: Clearly, reconstructing some speech act presupposes that the speech act in question has actually been uttered (i.e., said, implicated, or implied) at the time of the reconstruction. 2.2 does not deviate from Searle's account, while 2.3 simply states that it is a preparatory condition that *H* (if *H* is the protagonist) accepts to engage in meta-linguistic discourse about *p*' in the given context.)

3. *Sincerity condition*

S believes that *p* accurately describes *p*'.

(*S* believes that his utterance, *p*, gives a charitable reconstruction of the reconstructed utterance, *p*', but he does not have to believe *p*'.)

4. *Essential condition*

S takes on the obligation that *p* accurately describes *p*'.

(In producing the reconstructive utterance, *S* is committed to the accuracy of the fit between meta-linguistic reconstruction and the utterance it is a reconstruction of, but *S* is not committed to *p*' representing a state of affairs.)

Figure 2: Felicity conditions for reconstructions (Nielsen 2005:207)

As to the criticising speech act, Nielsen (2005:208-209) characterises this as "a meta-linguistic description of the correspondence between some linguistic phenomenon and the facts, or the coherence between two or more linguistic phenomena". That is, criticism as *factual refutation* referring to "the truth value of some particular utterance", or as *formal refutation* referring to "the consistency between two or more utterances". When performing the criticism, the speaker is only committed to his *evaluation* of the reconstructed propositional content. On that basis, Nielsen (2005:208) proposes the following felicity conditions for criticising speech acts, represented by q . The utterance that is criticised or evaluated is represented by p .

1. *Content condition (or 'propositional act')*

Any proposition q evaluating any proposition p '.

(The content of the utterance should be about some other utterance(s), and it should specify S 's evaluation of that other utterance, or S 's evaluation of the relationship between those other utterances.)

2. *Preparatory condition*

S has evidence for q . It is not obvious to S and H that H already knows q .

(Again this condition is identical to the condition for the prototypical 'assertion', perhaps with the addition that insofar as p ' is ascribed to H , H should be prepared to accept having his utterances evaluated by S in the given context.)

3. *Sincerity condition*

S believes that q accurately evaluates p '.

(The speaker believes that his evaluation refers to the truth value of some utterance (factual refutation) or to the consistency between some utterances (formal refutation)), and that his evaluation is true.

4. *Essential condition*

S takes on the obligation that q accurately evaluates p '.

(S is committed to his utterance referring to the truth value of some utterance or the consistency between some utterances.)

Figure 3: Felicity conditions for criticism (Nielsen 2005:208)

As appears from the felicity conditions for reconstructions, Nielsen distinguishes between reconstructive speech acts in the form of *paraphrases* or *implicata*. A paraphrase is “an account of some proposition that has been literally said”, and “implicatum is understood as an account of some proposition which has been implicated *by* what has been literally said, and/or is derived as a necessary condition for the literally said to be coherent” (Nielsen 2005:206).

Nielsen (2005:175) distinguishes between implicata that are *intended* and *non-intended* by the speaker. The latter refers to a situation where the meaning intended by the speaker, and the meaning reconstructed by the hearer, are not identical. Nielsen suggests that “meaning is always negotiated *in* conversation”, and that non-intended meaning, like intended meaning, is implicatural. Thus, he elaborates on Grice’s account of conversational implicature saying that “In accounts like Grice’s it appears that meaning is transmitted *from* speaker *to* hearer“ (Nielsen 2005:175). As opposed to this, Nielsen (2005:175) stresses that “it is the hearer, not the speaker, that actually does the inferential work” and derives the implicatum. Hence, Nielsen characterizes “the *act* of implicature” as a reciprocal action involving a double agency, illustrated by the figure below:

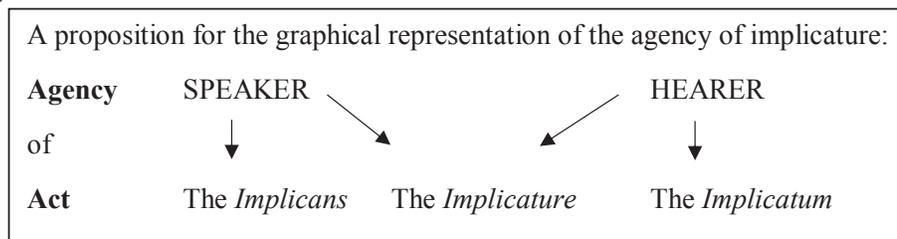


Figure 4: The agency of implicature (Nielsen 2005:176)

Nielsen (2005:176) argues that “an implicatum that was not intended by the speaker is also a result of the act of implicature, seeing that it was arrived at by the same kind of inferential procedure as traditional implicatures”. Hence, drawing on Ennis (1982, Nielsen 2005:178), Nielsen distinguishes between derived implicata as *intended meaning (used assumptions)*, that is, “assumptions that have actually been intended by the speaker”, and *commitments (needed assumptions)* that are “thought to be necessary by a ‘rational judge’, i.e. some external norm for rationality”. On a theoretical level, the two kinds of implicata are different, but in dialogue they are “performed in practically identical ways”, and “the practical analysis of argumentative dialogue will generally not be able to draw a distinct line between the two types of derived implicata” (Nielsen 2005:179-180).

4. The training interview as argumentative dialogue

The model of argumentative dialogue outlined above captures central features of more kinds of conflicting dialogue than argumentation per se. Indeed, the

training interview may be conceptualised through this lens. According to Nielsen (2005:136) “the fact that communication involves co-operation does not contradict the fact that argumentative dialogue is very often a kind of conflict: there has to be a divergence of opinion, otherwise there cannot be argumentation in any ordinary sense of the word”. This point of view goes for training interviews as well.

In a police interview one might expect that the suspect “may try to avoid committing himself to any definite statement of fact” (Levinson 1992:77). The interview in this study is not authentic, though, but during the training course, some of the participants are instructed to play the role of a suspect who is unwilling to share details with the interviewer and to lie about certain parts of the mock event. However, such individual and psychological dispositions, or lack of social cooperativeness, are not to be confused with Gricean, communicative cooperation and intentions (Archer 2005:58). Thus, when the mock suspect is lying or avoids shedding light on relevant parts of the event under investigation, he will most likely make his contributions as informative as required in the particular situation, but no more than that – that is, informative enough to count as communication and convey a communicative intention of truthfulness. As for the training activity, the participants also engage in a kind of argumentative dialogue when they reconstruct and evaluate the certainty of a co-participant’s utterances in relation to remembering and following the instructions, they have been given.

Applying the model of argumentative dialogue to the training interview, I employ the interactional roles, *protagonist* and *antagonist*, though referring to them as *interviewee* and *interviewer* respectively. As mentioned in section 3, arguments are identified as social in the pragma-dialectical approach, meaning that the participants in the argumentative interaction switch interactional roles in the dialogical process. In this respect, the training interview differs from the model of argumentative dialogue, at least with regard to the interview activity. In this kind of institutional interaction, “there is a significant and built-in asymmetry of power and knowledge in the institutional participant roles (...) which cast the institutional member (...) as the questioner and the non-institutional member (witness, defendant, suspect, etc.) as the respondent” (Harris 2011:282).

Hence, switching roles is not part of the interview activity, and consequently the interviewer, roughly speaking, has the interactional role of the antagonist who reconstructs and criticises the statements given by the interviewee who plays the role of a suspect, i.e. the protagonist in Nielsen’s model. These are the role identities associated with and constrained by the interview activity. In terms of interactional roles, obviously, the training activity constitutes a less constraining frame for the participants to act within.

4.1. Reconstructions as questions

In Nielsen's model, the meta-communicative reconstructive speech act serves as a clarification or warning on which the meta-argumentative criticism is based. In the excerpts presented in this paper, though, some of the reconstructions serve both a clarifying and a criticising or evaluating purpose. For that reason, I only employ the notion of *reconstruction* in my analysis, thus defining it as a speech act type that can fulfil both the clarifying function *and* the criticising function.

According to Nielsen, both reconstructing and criticising utterances can be phrased as assertions, questions, etc. Based on interactional and semantic interpretations, I consider the reconstructions displayed in this paper to be *functional questions* in the sense that they are utterances that "effectively seek[s] to elicit information, confirmation or agreement" (Heinemann 2010:2703, see also Stivers and Enfield 2010). Following Mortensen's (2020, this issue) categorisation, the reconstructions resemble declarative questions, as they "do not have morphosyntactic features that clearly make them questions", and echo questions, as they repeat (part of) the interviewee's utterance *and* elicit a reply from the interviewee as well (Mortensen 2020, this issue, see also Noh 1998). The reconstructions share certain characteristics with declarative questions, seeing that declarative questions rarely function as 'pure' questions (Teleman, Hellberg and Andersson 1999, Mortensen 2018). Declarative questions, as well as reconstructions, are meta communicative and require an utterance prior to the declarative question (Mortensen 2018:118-119), and, equal to the essential condition of reconstructions, the speaker who utters a declarative question, is not committed to the truth of the propositional content, but to the meta linguistic operators (Mortensen 2018:124).

As the following analysis will illustrate, Nielsen's model of argumentative dialogue makes it possible to capture how, on the one hand, the reconstructions function as questions seeking to elicit information and, on the other hand evaluate and test the interviewee's statement and trustworthiness.

5. Method and data

The excerpts examined in this paper are a selection of examples from a study of the functions of reconstructions in mock police interviews. The original dataset consists of audio recordings of 39 mock police interviews and originates from an experimental study in the field of applied criminology and police management, conducted during an interview training-course for experienced detectives (Hviid 2017). The mock interviews are set up as role-plays based on the same mock case. The participants attending the training course take turns playing the roles of the interviewer, suspect and a willing witness. Prior to playing the role of a suspect or a willing witness, the participants have read an instruction about their character, what they experienced during the event under investigation, and how much they are willing to tell the police (Hviid 2017:33). During the mock interview, the participants are allowed to consult the written instruction.

5.1. The mock case

The mock event under investigation is a case of violence that involves four young men⁷. One of them, Sedat, is a suspect and the interviewee in the excerpts in this paper. Sedat is a gang member, and by the time of the event he was hanging out with a boy from the neighbourhood, Søren. Two young men, Louai and Kim, show up. They are both members of a rival gang, and soon Sedat and Louai start to argue and push each other. Someone has brought a knife, and during the scuffle, Søren is hit and seriously injured. Kim and Louai run away, while Sedat and a witness take care of Søren.

In the mock case, two issues in particular are at stake. Firstly, who brought the knife, who stabbed Søren, and where is the knife now? Secondly, did the four young men meet by coincidence, or did Louai and Sedat set up the meeting to discuss an ongoing conflict?

5.2. Method

An initial review of the data material showed that the interviewers characteristically repeat and paraphrase the interviewees' statements in various ways that seem to fulfil different functions in the particular contexts.

Four interviews with mock suspects were chosen for further analysis, and based on transcriptions of these, using standard orthography, without indicating intonation, pause lengths etc., the interviews were hand-coded inductively as part of a preliminary analysis.

Based on the preliminary analysis of the four interviews, three predominant functions that the reconstructions seem to fulfil were identified; *request for confirmation*, *request for elaboration* and *evaluation*. While requests for confirmations and elaboration, roughly speaking, clarify in terms of comprehension, equalling Nielsen's reconstructive speech act, the evaluating reconstructions question truth value and trustworthiness, more or less equalling Nielsen's criticising speech act. Furthermore, the evaluating function differs from requests for confirmation and elaboration because the interviewee either changes his or her explanation or sticks to the explanation that the interviewer evaluates or questions, thus making the dispute clear despite the interviewer's disbelief in his or her trustworthiness.

The three functions formed the basis of a quantitative overview of the reconstructions' occurrences and functions in the four interviews and, furthermore, a qualitative analysis of two of the four interviews⁸. The two interviews illustrate how the reconstructions fulfil different purposes, especially when the interaction is conflictual, and how the reconstructions operate across the activities embedded in the training interview. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate sequences of interaction where the reconstructions function across the activities and in the intersection of social cooperation and non-cooperation, when the interviewer on the one hand questions the suspect's trustworthiness, and on the other hand helps his co-participant

and supports the training activity. For this reason, the qualitative analysis is focused on reconstructions with a predominantly evaluating function.

6. Analysis

The excerpts⁹ in the analysis below are from an interview with the mock suspect Sedat. Sedat has a criminal background, and the police knows him very well. He is member of a criminal gang and is not in any way interested in talking to the police, and whenever possible he sidesteps issues that hold a potential conflict.

In this interview, a female interviewee plays Sedat's character. Therefore, I refer to the interviewee as *she* and *her*, even though Sedat is male. It is very difficult for the interviewee to remember her instructions, which shows in various ways. Several times, she pauses during her explanation and tries to remember what to say, sometimes laughing and sometimes rereading her instruction before going on with the interview. At one point during the interview, the participants explicitly stop the interview activity and step out of the roles as suspect and detective. The interviewee is rather confused and tells the interviewer and the attending observer that it is very hard for her to remember the instructions and to distinguish the characters from the mock case, therefore struggling to remember which character she is actually playing, and what she is supposed to answer.

In the analysis, I will illustrate how the interviewer questions and raises doubt about the certainty of the interviewee's statements by reconstructing the epistemic expressions in the interviewee's propositions. Prior to the interaction in excerpt 1, the interviewee has explained that she and another suspect were arguing. Suddenly Søren, the victim, was screaming and bleeding, and the interviewee says that "something must have hit him". The interviewee does not know what this "something" was, but says that it might have been a knife. In addition, she claims that she does not know who brought the knife, and now the interviewer tries to shed light on this issue.

Excerpt 1¹⁰

- 1 IN: in that case where did the knife come from
2 IE: → well it is *jo* it is *jo probably* that guy Louaia who who had it
3 IN: → **probably** that guy Louaia who had it
4 IE: yes
5 IN: → yes why are you saying that it is probably him who had it can
you explain a
6 → **bit** about that
7 IE: → well so it is *jo*, because when when he (p) when he started
and and

- 8 scold me there right er
9 IN: yes
10 IE: → about, er, my family then then, er, then I **jo** got really angry **jo**
and like
11 that and then I also started **jo** pushing him a little
12 IN: okay
13 IE: at at Louaia that so so so therefore so, er, then then all of a
sudden I was afraid
14 → because then I could all of a sudden **see** one that that that
Louaia had a knife
15 IN: → you are saying that you **see** a knife then
16 IE: yes
17 IN: yes
18 IE: → I **actually** see a knife
19 IN: → try to tell **a little more** about that if you try to
20 IE: yes
21 IN: recall, er, when you see the knife for the first time.

In line 2 in the excerpt above, the interviewee employs the epistemic adverb *nok* ‘probably’, thus indicating that she is guessing or that her statement is based on inference rather than recollection or knowledge about what she saw during the event (Jacobsen 1992:15). By employing *probably* the interviewee “opens the dialogical space” (Mortensen and Mortensen 2017:415, see also White 2003, Martin and White 2005), and by indicating weak epistemic support for the statement, the interviewee gives herself the opportunity to revise her statement if necessary (Mortensen 2012:67).

The interviewer reconstructs the proposition, emphasising *probably* and thereby addressing the interviewee’s uncertainty and questioning the truth value of a statement based on guesses and inferred conclusions. Considering the speech act as a declarative question, the interviewer questions the evidential basis for the statement. This seems to recur in the *wh*-question following (line 5), where the interviewer asks *why* the interviewee says that it is *probably* Louaia, thus requesting the interviewee to explain the reason (Heinemann 2010:2713) for the uncertainty rather than elaborating on the propositional content. However, the interviewer employs *lidt* ‘a little’ in his question, thereby downplaying the utterance and making it possible for the interviewee to revise her explanation – which she does (line 7) after she has consulted the written instruction for the mock case and her role as the suspect. Based on this and the following revised statement, it seems plausible

that the weak epistemic support, marked by *probably* (line 2), derives from the participant's trouble remembering the instructions for the mock case and her role as the suspect Sedat in particular. Thus, the training activity and the mock interview activity intertwine, and from the perspective of the interviewee, the opening of the dialogical space might be a way of showing her uncertainty about the instructions, thereby leaving herself with the opportunity to revise her statement if it is questioned or challenged by the interviewer.

In line 7-15, the interviewee changes her explanation about the knife, now stating that Louai did have a knife. Four times in this sequence (line 7, 10, 11), she employs the Danish dialogical particle *jo* 'as you know'. Thereby, the interviewee indicates mutual agreement about her statement, as *jo* holds the polyphonic instruction that the speaker has a point of view that she expects the interviewer to agree upon (Hansen and Heltoft 2019:1050). The interviewee ends her revised explanation by saying that she *faktisk* 'actually' sees a knife. By employing *actually* she indicates and recognises that an opposing point of view is possible (in this case her own inferred conclusion in line 2), but that she no longer subscribes to that (Mortensen 2012:82). Furthermore, the verb *see* is in the present tense. This is an example of *dramatic present tense* (Searle 2001:106) and might indicate that the utterance refers to a here and now in the interaction of both the training activity and the interview activity. In combination with the relatively strong epistemic support from *actually*, the inference derived in relation to the training activity could be that the participant is now more certain about the instruction and her role as a mock suspect. As a contribution to the interaction in the interview activity, the use of the present tense might be a way of making her explanation more trustworthy.

In summary, excerpt 1 shows two examples of how the interviewer reconstructs and emphasises the particular part of the interviewee's utterance that signals certainty – or the lack of it. In both cases, the reconstruction evaluates the epistemic stance taking, thus, by itself forming an indirect question about trustworthiness and truth value. The interviewer expresses this question more explicitly in the requests for elaboration that follow. Referring to the model for argumentative dialogue, another possible analysis could be that the reconstruction in line 3, holding the epistemic stance marker *probably*, is a clarifying warning about the following criticism or evaluation. Nevertheless, I find it reasonable to say that the reconstruction in itself holds both a reconstructive and a criticising and evaluating aspect, and that the interviewer makes this explicit in the following *wh*-question because the interviewee does not respond to the implicit questioning at first.

Whether the interviewee's utterances in excerpt 1 express a combination of the participant's trouble remembering and the mock suspect's unwillingness to talk to the police is not possible to tell for certain. It is possible to derive meaning in relation to the inferential frame of both the training activity and the interview activity, while not knowing which implicature is actually

intended by the interviewee. The interviewer seems to respond to the utterances as contributions to the interview activity, but his reconstructions of the ambiguous utterances fit the inferential frames of both the training activity and the interview activity, thus questioning his co-participant's memory and the mock suspect's unwillingness respectively.

Later in the interview, an exchange similar to the one in excerpt 1 takes places. Prior to the exchange in excerpt 2 below, the interviewee has explained that during the quarrel Louai tries to stab the interviewee, and that Kim, the interviewee's friend, tries to intervene. The interviewer asks the interviewee to elaborate on what was going on.

Excerpt 2

- 1 IE: yes (sighs), er, (p) I do not quite know how he grabs it I just
 think he is trying
2 to help me like in this situation because he knows that it can
 end up badly (.),
3 → er, (p) and then there's this boy that that the Danish boy I
 think he had a knife
4 → too **actually** (p)
5 IN: → **think**
6 IE: well yes [it]
7 IN: [yes]
8 IE: → it he had a knife too
9 IN: → try to explain **a bit** about that

In the excerpt above, the interviewee says that she *tror* 'thinks' that the Danish boy had a knife too (line 3). By using the epistemic verb *think*, the interviewee marks her utterance as a subjective speech act with relatively weak evidential support (Mortensen 2012:82). However, she ends her statement with *faktisk* 'actually' in the final position, which marks a stronger evidential support to the statement. By repeating *think* (line 5), the interviewer evaluates the epistemic basis for the statement. Thus, in the context this reconstruction functions as an elliptical declarative (Heinemann 2010:2705) that raises doubts about the subjective and epistemic part of the interviewee's statement. The interviewee responds rather vaguely, though maintaining that the Danish boy had a knife (line 9). In her response she uses the past tense of the verb *had*. Compared to her use of the present tense in excerpt 1 (line 14), this could indicate that the utterance in this case functions as a contribution to the interaction in the interview activity, and that the intended inference is that the mock suspect is now standing by her explanation.

In excerpt 1 and 2, I have shown how the interviewer reconstructs those parts of the interviewee's utterances that mark epistemic stance taking, thus questioning the truth value or certainty of the interviewee's proposition, depending on which inferential frame the meaning is derived from. In excerpt 1, this brings the interviewee to revise her explanation, possibly because the expression of weak epistemic support actually derives from the participant's trouble remembering her instruction, and the epistemic stance marker functions across the training activity and the interview activity. In excerpt 2, on the other hand, the interviewee maintains her explanation, presumably in this case staying in her role as a suspect.

Like in excerpt 1, the interviewee employs *probably* in a later utterance, shown in excerpt 3 below. Similar to excerpt 1 and 2, the interviewer reconstructs the interviewee's utterance, but in this case he does not include the epistemic stance marker in the reconstruction. This could indicate a different function of the reconstruction in this particular exchange.

To understand what is going on in excerpt 3, a brief summary of the interaction at the beginning of the interview might be helpful. In the preliminary free account, the interviewee explains that she was going to meet a friend at the day of the event under investigation. She says that it was "just a friend" and that she does not remember who he was – but it was not Louai. A little later, the interviewee says that she does not feel like telling the friend's name, again saying that it was "just somebody". Obviously, this seems like the interviewee playing her role as the unwilling suspect Sedat trying to cover up the truth. However, in the light of the interviewee's trouble remembering her instructions and the details of the mock case, an alternative interpretation could be that she is trying to make this uncertainty part of the role as an unwilling suspect. As already mentioned, the interviewee has trouble remembering the characters and the sequence of events in the mock case as it is described in the instructions. This, in particular, becomes clear and is said aloud by the interviewee right before the exchange in excerpt 3. The interviewee explicitly steps out of her role as a suspect and tells her co-participants that it is hard for her to understand and remember the instructions. Furthermore, she is confused about the character she is supposed to play in the ongoing interview, because she keeps mixing up the instructions and characters from the various training interviews she is supposed to take part in during the training course. This talk also reveals that she has made a wrong statement during the ongoing interview, and her co-participants, the interviewer and the observer, agree that she seems quite confused. After this short exchange between the co-participants, the interviewer, without further notice, returns to the training interview. By reference to a printout from the interviewee's mobile phone, he brings up the still unresolved issue of whether the interviewee was going to meet Louai or another friend, and whether the meeting between the interviewee and Louai was planned or not.

Excerpt 3

- 1 IN: but when I look at this report (.) secured phone (.) that is *jo*
your phone
- 2 IE: yes
- 3 IN: here I can see that there is this phone conversation on May 11
between you
- 4 and Louai (p) er both in the afternoon and in the evening (p)
do you remember
- 5 what you talked about on the phone that day (p) I do realise
that it is one day
- 6 ago but er it was yesterday
- 7 IE: → well it is *jo probably* because it was him then we were going
to meet *jo*
- 8 IN: → it was (.) Louai you were going to meet
- 9 IE: yes
- 10 IN: yes (p) okay so you arranged that with Louai
- 11 IE: well yes
- 12 IN: did you plan where you were going to meet
- 13 IE: well (p) we think supposedly we talked about meeting by the
courtyard

In the excerpt above, the interviewee employs the epistemic stance marker *nok* 'probably' in her utterance (line 7). On the one hand, *probably* might refer to the causal relation between the interviewee's and Louai's phone call and the fact that they met at day of the event under investigation, that is, the reason for her conversation with Louai is that she did plan to meet him the next day. On the other hand, *probably* might refer to the fact that it was Louai, and not another friend, the interviewee was going to meet. Each interpretation might be relevant, as both issues have been sources of conflict and confusion during various stages of the interview.

The interviewee also employs *jo* ‘as you know’ twice in her utterance; in relation to *probably* and in the final position of her proposition. Seeing that *probably* does not per se specify the epistemic strength or the *degree* of probability (Hansen and Heltoft 2019:1058), but covers a spectrum “from the wildest guess to the most deliberate and watertight inference” (Jacobsen 1992:15), a possible interpretation is that the interviewer responds to the interviewee’s use of *probably* as a statement of fact rather than conjecture. This due to the strong epistemic support from *jo*. Thus, it seems that the interviewer does not use the reconstruction to raise doubt about the interviewee’s intentions or certainty, but to conclude and seek affirmation that the interviewee had actually planned to meet Louai on the day of the event. In this case, the reconstruction seems to count primarily as a contribution to the mock interview and the interviewee’s utterance as a speech act with relatively strong epistemic support.

An alternative interpretation is that the interviewee’s utterance (line 7) is directed primarily at the training activity, and, within that inferential frame, functions as a question seeking affirmation. As mentioned, *jo* might indicate strong epistemic support for the interviewee’s statement. Right before the exchange in excerpt 3, however, the interviewee has expressed anything but strong support for her explanation when she was talking with her co-participants about her confusion. Hence, in this instance, rather than indicating consensus by using *jo* twice, it seems that the interviewee is violating the maxim of quantity, thereby actually seeking confirmation of the content of her proposition – and an affirmation from her co-participant that she remembers her instruction correctly. In this perspective, *jo* in the final position seems to function as an adverbial tag, thus turning the declarative into a question (Heinemann 2010: 2707). *Jo* is not commonly used as a tag, but due to its polyphonic instruction of consensus, and because particles like *jo* acquire dialogical meaning depending on their particular sentence position (Mortensen and Mortensen 2017:211, see also Jensen 2000, Christensen 2007), an interpretation of *jo* equalling a positive adverbial tag seems plausible.

The interpretation of the interviewee’s utterance as a question is furthermore based on the cleft sentence *it was him then we were going to meet jo* (line 7). By employing this, the interviewee is both presupposing that she was going to meet somebody, and at the same time points out that, among other possible persons, this someone was Louai. This might reflect the interviewee’s recurring confusion between the characters in the mock event, and the use of *probably* might, within the inferential frame of the training activity, indicate that this is what she believes to be the right interpretation of the instruction and the events in the mock case.

In other sequences during the interview, when the interviewee shows signs of a bad memory and confusion regarding her character, the interviewer seems to stay in his role as a detective and responds to the interviewee’s utterances as if they count as contributions to the activity of the mock interview. This is

also the case in excerpt 3, but the omission of the epistemic stance marker, *probably*, makes the reconstruction in this excerpt different from the others. This could indicate that the reconstruction is a contribution to the interaction between the participants in the training activity, and that the interviewer is responding to the interviewee's utterance as a question, confirming that she, his co-participant, remembers her instruction and role as a suspect correctly. The interviewer does not explicitly step out of his role as a detective, though, but by this little change in the reconstruction, he seems to point out the relevant inferential frame and show that the training interview is back on track.

Another argument for interpreting the reconstruction as primarily a contribution to the training activity is the questioning function of the interviewee's utterance prior to the reconstruction. An exchange like that, where the suspect asks questions about the event under investigation, does not fit the conventional form of an investigative police interview, including the casting of the detective as the questioner. Hence, in the light of the constraints on allowable contributions in the two different activity types and the preceding exchange between the co-participants, it seems plausible that the inference is to be derived primarily from the inferential frame of the training activity.

7. Summarising the interview – and the analysis

When the interview reaches the closing stage, the interviewer summarises what the interviewee has told about the mock event under investigation, and he lets the interviewee know that he does not believe her. For instance he says that part of the interviewees' explanation "sounds a little odd" and places the responsibility for this oddness and the lack of information on the interviewee by saying that he will write in his report that the interviewee refuses to make sufficient statements about the conflictual issues. Thus, he indicates that he believes that the unclarified parts of the event are the result of the interviewee's unwillingness to tell rather than a bad memory.

As shown in excerpt 1 and 2, the interviewer raises doubts about the uncertainty and trustworthiness of the interviewee during the questioning stages of the interview. In these examples, however, he mitigates the confrontation in the follow up questions, saying *try to tell a little more about that* (excerpt 1, line 9) and *yes why are you saying that it is probably him who had it can you explain a bit about that* (excerpt 1, line 5-6). In the closing summary, the interviewer does not mitigate his utterances like this, and it seems that during the interview he has compensated for the potential face threats that his questioning poses to the interviewee. This may be due to the interviewer's interpretation of the weak epistemic support to the propositions as an indication of the co-participant's uncertainty rather than the mock suspect's unwillingness. That is, considering the propositions as, maybe intended, *implicata* within the inferential frame of the training activity. Consequently, his reconstructions have fulfilled a double function

and operated across the training activity and the interview activity by raising doubts about the trustworthiness of the mock suspect while also responding to the derived implicatum and supporting the co-participant. In the context of the training activity, the reconstructions of the interviewee's utterances are not questioning the truth value or the trustworthiness of the interviewee, but evaluate the consistency between the instruction and the interviewee's statement. Whether or not such double function can explain why the interviewer mitigates his utterances and compensates for the face threat of a co-participant, is not obvious. Nevertheless, the interviewee shows more certainty and unwillingness to cooperate when she is clearly enacting the role identity of the suspect at the end of the interview. Hence, the interviewer does not have to protect a co-participant's face, and in that situation, he seems less concerned with mitigating his utterances when he questions the interviewee's intentions.

8. Conclusions

The interview analysed in this paper is a mock police interview conducted as part of a training course for skilled police officers. In the training interview, the participants navigate two distinctly different activity types, developing within different inferential frames; the training activity and the interview activity.

The interview activity simulates an asymmetric relation between the participants who are instructed to act as interlocutors of an interaction that does not take its natural point of departure in mutual expectations of social cooperativeness. In the training activity, though, the participants are part of a symmetric relation, and they share the same goals for the communication, among these to get the most out of the training interview and keep it on the right track. This activity invites to social cooperation. In the analysis, I have shown how contributions to the interaction function across these two activities, even though the inferential frames and the conditions for these activities are inherently diverse.

In the excerpts displayed in this paper, both the socially non-cooperative and cooperative aspects show, because one of the participants struggles with remembering her instruction. When her utterances seem to express this struggle and uncertainty as a participant in the training activity, the interviewer makes his contributions to the interaction interpretable in relation to both the training activity and the interview activity. The analysis illustrates how the interviewer by reconstructive speech acts manages to evaluate the interviewee's utterances across the activities. With the reconstructions, the interviewer raises doubt about the trustworthiness of the mock suspect, hence contributing to the role-played interaction, and simultaneously addresses the uncertainty of the co-participant, thereby supporting the participant and keeping the training activity on the right track.

By applying Nielsen's model of argumentative dialogue to the training interview, I have illustrated how the model has the potential to capture central features of conflicting dialogue within different activity types. In particular, the speech act types *reconstruction* and *criticism* are essential in the training interview. In this context, the reconstructions function as questions that, within the inferential frame of this particular activity type, often serve both a clarifying *and* a criticising function.

The analysis also shows how the participants negotiate comprehension and possible inferences. Whether the derived implicatum is intended by the interviewee, is not possible to tell from the excerpts, as her propositions in most cases can count as statements from both the mock suspect and the participant in the training course. The interviewer responds to this double possibility of inference, and apparently forms his reconstruction as contributions to the interview activity, while also making an interpretation within the inferential frame of the training activity possible.

These contributions, holding diverse possible implicata, show how the participants take part in the reciprocal act of implicature, and how the activity-crossing implicatures both contribute to the mock interview and simultaneously support the participants and guide the training interview.

Appendix 1, excerpt 1 (Danish)

- 1 IN: hvor skulle den kniv i så fald være kommet fra
2 IE: → (p) jamen altså det jo (p) det er jo nok ham der Louaia der der
havde den (p)
3 IN: → nok ham der Louaia der havde den
4 IE: ja
5 IN: → ja (p) hvorfor siger du det nok er ham der havde den (.) kan
du forklare lidt om
6 det
7 IE: → ej men altså det er jo fordi da da han (p) da han begyndte og
og skælde mig ud
8 der ikke øh
9 IN: ja
10 IE: → om øh min familie så så øh så blev jeg jo rigtig sur jo og
sådan noget og så
11 begyndte jeg jo også og skubbe lidt til ham (.)
12 IN: okay
13 IE: til til Louaia der så så så derfor så øh så så lige pludselig så

- blev jeg bange
14 fordi så kunne jeg lige pludselig se en at: at at Louaia havde
en kniv på sig
15 IN: → du siger du ser en kniv så
16 IE: ja
17 IN: ja
18 IE: → jeg ser [faktisk en kniv]
19 IN: → [prøv at fortælle] lidt mere om det hvis du prøver og
20 IE: ja
21 IN: genopfrisk øh hvornår ser du den kniv første gang

Appendix 2, excerpt 2 (Danish)

- 1 IE: Ja (sukker lidt) øhm (p) jeg ved ikke helt hvordan han tager
den jeg tror bare
2 han prøver på og hjælpe mig ligesom i den her situation fordi
han godt ved at
3 det kan gå galt (.) øhm (p) og så er der den her dreng der den
der danske dreng
4 → jeg **tror** også han havde en kniv **faktisk** (p)
5 IN: → **tror**
6 IE: jaer (.) [det]
7 IN: [ja]
8 IE: det han havde også en kniv
9 IN: → prøv at forklare **lidt** om det

Appendix 3, excerpt 3 (Danish)

- 1 IN: men når jeg kigger på den her rapport sikret telefon (.) som jo
er din telefon
2 IE: ja
3 IN: der kan jeg se der er den her telefonsamtale 11. maj mellem
dig og Louai (p)
4 øhm det er både om eftermiddagen og om aftenen (p) kan du
huske hvad du
5 snakkede med ham om i telefonen den dag (p) jeg ved godt

- det er en dag siden
6 men øh det var i [går]
7 IE: → [jamen] det er **jo nok** fordi det så var ham vi skulle mødes
med **jo**
8 IN: → det var (.) Louai I skulle mødes med
9 IE: ja
10 IN: ja (p) okay så det aftalte du med Louai
11 IE: jaer
12 IN: aftalte I hvor I skulle mødes henne
13 IE: jaer (p) vi tror vist nok vi snakkede om vi skulle mødes ved
gården

Notes

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- ¹ PEACE: Planning and preparation, Engage and explain, Account, Closure, And Evaluation of the interview and the interviewer's performance (Clarke and Milne 2001:1)
- ² For describing and analysing this kind of communication, Linell and Thunqvist suggest the dynamic concept of *framing* rather than *frame* (see Linell and Thunqvist 2003).
- ³ I refer to the participants as *interviewer* and *interviewee*. The latter is the participant who plays the role as a suspect, and the interviewer is the detective who is doing the interview.
- ⁴ Archer (2005:58) distinguishes between Gricean conversational cooperation and social cooperation.
- ⁵ Note that Nielsen uses 'speaker' and 'hearer' instead of the argumentative roles. The reason is that "while the speaker of a reconstructive or critical speech act is necessarily identical to the argumentative role of antagonist, it is not given that the hearer is necessarily identical to the protagonist role" (Nielsen 2005:206).
- ⁶ The comments about the felicity conditions for reconstructions and criticism are Nielsen's own.
- ⁷ The description of the event under investigation is based on the instruction material from the experimental study (Hviid 2019:99).
- ⁸ Due to lack of space the quantitative overview is not presented in this paper.

- ⁹ The excerpts are English translations, except for the Danish dialogical particle *jo* ('as you know') as it has no direct translation equivalent in English. The original Danish excerpts are to be found in appendices 1, 2, and 3.
- ¹⁰ IN: the interviewer. IE: the interviewee.

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