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1 Descriptive and analytical qualitative research of argumentative discourse

Frans H. van Eemeren and Bart Garssen

1 Qualitative research in argumentation theory

Argumentation theory is concerned with the descriptive and analytic treatment of argumentative discourse as well as its evaluation and improvement. It aims to provide not only knowledge and insight about how in actual communicative practices argumentative discourse is conducted but also about how it is to be conducted to resolve a difference of opinion ‘on the merits.’ Only then, a solid basis can be established for improving such practices by methodical intervention. As a consequence, to cover the various kinds of research required, the research program of argumentation theory needs to include five different components: philosophical, theoretical, empirical, analytical, and practical research (van Eemeren, 2015, pp. 81–109).¹

This chapter deals with the use of a ‘qualitative’ research method in describing and analyzing argumentative discourse and focuses for this reason on the empirical and analytical components of the research program. In descriptive empirical research, which is aimed at providing explanatory descriptions of ‘argumentative reality,’ it is examined how argumentative discourse is conducted – in general or in specific communicative practices. In analytical empirical research, which is aimed at providing interpretive analyses of ‘argumentative reality,’ actual argumentative discourse is systematically interpreted in terms of a specific conceptual framework. Whether the empirical manifestations of argumentative reality are treated descriptively or analytically, qualitative research may concentrate not only on general characteristics of argumentative discourse but also on its specific characteristics in a particular domain. It may focus on one or more individual speech events, but also on a larger corpus. The aim of qualitative research is in all cases to provide insight and knowledge about argumentation in reality by enhancing our understanding of the use of argumentative discourse to achieve effectiveness through reasonableness and the critical standards it needs to comply with.

In the approaches to argumentation currently prominent in argumentation theory, these two components of a fully-fledged research program are represented

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in different ways. This can be illustrated by briefly considering (a) the formal logical approaches, in which argumentation is treated as a formal reasoning process; (b) the rhetorical and pragma-linguistic approaches, which are oriented toward communication and effectiveness; (c) the approaches jointly known as ‘informal logic,’ which concentrate on examining informal reasoning in argumentation; (d) the theoretical approach called ‘pragma-dialectics,’ in which a pragmatic perspective on the communicative dimension of argumentative discourse is combined with a dialectical perspective on its reasonableness. As is shown in Figure 1.1,² based on an examination of the state of the art in argumentation theory,³ descriptive empirical research of argumentative reality is only extensively represented in the pragma-linguistic and the pragma-dialectical approaches – and to some extent by cases studies in the rhetorical approaches. Analytical empirical research of argumentative reality is a focal point not only in rhetorical/pragma-linguistic and pragma-dialectical research, but also in the informal logical approaches.

2 **Descriptive qualitative research of argumentative discourse**

Qualitative empirical research of argumentative discourse involves an exploration of argumentative reality that relies on observation and introspection.⁴ In Pike’s (1967) established terms, descriptive qualitative research can be *emic* or *etic*. Opting for an ‘emic’ approach means that in the research the argumentative discourse and the critical standards that are applied are viewed from the ‘internal’ perspective of the arguer – which can be the perspective of the arguer(s) the researcher identifies with (i.e. concentrates the qualitative research upon) or the researcher’s own perspective. The pertinent questions then are: what exactly is from this perspective relevant in the argumentative discourse and which criteria determine acceptability? In an ‘etic’ approach, the argumentative discourse and the critical standards applicable are examined from an ‘external’ theoretical perspective. The pertinent questions then are: how can argumentative discourse be described by using a particular theoretical framework or model? In actual practice, etic research from a specific theoretical perspective is in fact often preceded by preliminary emic observations – from the researchers themselves or taken from reports in the literature.

Descriptive empirical research can be *qualitative* but also *quantitative*. In a well-considered research program, the qualitative research carried out may be preparatory to quantitative research, but in some cases qualitative research is by itself sufficient to answer the research questions that have come up. After all, some research problems can be satisfactorily dealt with by qualitative research focusing on the interpretation and understanding of argumentative discourse. As a rule, emic research remains limited to qualitative research while etic research more easily moves on to (usually experimental) quantitative research in a later phase. Whether emic or etic, descriptive qualitative research is initially often

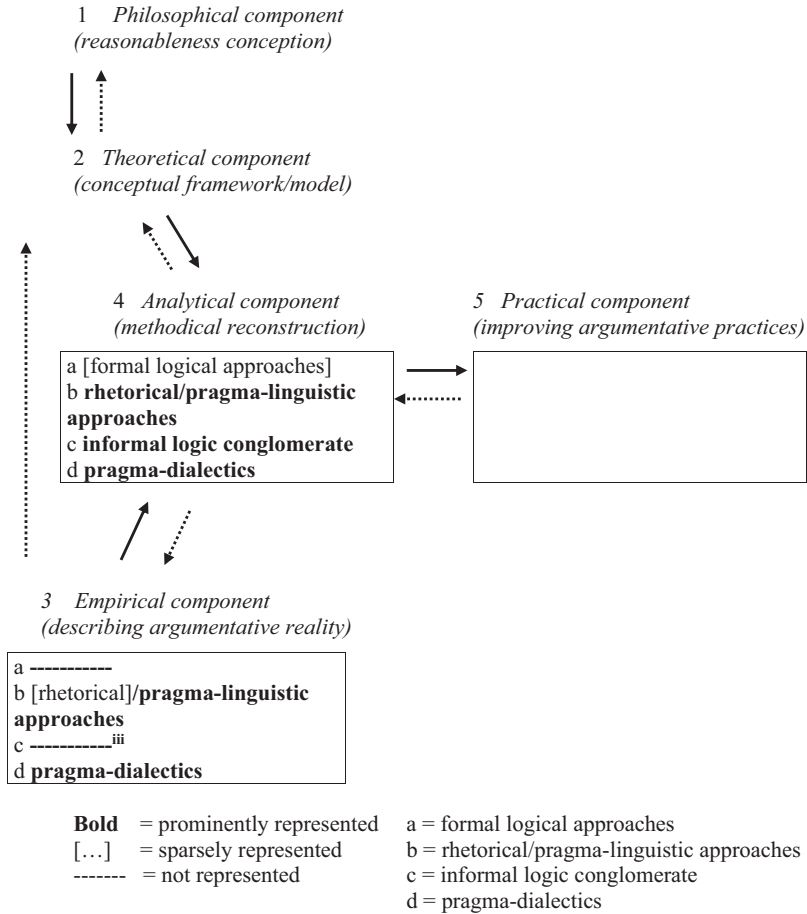


Figure 1.1 Contributions to descriptive and analytical qualitative research.

inspired by the researcher’s own intuition and experience, supplemented by information available from the literature. This combination of resources can be helpful to getting a better grip on a great many argumentative phenomena encountered in argumentative reality. To fulfil its academic function properly, qualitative research must be authentic, credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable, and the research results reported should be representative and presented univocally in a clear and comprehensible way.⁵ In contrast, quantitative descriptive research, relying on measurement based on numerical data and statistics, is as a rule directed at explaining argumentative phenomena by empirical testing of generalizing hypotheses about argumentative reality. Generally, the quantitative research conducted is therefore of an experimental kind, but it can also consist of purely numerical descriptive corpus research.

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Irrespective of whether it utilizes a qualitative or a quantitative methodology, the research will in principle be aimed at achieving a better understanding of how in actual argumentative discourses efforts are made to get standpoints accepted by means of argumentative moves. If it involves a case study or identification of the properties of a particular type of argumentative discourse, qualitative research is usually most appropriate. If it involves testing a general hypothesis about the conduct of argumentative discourse or the frequency of occurrence of certain argumentative properties in a particular communicative domain, quantitative research is called for.

3 **Examples of descriptive qualitative research projects**

It is characteristic of the rhetorical and pragma-linguistic studies which focus on the (potential) effectiveness of argumentative discourse that virtually all of them consist of qualitative research.⁶ Whereas rhetorical scholars tend to favor case studies of individual speech events, pragma-linguists generally concentrate on examining the communicative or linguistic properties of actual argumentative discourse. Their qualitative research of argumentation focuses as a rule on the argumentative function of specific discourse properties in natural exchanges and makes use of pragmatic insights from discourse and conversation analysis (e.g., Jacobs & Jackson, 1982). A French example of primarily emic qualitative research, influenced by ‘radical argumentativism,’ classical rhetoric, conversation, and discourse analysis, is Doury (2006). The descriptive empirical research of argumentative discourse conducted in rhetorical studies is predominantly based on theoretical concepts and terminology stemming from the classical rhetorical tradition, often mixed with all kinds of other insights. Striking specimens of such etic rhetorical research are the American case studies of specific political speech events in a particular historical context (e.g., Leff, 2003; Zarefsky, 2014, 2021).⁷

An explicitly theoretically motivated approach to descriptive qualitative research of argumentative discourse, which is also systematically connected with quantitative research, can be found in pragma-dialectics. Building on preliminary emic observations of argumentative reality, the researchers concerned opt for an etic approach in which the theoretical point of departure is constituted by a model of a critical discussion in combination with a code of conduct for reasonable argumentative discourse. By making clear what is relevant in the way in which argumentative reality manifests itself, these abstract theoretical constructs indicate what should be concentrated on in describing argumentative reality and how the observations made can be qualified terminologically. When appropriate, in connection with the findings of the qualitative research, quantitative research is undertaken.

The pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion specifies the dialectical stages the argumentative process needs to pass through in resolving a

difference of opinion on the merits. Next to a confrontation stage in which the standpoints at issue and the difference of opinion are introduced, there is an opening stage in which the procedural and material starting points of the argumentative process are established, an argumentation stage in which the reasons in defense of the standpoints at issue against critical reactions are advanced, and a concluding stage in which the argumentative process is brought to an end by a decision about the outcome. The argumentative moves made in the four stages of this idealized representation of the resolution process consist of communicative acts instrumental in reaching a reasonable decision about accepting the standpoint(s) at issue (van Eemeren, 2018, pp. 36–38). The code of conduct for reasonable argumentative discourse complementing the model consists of a series of rules conveying the standards that must be observed in the argumentative moves that are made to prevent the argumentative process from derailing into fallaciousness (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, pp. 102–217). The standards incorporated in these rules apply to defining the difference of opinion, establishing the procedural and material starting points, advancing argumentation to defend the standpoints at issue, deciding about the outcome, and maintaining clarity during the argumentative process. The central descriptive question examined in such qualitative research is to what extent the standards for judging argumentative discourse in real-life agree with the theoretical standards.

Because in argumentative discourse people are not just out to maintain reasonableness but also – and often primarily – to achieve the interactional effect of effectiveness, by means of the notion of strategic maneuvering a rhetorical dimension has been integrated in the dialectical theoretical framework of pragma-dialectics described above (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002; van Eemeren, 2010, 2018, pp. 111–127). Strategic maneuvering between pursuing rhetorical effectiveness and maintaining dialectical reasonableness manifests itself in every argumentative move in three different aspects: (1) the selection made from the ‘topical potential’ of argumentative moves available at a particular point in the discourse; (2) the adaptation to ‘audience demand’ ensuing from the beliefs and preferences of the intended listeners or readers; (3) the exploitation of ‘presentational devices’ in the way argumentative moves are expressed. As a rule, the analytic distinction between these three aspects does not manifest itself explicitly in the strategic maneuvering because in the argumentative discourse they come into being simultaneously. Nevertheless, each of these aspects contributes in its own way to the reasonableness and effectiveness of the argumentative discourse. When the reasonableness falls short, the strategic maneuvering is lacking in its dialectical dimension; when the effectiveness falls short, it is lacking in the rhetorical dimension. One of the aims of descriptive research of strategic maneuvering is to achieve a better understanding of when this happens in argumentative reality.

3.1 *Descriptive qualitative research concerning indicators of argumentative moves*

Descriptive qualitative research in pragma-dialectics conducted in the 1980s focused initially primarily on the way in which argumentative moves that are potentially instrumental in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits manifest themselves in argumentative discourse. The central question was what kinds of verbal or other indicators can be a clue as to which of the various kinds of argumentative moves represented in the model of a critical discussion are made in the discourse. Thus, the model of a critical discussion offers a theoretical framework that serves in descriptive qualitative research as a heuristic tool for determining which communicative acts performed in actual argumentative discourse are relevant to resolving a difference of opinion. However, more detailed analytic tools proved to be required to trace in all pieces of argumentative discourse examined the relevant argumentative moves. These tools are developed by zooming in on specific points in the argumentative process to create detailed ‘dialectical profiles’ of the various argumentative situations. A dialectical profile specifies more precisely than the model of a critical discussion the various kinds of moves that can be instrumental in realizing the specific tasks of the arguers at a particular point in the argumentative process.⁸

In descriptive qualitative research, such dialectical profiles are a heuristic design for capturing the argumentative moves that are at a certain point potentially relevant to resolving the difference of opinion at issue and to identify the verbal and other indicators of these argumentative moves. Taking the relevant dialectical profiles as their point of departure, van Eemeren et al. (2007) examined in *Argumentative indicators in discourse* by means of descriptive qualitative research systematically the ways in which argumentative moves are prototypically realized in argumentative reality. The observations they made in this research center around the question of what kind of indicators that are pointers to specific argumentative moves are used in actual pieces of argumentative discourse. The central goals of the research are: (1) to identify the words and expressions arguers use to indicate the functions of the various moves they make; (2) to classify these moves in accordance with their argumentative functions in the various stages of the resolution process; (3) to determine under which conditions the communicative means that are used fulfil these functions. The indicators examined include the way in which the argumentative moves are presented, the way in which the other party responds to them, and the way in which the first party reacts to these responses.⁹

Connected with this descriptive qualitative research, van Eemeren et al. (1989) conducted in the 1980s a series of complementary empirical research projects of a quantitative descriptive type in which general hypotheses concerning the use of indicators of argumentative moves based on the qualitative research were tested experimentally (see also van Eemeren, 2015, pp. 733–742).

3.2 *Descriptive qualitative research concerning the standards
for reasonable argumentative moves*

Descriptive qualitative research in pragma-dialectics has also been conducted regarding the standards for reasonable argumentative moves. This happened in *Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies* (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, pp. 102–217) by careful reflection on the fallaciousness of argumentative moves made in natural fragments of argumentative discourse in considerations about the various kinds of standards involved in the rules of the code of conduct for reasonable argumentative discourse. The observations made in these discussions of specimens of argumentative discourse concerning what goes wrong in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits do not just represent the researching authors' own perceptions of violations of reasonableness but should, when explained, be shared by the readers addressed. In this way, a joint intersubjective conception of reasonableness is appealed to – or created. This reasonableness conception is supported by the fact that it is demonstrated in the didactical expose that the argumentative moves that are criticized are indeed obstacles to a resolution of the difference of opinion on the merits. Based on introspection and observations concerning the suitability of argumentative moves for resolving a difference of opinion on the merits, a didactic effort is thus made to establish intersubjective agreement on the standards of reasonableness. Later on this qualitative research concerning the reasonableness standards was followed up by extensive quantitative research of an experimental kind concerning the extent to which ordinary arguers' standards for judging the reasonableness of various kinds of argumentative moves correspond with the standards incorporated in the theoretical code of conduct – which provided further empirical support for the intersubjective acceptability of the pragma-dialectical rules (van Eemeren et al., 2009).

According to the pragma-dialectical standard theory, argumentative moves that go against the rules of the code of conduct for reasonable argumentative discourse are in principle fallacious in every context. In some cases, however, the reasonableness of a particular argumentative move depends in the last resort also on the context of the communicative practice in which the move is made. Because of differences in the 'institutional preconditions' pertaining to the various communicative activity types, in different communicative domains the reasonableness standards for making certain kinds of argumentative moves sometimes need to be implemented in different ways. Then the soundness criteria going with the standards of reasonableness need to be specified (or supplemented) differently in different communicative practices. Which 'precization' of the soundness criteria is needed in a particular case, depends on the conventionalization of a communicative activity type. Descriptive qualitative research by argumentation theorists specialized in the communicative domains concerned provides for instance more clarity about the differentiation in the conventionalization of plenary debates in

the European Parliament in the political domain (Garssen, 2017), the conventionalization of the justification of judicial decisions in the legal domain (Feteris, 2017), and the conventionalization of over-the-counter medicine advertisements in the domain of health communication (Snoeck Henkemans, 2017).

4 Analytical qualitative research of argumentative discourse

In analytical research taking place in argumentation theory, a reconstruction of argumentative discourse is carried out that brings its relevant constituents explicitly to the fore. In this way a systematic connection is made between empirical observations concerning the properties of actual argumentative discourse and a theoretical conception of argumentative discourse suitable for treating the discourse as being aimed at reasonably resolving a difference of opinion. This means that analytical research always involves a reconstruction of an empirical phenomenon (a speech event) in terms of the conceptual framework of a specific theoretical paradigm. Because in a reconstruction a speech event in argumentative reality is interpreted from a theoretical perspective, analytical research is by definition *etic*.

In the analytical component of the research program of argumentation theory, the tools are developed for making a methodical reconstruction of real-life argumentative discourse in terms of the theoretical paradigm guiding the analysis. Such a reconstructive analysis is necessary because in natural discourse the argumentative process manifests itself as a rule partly implicitly, interrupted by communicative acts that are not relevant to the argumentative process, in communicative acts that are not always immediately clear, and in a way that, due to intermediate corrections and modificatory resumés, seems at times unorderly.¹⁰ In carrying out an analytic reconstruction, all institutional and other preconditions must be taken into account that influence the argumentative process in the communicative practice concerned.

In a reconstructive analysis a speech event in argumentative reality is always – in an *etic* way – interpreted from the theoretical perspective favored by the analyst. For several reasons such a theoretically based analysis of argumentative discourse is not merely an interpretation: (1) it is more focused since it concentrates on a particular (e.g. argumentative) aspect of the discourse; (2) it takes place from a specific disciplinary angle (e.g. argumentation theory); (3) it is formulated in the terminology of a well-defined conceptual framework (e.g. pragma-dialectics); (4) it is intrinsically linked to the epistemological requirement of accountability.

An analysis of argumentative discourse entails carrying out analytic operations that are instrumental in laying bare the elements in the discourse relevant to the identification of the argumentative process. These analytic operations, known as ‘reconstruction transformations,’ are aimed at externalizing the argumentative commitments a speaker or writer contracted in the discourse which constitute together his or her contribution to the argumentative process. Depending on the kind of analytic operation involved, four types of transformations can be

distinguished: 'deletion,' 'addition,' 'permutation,' and 'substitution.' The transformation of deletion amounts to leaving out of consideration elements in the discourse that do not play a part in the argumentative process. The transformation of addition consists of completing the reconstruction of the argumentative process by supplementing elements that have been left implicit but contribute directly or indirectly to the argumentative process. In the transformation of substitution elements relevant to the argumentative process whose content or function is, due to their presentation, insufficiently clear are put in formulations that clarify their argumentative role unequivocally. The transformation of permutation entails rearranging parts of the discourse belonging to a particular stage of the argumentative process but appearing at a different and inappropriate point in the discourse by putting them in the order that reflects their role more adequately. Carrying out any of these transformations must always be accounted for by referring to the application of (a combination of) pragmatic or other communicative insights to the empirical data.

The purpose of an analytic reconstruction of argumentative discourse is to go beyond a naïve reading and create an overview of the discourse that constitutes an adequate basis for a fair evaluation by doing justice to the participants' commitments by bringing to the fore what they may be regarded to convey. The 'analytic overview' resulting from the reconstruction should contain all those, and only those, elements that play a constructive part in the argumentative process of trying to resolve a difference of opinion: the standpoints at issue; the positions adopted by the parties in the difference; the procedural and material starting points; the arguments for each standpoint explicitly or implicitly advanced by the parties; the argument schemes used in the various arguments to justify a standpoint; the structure of the constellation of arguments that constitute together the argumentation in defense of a standpoint; the outcome of the argumentative process according to the parties.

In the formal logical approaches to argumentative discourse no systematic connection is made with the communicative dimension of argumentation that is examined in pragmatics and other disciplines dealing with communication. Due to the lack of empirically supported theoretical understanding of the complexities of argumentative reality, the analytical research component of argumentation theory is in these approaches not or only poorly represented. Although their research about the analysis and evaluation of argumentative discourse opens up possibilities for developing the required analytic tools, so far informal logicians have not provided a great many full-blown analytic reconstructions of argumentative speech events either.

The rhetorical approaches to argumentative discourse contribute mainly to the analytical component of the research program by means of case studies. Their reconstructive efforts, almost invariably starting from classical rhetorical insights, remain as a rule limited to an application of familiar rhetorical tools, sometimes supplemented by incidental insights from other perspectives. Pragma-linguists concentrate as a matter of course on highlighting communicative or linguistic

phenomena. When they take an emic perspective, opting for an *a*-theoretical and sometimes even *anti*-theoretical approach, the possibilities for achieving a reconstruction of argumentative discourse that is theoretically accounted for are, of course, rather limited. In pragma-dialectics, on the other hand, ample possibilities have been created for a theoretically motivated reconstruction of argumentative discourse by developing the required analytic tools.

5 Examples of analytical qualitative research projects

Providing possibilities for an analytic reconstruction of argumentative discourse is currently only in pragma-dialectics explicitly seen as indispensable for an adequately functioning discipline of argumentation theory. In the analytical component of the research program, it is explained what a resolution-oriented reconstruction of argumentative discourse involves. The analytic tools developed for identifying the relevant argumentative moves made in the four stages of the argumentative process include: typologies of standpoints and differences, argument schemes, argumentation structures, and identification procedures for unexpressed standpoints and premises (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, pp. 3–102). The results of the reconstruction are brought together in an analytic overview of all elements in the discourse pertinent to resolving a difference of opinion. To serve its purposes, this analytic overview needs to satisfy the requirements of efficacy (no non-pertinent elements), coherence (no inconsistent elements), economy (no redundant elements), realism (no unlikely elements), and well-foundedness (no unaccountable elements) (van Eemeren, 2010, pp. 16–19).

Since strategic maneuvering does not take place in an abstract critical discussion but in actual communicative practices, in analyzing strategic maneuvering the different kinds of institutional requirements must be taken into account that are connected with the exigencies of the communicative domain in which the argumentative discourse occurs (van Eemeren, 2010, pp. 129–162).¹¹ In the legal domain, for instance, argumentative discourse needs to fulfill other requirements than in the political or the medical domain. Depending on its *raison d'être* in a particular domain, in each communicative activity type a specific 'institutional point' is to be realized – in Prime Minister's Question Time in British parliament, for example, holding the PM to account for the government's policies (van Eemeren, 2010, pp. 131–132; Mohammed, 2018, pp. 21, 30–32). An 'argumentative characterization' of the argumentative process in a certain communicative activity type is a systematic overview of its conventionalization in the empirical counterparts of the four stages of a critical discussion¹² that provides insight in how the institutional preconditions of the macro context in which the argumentative discourse takes place determine the possibilities for strategic maneuvering (van Eemeren, 2010, pp. 93–127).¹³ Relevant to the argumentative characterization is the identification of the institutional preconditions that influence the conduct of argumentative discourse in the macro context concerned. Next to *primary* institutional preconditions (such as the 'standing orders' in parliament), which are generally

official, usually formal and often procedural, there are also *secondary* institutional preconditions (such as the silent rule that, next to Europe's interests, Members of the European Parliament always need to serve the interests of their own country), which are generally unofficial, usually informal, and often substantial. To be able to deal with the variety of communicative activity types in the analysis, in addition to the analytic overview and its components, in pragma-dialectics additional conceptual tools have been developed, such as 'dialectical route,' 'strategic design,' and 'argumentative style' (van Eemeren, 2018, pp. 43, 111, 167, respectively).

5.1 Analytical qualitative research concerning an analytic overview of a speech event

The analytical qualitative approach to argumentative discourse can be illustrated by giving an analytic overview of an argumentative discourse – in this case, an advertorial by KLM (Royal Dutch Airforce):

- I KLM sincerely apologizes for having been forced to have 440 squirrels destroyed, last Monday in the KLM Cargo animals' hotel. KLM has acted in a way that is formally justified but admits that an ethical assessment mistake was made. KLM fully endorses the criticisms that have been voiced by the public and the various organizations.
- II The airline company has decided to start a thorough investigation into what exactly happened at the reception of the package in Beijing. The events in the KLM Cargo animals' hotel will also be investigated.
- III Pending this investigation and in view of the emotions that these events have aroused, the Board of KLM has deemed it desirable that the employee concerned will stay home for the period of this investigation.
- IV On Sunday, April 11, 1999, KLM received orders from the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Management, and Fishing (AEMF) to destroy the animals. KLM is of the opinion that this order, in this form and without feasible alternatives, was unethical.
- V The Board of KLM holds, however, that the KLM employee concerned has acted formally correct in this matter by promptly following the directives of the Department of AEMF, but also acknowledges that the employee has made an assessment mistake.
- VI KLM once more emphasizes that the company regrets the course of events and offers its sincere apologies to all animal lovers and all those whose feelings have been hurt by the events.
- VII KLM has informed [list of protesting organizations] of the above and has invited these organizations to come to a consultation on how to avoid this kind of deplorable situations at a short term.

Next to the text of the advertorial, in the analytic reconstruction the linguistic and institutional context, suggested logical/pragmatic inferences, and relevant

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background information are considered. This results in the analytic overview of the elements pertinent to the resolution of the difference of opinion below.

5.1.1 *Standpoints addressed*¹⁴:

Initially it appears as if KLM has two explicit standpoints and one implicit standpoint [recorded in parentheses]:

- KLM acted in a way that is formally justified [I]
- AEMF gave a wrong order [IV]
- (KLM responded appropriately to the destruction) [can be ascribed to KLM based on their elaboration on their post-destruction measures, II-III, VII]

A reconstruction of KLM's strategic maneuvering in trying to achieve effectiveness while maintaining (the appearance of) reasonableness makes clear that KLM defends in fact the following three (unexpressed¹⁵) main standpoints:

- 1 (KLM is not to be blamed)
- 2 (AEMF is to be blamed)
- 3 (KLM responded appropriately to the destruction)

The crucial act of finishing off the squirrels KLM pushes to the background by wrapping it up in expressions of regret.¹⁶ After strategically portraying their accusers as claiming that KLM made an assessment mistake rather than blaming the company for killing 440 squirrels, KLM initially creates the wrong impression that they admit having made an assessment mistake. It transpires however that they put the blame implicitly on AEMF.

5.1.2 *Starting points*¹⁷:

- It was wrong that the squirrels had to be finished off (I, IV)
- KLM regrets what happened and apologizes for it (I, V)
- The criticisms of the action deserve full endorsement (I, VII)
- AEMF ordered KLM to have the squirrels destroyed (I, IV)

5.1.3 *Arguments advanced*¹⁸:

In support of standpoint (1):

- KLM acted in a way that is formally justified

Supported by:

- KLM received orders from AEMF to act in this way (IV) &
- KLM's employee followed AEMF's directives (V)

In support of standpoint (2):

- AEMF gave a wrong order

Supported by:

- AEMF's order did not have the correct form (IV);
- AEMF did not offer any feasible alternatives (IV)

In support of standpoint (3):

- KLM started a thorough investigation into what happened in Beijing (II) &
- What happened in the KLM Cargo animals' hotel (II) &
- KLM let the employee who carried out the orders stay at home during the investigation &

Supported by:

- The investigation still needed to be carried out;
- The rising emotions made the employee's staying at home necessary (III)
- KLM informed and consulted all interested parties (VII)

5.1.4 Argument schemes employed¹⁹:

The argument schemes employed are generally symptomatic.²⁰ An example is the presentation of the fact that KLM started a thorough investigation into what happened as a token that KLM responded appropriately to the destruction – KLM's implicit third standpoint.

5.1.5 Argumentation structure²¹:

The formulation of KLM's starting points already paves the way for a successful defense of their implicit standpoints. Only facts that are positive for KLM's position are mentioned. KLM states explicitly that their conduct was formally correct and demonstrates that they did the right things after the squirrels were destructed. They use in their argumentation the argumentative technique of dissociation to ensure that the company as a whole is not blamed when only one of their employees is guilty. To justify their claim that from a formal perspective both KLM and the employee acted correctly, they emphasize that both did precisely what higher up had told them to do. In this way they suggest that the

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real guilt lies with AEMF. This is, all considered, the argumentation structure of this speech event:

- (1) KLM is not to be blamed
 - (1) 1 KLM acted in a way that is formally justified
 - (1) 1.1a KLM received orders from AEMF to act in this way
 - (1) 1.1b KLM's employee followed AEMF's directives
- (2) (AEMF is to be blamed)
 - (2) 1 AEMF gave a wrong order
 - (2) 1.1 AEMF's order did not have the correct form
 - (2) 1.2 AEMF did not offer any feasible alternatives
- (3) (KLM acted appropriately to the destruction)
 - (3) 1a KLM started a thorough investigation into what happened in Beijing
 - (3) 1b And into what happened in KLM's Cargo animals' hotel
 - (3) 1c KLM let the employee who carried out the orders stay at home during the investigation
 - (3) 1c.1 The investigation still needed to be carried out
 - (3) 1c.2 The rising emotions made the employee's staying at home necessary
 - (3) 1d KLM informed and consulted all interested parties

5.1.6 *Outcome*

No outcome is mentioned: KLM suggests that the conclusion is clear

5.2 *Analytical qualitative research to characterize prototypical argumentative styles*

Analytical qualitative research may also be used to identify the argumentative style that is used in a particular speech event. This argumentative style is prototypical of a certain communicative activity type or domain if it manifests itself systematically and consistently in: (1) the *argumentative moves* that are made, (2) the *dialectical routes* that are chosen, and (3) the *strategic considerations* that are implemented (van Eemeren et al., 2022, pp. 1–32). To identify the argumentative style, a theoretically informed analysis of the discourse is required. The relevant argumentative moves (1) are, as explained above, included in the analytic overview of the discourse resulting from an analytic reconstruction. Choosing a certain dialectical route (2), which directs the argumentative discourse towards the desired resolution of the difference at issue, is connected with

the development of a particular kind of ‘argumentative pattern’ in the discourse (van Eemeren, 2017, pp. 17–22). An argumentative pattern is the result of the need to respond in the discourse to critical questions associated with the use of specific types of argumentations – each type of argumentation being characterized by the argument scheme that defines the relationship between the reason advanced and the standpoint defended. Which types of argumentations are used and which critical questions are pertinent will to some extent depend on the institutional context in which the argumentative discourse takes place. Due the (sub)types of argumentations that are advanced in the discourse, an argumentative pattern of consecutive argumentative moves arises that can be portrayed in a dialectical profile specifying the various dialectical routes that at a certain point in the discourse can be followed in trying to resolve the difference of opinion at issue on the merits. The strategic considerations (3) that are brought to bear in the argumentative discourse in developing a specific argumentative route of argumentative moves – the other property relevant to determining the argumentative style – concern the selection from the topical potential of argumentative moves that can be made at a particular point in the discourse, the adaptation to the intended listeners’ or readers’ audience demand, and the presentational devices employed. Since all argumentative moves arguers make in argumentative discourse may be supposed to be aimed at realizing the dialectical and rhetorical aims of resolving the difference at issue in the way they favor, the various strategic maneuvers carried out in the discourse may be expected to be coordinated in a way that is optimally helpful to achieving these aims – both at the level of the three aspects of the individual strategic maneuvers just mentioned and at the level of the succession of the various maneuvers in the discourse. If the strategic maneuvers that are performed systematically cohere to constitute together an argumentative strategy, the use of this strategy can also be reckoned to be based on strategic considerations (van Eemeren, 2018, pp. 116–120).

In carrying out analytical qualitative research concerning argumentative styles within this theoretical framework, a collective of pragma-dialectical authors identified the kind of argumentative styles that are used in a variety of communicative activity types from several communicative domains, concentrating particularly on the use of ‘detached’ argumentative styles and ‘engaged’ argumentative styles (van Eemeren et al., 2022).²² The argumentative styles that are identified in the qualitative analysis may be regarded ‘prototypical’ when their use agrees with what can be expected in the macro context concerned in view of the institutional preconditions applying to the type of standpoints and differences at issue, the argumentation advanced on the main level of the defense and the relevant critical questions. If there is an interest in whether a certain prototypical argumentative style is also stereotypical, the frequency of occurrence of its prototypical properties can be investigated by means of quantitative research, so that these frequencies can be compared with those found in other communicative activity types in the same and other domains and in other argumentative styles in the same communicative activity type. When the occurrence of a prototypical

argumentative style is relatively frequent in any of these senses, the use of this prototypical argumentative style may be called ‘stereotypical’ in that respect.

Notes

- 1 The philosophical research reflects upon the standards of reasonableness for argumentative discourse, the theoretical research develops a connecting conceptual framework for dealing with argumentative discourse. The actual manifestations of argumentative discourse are examined in the empirical research, and interpreted from the favored theoretical perspective in the analytical research, so that an adequate point of departure is created for practical research concerning the improvement of argumentative practices. A short explanation of this program is provided in van Eemeren and van Haaften (2023).
- 2 *Pace Finocchiaro.*
- 3 For the complete figure and further elucidation, see van Eemeren and van Haaften (2023).
- 4 Introspection involves in this case systematic reflection upon one’s own perceptions, experiences, and recollections of argumentative phenomena.
- 5 Apart from the authenticity requirement, these qualities are phenomenological counterparts of the positivistic requirements of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity.
- 6 A notable exception relevant to argumentation theory is the branch of communication studies known as ‘persuasive effect research,’ in which rhetorically oriented descriptive effectiveness research is conducted that is mainly quantitative (O’Keefe, 2002).
- 7 To the extent that these rhetorical studies are theory-driven, it can be claimed that they are as a matter of fact analytical rather than descriptive.
- 8 For further elucidation, see van Eemeren, 2018, pp. 42–49.
- 9 Related topics subjected to descriptive qualitative research of real-life specimens of argumentative discourse in pragma-dialectics include the distinctions between different kinds of complex argumentation (Snoeck Henkemans, 1997) and the analysis of various kinds of presentational phenomena, such as ‘praeteritio’ (Snoeck Henkemans, 2009).
- 10 In natural discourse these phenomena may be perfectly functional: the efficiency of the discourse can be served by leaving implicit what is self-evident, its clarity by re-emphasizing what is vital, its smoothness by concealing what is face-threatening, and its naturalness by dealing with issues when they happen to come up. The original presentation will play a role again when analyzing strategic maneuvering in an extended analysis.
- 11 Unlike theoretical constructs such as a critical discussion, the communicative activity types in which strategic maneuvering occurs are empirical phenomena that can be examined by observation.
- 12 Using the model of a critical discussion as a template in all argumentative characterizations, not only creates a common point of reference in studying communicative activity types but also ensures consistency and coherence that facilitates comparative studies.
- 13 The room for strategic maneuvering in strongly conventionalized communicative practices as can be found, for instance, in the legal domain, is generally severely limited by the institutional preconditions.
- 14 See van Eemeren and Snoeck Henkemans, 2017, pp. 1–10.
- 15 Expressing them explicitly would have been inappropriate. The standpoint that KLM is not to be blamed, for instance, goes against KLM’s apologetic attitude demonstrated at the start of the advertorial.

- 16 The pragmatic inconsistency in KLM's apologizing and at the same time claiming not to be guilty is hidden from view by a lack of clarity in their presentation. This should be spotted in the evaluation of the discourse.
- 17 For the procedural starting points (rules to be followed) and the material starting points (shared premises) that can be taken as a point of departure in the argumentative process, see van Eemeren, 2018, p. 24.
- 18 For the explicit and unexpressed premises that play a role as arguments in the argumentative process, see van Eemeren and Snoeck Henkemans, 2017, pp. 31–37, 43–51.
- 19 For the distinction between symptomatic, analogy, and causal argumentation, see van Eemeren and Snoeck Henkemans, 2017, pp. 83–91.
- 20 In symptomatic argumentation a certain sign, symptom or distinguishing mark of what is claimed in the standpoint is cited in the argument to make the standpoint acceptable (van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017, p. 84).
- 21 For the differences between argumentation structures such as 'multiple' argumentation (consisting of mutually independent arguments: 1.1; 1.2, etc.) and 'coordinative' argumentation (consisting of interdependent arguments: 1.1a & 1.1b, etc.), see van Eemeren and Snoeck Henkemans, 2017, pp. 55–68.
- 22 In detached argumentative styles a distant position of neutrality is created between the arguer and the audience whereas in engaged argumentative styles the arguer identifies in an empathic way with the audience. See van Eemeren et al., 2022, pp. 21–32.

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