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van Eemeren, F.H.; Andone, C.

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Frans H. van Eemeren and Corina Andone

13 Argumentation and communicative practices

Abstract: In this chapter, we give an overview of the approaches to the study of argumentation which concentrate on various communicative and interactional practices of arguing. First, attention is paid to the way in which the perspective of discourse analysis and conversation analysis can be helpful in dealing with argumentative texts and discussions. Next, we focus on approaches in which the rhetorical perspective on argumentation is used to study exemplary speech events. Finally, we turn to the pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation, which integrates a philosophical, a theoretical, an empirical, an analytical, and a practical component into a coherent approach, and the semantic-pragmatic perspective on argumentation which connects with the pragma-dialectical perspective.

Keywords: Communicative practices, pragma-linguistic perspectives, rhetorical perspectives, pragma-dialectical perspective, semantic-pragmatic perspective

1 The study of argumentation

Argumentation is one of the most common phenomena in communicating with each other. We employ argumentation on a daily basis to justify our views and opinions and to convince others of the acceptability of our positions. We do so in formally regulated communicative practices such as legal proceedings, but also in less formal types of communication at work and in the informal exchanges we have with family and friends. Whether we want to convince a judge that we did not commit the act we are accused of, our colleagues that we have to set certain priorities, or a friend that she should see a certain movie, we employ arguments to convince them that our points of view are acceptable.

Argumentation is advanced to resolve a difference of opinion between the speaker or writer and the people they address. In the communication between the parties the difference of opinion may have been externalized but it may also be presumed to exist, so that the argumentation is put forward in anticipation. More often than not only one of the parties involved expresses an opinion, whether explicitly or implicitly, and the other party doubts whether they should accept this opinion or is supposed to doubt this. More complex cases come into being when both parties have a standpoint and try to convince each other, or a neutral audience, of the correctness of their view.

Although there are different views as to how argumentation should be understood, most scholars seem to agree on some general characteristics (van Eemeren et al. 2014). Firstly, argumentation is viewed as a *communicative act complex* consisting of a combination of communicative moves put forward in defence of a standpoint. As a rule, these moves are verbal in nature and can be characterized as speech acts, but they can also be partly or wholly non-verbal, particularly visual.

Second, argumentation is seen as an *interactional act complex* directed at eliciting a response from the other party that indicates acceptance of the standpoint that is defended. Viewed in this way, argumentation is always part of an explicit or implicit dialogue with a real or imagined interlocutor who is in doubt about the acceptability of the standpoint that is defended.

Third, argumentation consists of a constellation of propositions involving *commitments* assumed by the party advancing the argumentation. Depending on the propositions which are put forward in the argumentation and the way in which they relate to the standpoint that is defended, the arguer can be held accountable for having a specific set of commitments.

Fourth, argumentation involves an appeal to a *rational critic who judges reasonably*.¹ People who put forward argumentation are first and foremost out to convince their addressees of the acceptability of the standpoint defended by making them see that their argumentation meets certain mutually shared critical standards. In this endeavour they assume that in principle the other party is capable of judging the soundness of their argumentation reasonably.²

These general features of argumentation can be captured in a definition which combines the process dimension of argumentation as a communicative and interactional act complex aimed at resolving a difference of opinion with the product dimension of argumentation as a constellation of propositions designed to resolve the difference of opinion by making the standpoint at issue acceptable to a rational judge who judges reasonably:

Argumentation is a communicative and interactional act complex aimed at resolving a difference of opinion with the addressee by putting forward a constellation of propositions the arguer can be held accountable for to make the standpoint at issue acceptable to a rational judge who judges reasonably (van Eemeren et al. 2014: Section 1).

¹ For the distinction between *rational* and *reasonable* see van Eemeren (2008). Being rational involves in his view using the faculty to reason; being reasonable refers to doing so in an appropriate manner. Cf. Perelman's (1979) view.

² Just like any other communicative and interactional act, argumentation can be used improperly. Instead of being reasonable, arguers may, for instance, be primarily interested in making a favourable impression on an audience, as when two political rivals are engaged in an electoral debate. However, if their discussion with each other is to be taken seriously by others, they need to act reasonably or maintain at least the appearance of being engaged in a reasonable discussion (van Eemeren et al. 2014).

The study of argumentative discourse aimed at resolving a difference of opinion in a reasonable way does not only have a descriptive dimension, but also a normative dimension. This means that scholars of argumentation must combine an empirical orientation towards how argumentation is actually conducted with a critical reflection upon how it should be conducted. If the descriptive study of communication and interaction is designated in the usual way as *pragmatics*, because of the need for combining descriptive research with normative research, the study of argumentation can be construed as a branch of *normative pragmatics* (van Eemeren 1986, 1990). In this branch of normative pragmatics argumentation theorists make it their business to connect the normative and the descriptive dimensions of the study of argumentation by systematically integrating in their theorizing empirical and critical insights.

The problems involved in combining the two dimensions can be only solved by means of a comprehensive research program consisting of five interrelated components: a philosophical, a theoretical, an empirical, an analytical, and a practical component (van Eemeren 1987; van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 9–41). On the one hand, in the philosophical component a conception of reasonableness needs to be developed that is adequate for judging argumentative discourse.³ In addition, in the theoretical component a model of argumentation needs to be developed that can serve heuristic, analytic and critical functions in the descriptive and normative study of argumentative discourse. On the other hand, to understand how argumentative discourse develops, in the empirical component a justified description of argumentative reality must be provided based on qualitative and quantitative research. Next, the philosophical, theoretical and empirical insights should be brought together in the analytical component by means of a methodical reconstruction of argumentative discourse as it occurs in argumentative reality. In this way a sound basis is created for tackling and improving the various kinds of argumentative practices in the practical component of the research program.

In the end, the general objective of argumentation theory is to provide the instruments required for analyzing, evaluating and producing argumentative discourse in an adequate way. Viewed from this general objective, the *raison d'être* of all components of the comprehensive research program eventually is that they enable us to develop such instruments. In the following sections we will outline how the results achieved in the various components of the research program are

3 Toulmin (1976), one of the founding fathers of modern argumentation theory, distinguished among three conceptions of reasonableness: 1. an *anthropological* conception, which starts from what is considered reasonable by the members of a certain communicative community and generally results in a rhetorical model for argumentation; 2. a *geometrical* conception, which is aimed at preserving certainty and developing a model of argumentation providing universal standards for assessing the truth of standpoints; 3. a *critical* conception, which boils down to adopting a dialectical procedure for testing systematically the tenability of standpoints.

brought to bear in dealing with the problems of analysing and evaluating argumentative discourse by explaining some prominent approaches to the study of argumentation. In each approach the perspective on argumentation that is chosen and the theoretical angle that is taken determine together how the various components are put to good use in realizing the descriptive and normative aims of the study of argumentation. In our expose we shall focus on approaches to the study of argumentation which concentrate on the communicative and interactional practices of argumentation. First, we pay attention to the way in which the perspective of discourse analysis and conversation analysis can be helpful in dealing with argumentative texts and discussions. Next, we focus on approaches in which the rhetorical perspective on argumentation is used to study exemplary speech events. Finally, we turn to the pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation, which integrates the five necessary components of argumentation research into a coherent approach, and the semantic-pragmatic perspective on argumentation which connects with the pragma-dialectical perspective.

2 A pragma-linguistic perspective on argumentation

Argumentation is often, especially in the United States, a central object of study for scholars of communication. Already since the early part of the twentieth century there has been a great interest among communication scholars in the practical skills of debating and public speaking. This purely practical enterprise led to the development of several theoretical insights into argumentation. In the 1980s some scholars complemented this interest in the practical component of the study of argumentation with the empirical study of argumentation as a linguistic communicative practice. In order to understand what “good” argumentation involves, they examined argumentative practices, taking account of all the details of the actual messages.

In tackling the problem of reconstructing arguments in such a way that becomes clear what exactly has been conveyed, Scott Jacobs (1998), for one, emphasizes that due attention needs to be paid to “the total message” that is expressed, the *expressive design*. Starting from this expressive design, he analyses in his essays the *functional design* of argumentation. In his view, arguments may be designed to encourage or to discourage a critical scrutiny of the functional design: the justification of positions and alternative positions. An important insight that scholars such as Jacobs have contributed to the theoretical component of the study of argumentation is that argumentation is a *self-regulating activity*:

Argumentative discourse can function not merely to persuade, but also to encourage mutual, voluntary, free, comprehensive, open, fair, impartial, considered, reasoned, informed, reflec-

tive, and involved engagement. On this view, the problems of how to determine the substance of good reasons, the form of good reasoning, and the status of any conclusion are all, to a large degree, left open to those deliberating the issue (Jacobs 2000: 274).

Following their interest in the expressive and the functional design of argumentative discourse, Jacobs examined together with Sally Jackson interpersonal arguments to determine the strategies involved in the different ways in which arguers increase or reduce disagreements in various contexts and the effects of using these strategies. The argumentative practices they concentrated on range from informal family interactions to more formal practices such as mediation (Jacobs & Jackson 1981, 1982, 1983). In the model they use for analyzing argumentative discourse every verbal utterance is seen as a speech act instrumental in achieving various kinds of goals. Ultimately, the research by Jackson and Jacobs is aimed at tracing the knowledge needed to “play the game” of communication, which they represent formally in a *structural model of discourse*.

In their research, Jackson and Jacobs have three methodological starting points. The first is a commitment to naturalism: They consider naturally occurring talk as the object of their research. The second starting point is direct inspection of the details of actual discourse: They prefer concepts and categories to emerge from, and to be justified by, detailed observation to the application of categorical coding schemes that render discourse into sequences of act types stripped of details of content. The third starting point involves a preference of inductive theory-building over deductive hypothesis-testing: The research questions are to emerge from an examination of the empirical details of the discourse.

The structural model of argumentative discourse at the core of Jackson and Jacobs’s work is based on sequencing rules inspired by the turn-taking model of conversation analysts such as Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (1974). Jackson and Jacobs, too, view the conventional pairing of utterances in terms of *adjacency pairs*. In their structural model argument is treated as a “repair and prepare” mechanism, designed to regulate the appearance of disagreement in a rule system aimed to do justice to the natural *preference for agreement*. Modeling argument in this way results in the exposition of a generative mechanism flexible enough to avoid the more obvious anomalies of chain models of interaction applied in group discussion research.

This structural model however proves, as Jacobs and Jackson (1989: 161) observe, to be insufficient for explaining exactly what happens in the process of communication when arguing.⁴ For this reason they developed a model in which more

⁴ First, various kinds of coherent replies to first pair parts do not fit the category of a second pair part. Second, the concept of an adjacency pair relation does not provide an adequate basis for identifying pairs: There is no principled way of identifying which pair parts should be paired together and which not. Third, the adjacency pair analysis cannot explain what types of utterances can and cannot initiate an adjacency pair. Fourth, a sequencing rule model offers no principled way of determining what utterances can and cannot be structurally subordinate expansions. Fifth,

attention is paid to the function of arguments. In this model, the felicity conditions of speech acts are used to explain the pairing of arguments. The first pair part and the second pair part are then seen in terms of mirror-image felicity conditions. Generally people do not interpret and respond to each other's contributions to the discourse in terms of types of acts being performed, but in terms of perceived goals and plans of the communicator. Therefore Jackson and Jacobs propose to view conversation as "a process of coordinating plans and negotiating meaning rather than as product of people interlocking their rules for issuing and interpreting actions" (Jacobs & Jackson 1989: 164). In this approach, speech acts are seen as conventional means for achieving goals that may be sub-goals in a broader structure or plan (1989: 165).⁵

Relying also on an account in terms of speech acts, Fred Kauffeld has examined the way in which in everyday argumentative interaction a burden of proof is incurred. He tries to explain how this special kind of probative obligation is incurred in conformity with what he calls the *Principle of Pragmatically Incurred Obligations*. According to this principle, in serious human communication pragmatically necessary presumptions are strategically engaged by openly manifesting intentions regarding the addressee, incurring corresponding obligations in the process (Kauffeld 2009: 8). Kauffeld's research concentrates on illocutionary acts such as *accusing* and *proposing*, which typically involve undertaking argumentative obligations. According to Kauffeld, the presumption of innocence imposes a burden of proof on arguers who accuse the interlocutor of having done something wrong: They have to provide evidence which rebuts the interlocutor's expected appeal against the accusation. Similarly, arguers who make a proposal will have to give reasons in its support to meet the interlocutor's presumption that the proposal is not favourable.

Other American communication scholars have taken a kind of empirical approach to argumentation which is more or less in line with the approaches developed by Jacobs, Jackson and Kauffeld. Under the label *normative pragmatics* (van Eemeren 1986, 1990), scholars such as Jean Goodwin and Beth Innocenti (Manolescu 2006) concentrate on describing the norms actually used by arguers in different contexts in dealing with argumentation. As an illustration, Goodwin refers to forensic argumentation in the courtroom and deliberative argumentation in public policy. In a forensic situation, she observes, representations of facts "must be based solely on the matters of fact of which evidence has already been introduced" (Goodwin 2005: 101). In a deliberative situation, arguments are adequate when they are "beyond criticism" (Goodwin 2005: 109).

there is an apparently limitless diversity of sequential expansions. As a consequence, no taxonomy of patterns can ever encompass all possible patterns (Jacobs & Jackson 1989: 161).

⁵ In this way Jackson and Jacobs's work in discourse analysis has developed closer to the pragmatic-dialectical perspective of van Eemeren and Grootendorst, with whom they co-authored the monograph *Reconstructing argumentative discourse* (van Eemeren et al. 1993).

Independently, a descriptive empirical approach to argumentative discourse is also adopted in France by Marianne Doury.⁶ She uses insights from conversation analysis to explain “the discursive and interactional devices used by speakers who face conflicting standpoints and need to take a stand in such a way as to hold out against contention” (Doury 2009: 143).⁷ Just like Goodwin, Doury is interested in describing argumentative norms adhered to in argumentative practices. She focuses on the norms revealed by observation of polemical exchanges in communicative settings such as everyday conversations, TV talk shows, internet newsgroups, letters to the editor, and public debates. Her aim is to find out to which extent theoretical categories and classifications of argumentative phenomena, such as *argument schemes* and *fallacies*, have their counterparts in empirical reality. For this purpose she investigates discursive clues which may reveal such commonalities. A good example is her empirical descriptive research regarding the parallels between scholarly conceptions of *argumentation based on comparison* and ordinary arguers’ conceptions of such arguments (Doury 2009). In this investigation Doury makes an inventory of explicit designations of comparison argumentation (such as the use of the word “compare”), indicators of this type of argumentation (such as “it’s like saying”), and refutations of the comparison (such as observations by other participants in the discussion that “the comparison is not suitable”).

3 A rhetorical perspective on argumentation

A great many communication scholars interested in argumentation are rhetorically-oriented. Because they describe various forms of argumentative practices and discuss ways to improve them, their research is to a large extent situated in the empirical or the practical component of the research program we sketched at the beginning of our overview. These scholars concentrate on the ways in which arguers try to persuade or convince others by the use of specific linguistic (and sometimes non-linguistic) devices. As a rule, they are strongly influenced by the rhetorical

⁶ Among a substantial group of European researchers, particularly those based in the French-speaking world, a descriptive approach to argumentation is traditional. Some of them continue the linguistic approach started in the 1980s by Jean-Claude Anscombre and Oswald Ducrot (1983). Others, such as Plantin (1997) and Doury (1997), build on this approach but are also – and often more strongly – influenced by conversation analysis and discourse analysis.

⁷ Doury’s descriptive approach is strongly influenced by Christian Plantin’s work on a dialogical model of argumentation including elements of classical rhetoric. In this model, the argumentative situation is characterized as an interaction between a speaker advancing a point of view which he needs to defend and an interlocutor expressing doubt for which a burden of proof is also incurred. For a more elaborate account of this model, see Plantin (2005).

tradition. Particularly in the United States this tradition has survived remarkably well.

In the nineteenth century, American communication and rhetoric studies developed as a result of the growing interest in the practical skills of debating and public speaking. This development was in the first place due to the already existing tradition of debate and eloquence, inherited from the British in colonial times. A second factor contributing to the rise of public speaking was that many considered it essential for effective citizenship. The transformation of the United States to a mass democratic society at the beginning of the twentieth century required in their view education in rhetoric and argumentation for active citizen participation. Debating was primarily seen as a pedagogical device – a form of practical training for careers in law, government, and politics. Argumentation was seen, more generally, as a body of citizenship skills.

Without necessarily sharing a common theoretical perspective on argumentation these communication and rhetoric scholars are for the most part concerned with how people use certain claims in various kinds of argumentative practices to obtain assent or achieve consensus. According to David Zarefsky (1995: 43), their common characteristic is that they examine “the practice of justifying decisions under conditions of uncertainty.” Studying argumentation as a *practice* requires viewing argumentative discourse as a social activity in which texts are advanced and responded to – these texts are then studied as products of this practice. The fact that argumentation is examined as a practice of *justifying* claims suggests that these rhetoricians, unlike scholars examining logical proof, do not envisage the outcome of argumentation in terms of certainty. Moreover, since argumentation is viewed as a practice of justifying *decisions*, it is concerned with choices and the need for making choices. It is the need for making choices under *conditions of uncertainty* – i.e. when not everything can be known – which these scholars consider the defining characteristic of a *rhetorical situation*.

Public speech as the product of a practice of argumentation is for rhetorically oriented communication scholars the object of investigation *par excellence*. Michael Leff and Gerald Mohrmann (1993), for example, provided a systematic analysis of Lincoln’s speech at Cooper Union. Their first observation is that the characteristics of this speech make it clear that it belongs to the specific genre of a campaign oration: speeches designed to win nomination for the speaker. Next, they point to the specific argumentative strategies and stylistic means which are used in the speech to achieve the purpose of the genre. By demonstrating that he is a man of reason, the authors observe, Lincoln tries to become a spokesman for his party. The strategy he follows consists of often quoting his main opponent, following his logic, and then turning it against him by means of a fallacious personal attack.

Public discourse is also central to Zarefsky’s work, which combines classical rhetorical insights with insights from modern rhetoric in giving an analysis of the argumentation used in public texts. In *President Johnson’s War on Poverty*, Zarefsky

(1986/2005) examines how public policy was presented strategically to the American public by declaring “an unconditional war on poverty” – an idea which initially became very popular, but lost its appeal later on. According to Zarefsky, the rhetorical choices made in *declaring a war on poverty* constitute the main reasons for both success and decline. The symbolic choice for waging a “war” and all the other choices associated with it – needing “soldiers,” fighting the “enemy,” conducting a “battle” – suggest a specific view of the world. By highlighting some aspects and diminishing others, these choices “evoke support or opposition by virtue of their association with an audience’s prior experience and belief” (Zarefsky 1986/2005: 5).

In *Lincoln Douglas and slavery*, Zarefsky (1990) analyses the seven encounters which took place in 1858 between Abraham Lincoln, the candidate of the Republican party, and Stephen A. Douglas, the incumbent senator seeking reelection, which have become known as the *Lincoln-Douglas debates*. Debates of this kind are often seen as the paradigm case of political debate, but Zarefsky considers this a “generally implausible” judgment which is “not supported by the record.” In his rhetorical analysis, he focuses on how the speakers “selected their arguments and appeals from the available means of persuasion and how they shaped and fashioned the arguments to meet the needs of the audience and situation” (Zarefsky 1990: xi). This perspective on the debates helped Zarefsky to explain “how linguistic and strategic choices both reflected and affected the course of the deepening controversy over slavery” (1990: xi).

A rhetorical approach to arguments is also characteristic of Edward Schiappa’s work, a case in point being his case study of the arguments concerning the definition of *person* and *human life* advanced in the context of the American constitutional disputes on abortion in the wake of the *Roe v. Wade case* (Schiappa 2002). In Schiappa’s view, “definitions always function to serve particular interests,” and “the only definitions of consequence are those that have been empowered through persuasion or coercion” (2002: 75). Schiappa provides a rhetorical analysis of the way in which the Supreme Court treats the questions of definition. He shows that the questions “What is a person?” and “What is human life?” – both allowing for infinite answers – are sidestepped. They are turned into a “more productive and answerable” question or the parties are left room “to offer – through persuasion but not coercion – competing answers” (Schiappa 2002: 78).

Gradually a growing number of American rhetorical scholars have shifted their attention away from public discourse to the *theory of inquiry*. Their basic assumption is that science, too, is governed by rhetoric. In line with this view, scholars such as Barry Brummett (1999) have contributed to the emerging belief that truth is relative to argument and to audience. They stimulated examining what sorts of knowledge are rhetorically constructed and how arguing produces knowledge. Among the answers that were proposed is the claim that all knowledge is rhetorical and that there are no standards transcending the rhetorical. Taking a stance like this is in fact only one step removed from the radical view that in fact everything

can be approached with rhetoric, which has led to the name *Big Rhetoric* (Schiappa 2001: 260).

4 A pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation

The pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation developed in Amsterdam is not only both normative and descriptive but also does justice to all components of the research program mentioned in our introduction. According to Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst (1984, 1992, 2004), the founders of the theory, argumentation is aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits by means of a critical exchange of argumentative moves between the protagonist of the standpoint at issue and an antagonist who has doubt as to the acceptability of this standpoint or even rejects it. Characteristically, in the pragma-dialectical theory argumentation is viewed from a perspective combining a communicative angle inspired by *pragmatic* insights from speech act theory and discourse analysis with a critical angle inspired by *dialectical* insights from critical rationalism and dialogue logic.

To connect the dialectical insights pertaining to the normative dimension of argumentation in an adequate way with the pragmatic insights pertaining to the descriptive dimension, the pragma-dialectical research needs to do justice to all five components of the research program of argumentation theory. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 2004) do so by adopting a critical rationalist philosophy of reasonableness and viewing argumentative exchanges as being part of a regimented critical discussion aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. Because speech acts which violate any of the rules for a critical discussion hinder the resolution of a difference of opinion on the merits, they view all argumentative moves involving the performance of such speech acts as *fallacies* (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992; van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 123–157).⁸

In the theoretical component of their research, the pragma-dialecticians give substance to their philosophical starting points by developing an ideal model of a critical discussion which specifies the stages the resolution process has to go through, the types of speech acts that can be instrumental moves in each of these stages, and the rules of critical discussion constituting the code of conduct that needs to be observed to prevent fallacies from occurring (van Eemeren & Grooten-

⁸ In principle, the pragma-dialectical “code of conduct” for reasonable discussants in which the rules for critical discussion are summarized provides all the standards pertinent to resolving a difference of opinion on the merits and therefore covers all fallacies that can be committed in argumentative discourse. See van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992: 93–217. Verify the number of pages because 93–217 seems too much.

dorst 1984, 2004). In a critical discussion four stages need to be distinguished. The discussion is initiated, in the *confrontation stage*, by the manifestation of a difference of opinion in which a standpoint is confronted with non-acceptance. After the discussion roles of protagonist and antagonist have been divided, in the *opening stage*, the substantive and procedural commitments are identified that can be considered as starting points of the discussion. The protagonist defends the standpoint at issue, in the *argumentation stage*, against the antagonist's critical responses to the standpoint and the arguments put forward in its defence.⁹ In the *concluding stage*, the protagonist and the antagonist determine whether the protagonist's standpoint has been defended successfully against the critical responses of the antagonist.

Starting from the classification of types of speech acts proposed by John Searle (1969: 1–29), van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) determined which speech acts can play a constitutive role in the four stages of a critical discussion. In the confrontation stage, *assertives* serve to advance standpoints and *commissives* to indicate acceptance or non-acceptance of a standpoint. In the opening stage, *directives* are employed to challenge the protagonist to defend a standpoint and *commissives* serve to indicate acceptance of the challenge as well as agreement with the premises and discussion rules. In the argumentation stage, *directives* are used to request for argumentation and *assertives* are performed to advance argumentation, while *commissives* will indicate acceptance or non-acceptance of the argumentation. In the concluding stage, standpoints can be upheld or retracted by means of *assertives*; *commissives* are used to indicate acceptance or non-acceptance of a standpoint. In all stages of a critical discussion, *directives* may be employed to request for the performance of *usage declaratives* which provide clarifications and usage declaratives may be performed to provide the clarification desired.¹⁰

In the analytical component of the pragma-dialectical research the model of a critical discussion serves a heuristic and analytic function by enabling a systematic reconstruction of argumentative discourse as it takes place in argumentative reality in terms of the resolution process portrayed in this model.¹¹ The model indicates what kinds of argumentative moves and discussion stages are to be traced when analysing argumentative discourse and how to reconstruct and label the moves

⁹ As a consequence of continued critical questioning, the protagonist's argumentation can become complex and the structure of the argumentation may vary. See van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992: 73–89) and Snoeck Henkemans (1992).

¹⁰ The category of the usage declaratives is introduced in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) as a specific subcategory of Searle's declaratives.

¹¹ It is important to note that in argumentative practice a great many speech acts in the discourse are performed implicitly or indirectly, so that in the analytic component of the research program it needs to be determined whether they can be reconstructed in terms of the moves pertinent to conducting a critical discussion.

and combinations of moves that are analytically relevant.¹² Among the analytical tools developed in pragma-dialectics to reconstruct argumentative discourse in terms of the model of a critical discussion are the *rules of communication*, based on an integration proposed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst of an amended version of the Searlean felicity conditions for the performance of speech acts in communication and an amended version of the Gricean maxims for the conduct of verbal interaction: Do not perform speech acts which are 1. incomprehensible, 2. insincere, 3. superfluous, 4. pointless or 5. not appropriate in the context in which they occur in a specific speech event (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992). In cases where it may be assumed that the *general principles of communication and interaction* are not abandoned, the analyst is to make an effort – just like ordinary listeners or readers do – to reconstruct implicit speech acts in which these rules are violated in such a way that the violation is remedied and the reconstructed speech act agrees with all rules of communication. Following this procedure, ordinary manifestations of argumentative reality such as indirect speech acts and unexpressed premises, which violate the rules of communication when the utterances by which they are conveyed are interpreted literally, can be reconstructed in such a way that they are in agreement with all the rules of communication.

The reconstruction of argumentative discourse implemented in the analytical component of the research program is aimed at achieving an *analytic overview* of the discourse which contains all elements pertinent to resolving a difference of opinion on the merits and provides an adequate point of departure for the evaluation (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992). In this evaluation the model of a critical discussion serves a critical function by providing a coherent set of standards in the rules for critical discussion.¹³ As an illustration, we cite the *Freedom Rule*, which captures the first standard for resolving a difference of opinion on the merits involving that the difference can be fully expressed: *Discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from casting doubt on standpoints*. If it is not clear to the parties that there is a difference of opinion and what this difference involves, a difference of opinion cannot be resolved. In the pragma-dialectical theory, freely advancing and doubting standpoints are therefore considered as basic rights of those entering the confrontation stage of a critical discussion. The Freedom Rule can be violated both by the protagonist and the antagonist. If restric-

¹² The reconstruction is pragmatic since argumentative discourse is viewed as an exchange of speech acts taking place in an actual communicative and interactional context; it is also dialectical since the exchange of speech acts is viewed as aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits by means of a critical discussion. See van Eemeren et al. (1993).

¹³ In non-interactive communicative approaches to argumentation in which argumentation is not put in the broader context of a critical discussion aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits but treated “as a claim and reasons that support it” (Blair 2012), such as *informal logic*, three standards are generally employed in evaluating argumentation: *relevance*, *acceptability*, and *sufficiency*.

tions are imposed on the standpoints that may be advanced or called into question, some standpoints are declared sacrosanct and excluded from the discussion. Next to this type of fallacy, a violation of the Freedom Rule may consist of denying the other party the right to advance or to criticize a certain standpoint, thus eliminating the other party as a serious discussion partner. This type of fallacy can be committed in various ways: by discrediting the opponent's integrity, impartiality, expertise or credibility (*argumentum ad hominem*), by calling on their compassion (*argumentum ad misericordiam*) or by threatening them with sanctions (*argumentum ad baculum*).

Since the mid-1980s, pragma-dialecticians have carried out qualitative and quantitative empirical research as the lack of available concrete methods to explore into the connection between the theory and argumentative reality which can be brought to bear in accounting for reconstructions of argumentative discourse. This research has concentrated primarily on the identification and interpretation of implicit and indirect argumentative moves by ordinary arguers (van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Meuffels 1984, 1989) and on determining the extent to which the standards of reasonableness incorporated in the rules for critical discussion agree with the judgments of ordinary arguers (van Eemeren, Garssen & Meuffels 2009, 2012). The results of this research provide insights in the actual processing of argumentative discourse which put the ideal of a critical discussion in a realistic perspective and provide a point of departure for developing adequate methods for improving argumentative practices.

In the practical component of the pragma-dialectical research, finally, the insights gained in the philosophical, theoretical, analytical and empirical components are put to good use in examining the great variety of argumentative practices and developing methods for improving the productive, analytic and evaluative skills arguers need in order to participate adequately in these practices. In the next section we will explain how the crucial step of taking the “strategic design” of argumentative discourse into account has extended the pragma-dialectical theory in such a way that the various types of argumentative practices in different communicative domains can be fruitfully tackled.

5 A contextualised pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation

Starting from the model of a critical discussion the pragma-dialectical theorizing has moved gradually, and in various phases, from the analytic level of abstract idealization to the concrete level of the manifold practices of argumentative discourse. A crucial step in this development was taken in the 1990s when van Eemeren set about, together with Peter Houtlosser, to strengthen the connection of pragma-dialectics with argumentative reality by taking the “strategic design” of argu-

mentative discourse into account (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002). Their aim was to extend the available analytic theoretical tools in such a way that a more profound analysis and a more realistic evaluation of argumentative discourse can be given than the pragma-dialectical “standard” theory allowed for.

To account for the strategic design of argumentative discourse, next to the dimension of reasonableness predominant in the standard theory, the dimension of effectiveness needs to be incorporated in the theorizing. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser took as their starting point that in real-life argumentative discourse, in all argumentative moves that are made, the arguers’ objectives of being effective and maintaining reasonableness are pursued simultaneously. In making an argumentative move, arguers are out to achieve the effect of acceptance in the audience they want to reach, but to achieve this effect based on the merits of the move that is made they need to remain within the boundaries of reasonableness defined by the rules for critical discussion. This means that a delicate balance must be kept, because pursuing at the same time these two objectives often creates a certain tension. This is why, according to van Eemeren and Houtlosser, making an argumentative move always involves *strategic manoeuvring*.

Strategic manoeuvring, as explained in by van Eemeren (2010), manifests itself in all argumentative moves in three different aspects: 1. the selection that is made from the *topical potential*, i.e. from the set of alternatives available at that point in the discourse; 2. the adaptation to *audience demand*, i.e. to the frame of reference of the listeners or readers the speaker or listener intends to reach; and 3. the exploitation of *presentational devices*, i.e. stylistic and other means of expression that could serve the purpose. Strategic manoeuvring takes place during the entire process of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits: At every stage the parties are presumed to be out to achieve the dialectical objective of the stage concerned and to achieve at the same time the optimal rhetorical result.

Because strategic manoeuvring takes part in actual communicative practices, in the extended pragma-dialectical theory the institutional conventionalization of these practices is duly taken into account. By observing their specific institutional point and the conventions characterizing the various communicative activity types it becomes possible to identify the institutional preconditions for the use of certain modes of strategic manoeuvring prevailing in a certain activity type. Fallacies are derailed strategic manoeuvres in which a rule for critical discussion has been violated. They can be identified with the help of soundness criteria applicable to the particular activity type in which the manoeuvre is advanced.

With regard to strategic manoeuvring in the legal domain, Eveline Feteris (2009) has concentrated on showing how a judge can manoeuvre strategically in justifying a decision which deviates from the literal meaning of a legal rule by referring to its purpose as it can be inferred from the intention of the legislator. As a case in point, she analyzes and evaluates the judge’s argumentation in the famous Holy Trinity case on the basis of a reconstruction of the burden of proof and the space available for strategic manoeuvring.

With regard to the political domain, van Eemeren and Bart Garssen have examined the institutional preconditions for strategic manoeuvring in argumentative exchanges in the European Parliament. So far, they have concentrated on the impact of a secondary precondition, which they call *the European predicament*, silently imposed upon Members of the European Parliament that they are supposed to serve the European cause and to satisfy at the same time their electorate by protecting the national interests of their home countries (van Eemeren & Garssen 2010, 2011). They show that when a policy is proposed that is disadvantageous to their home country this predicament leads to the occurrence of a regular pattern in the responses of the MEPs.

In *The honourable gentleman should make up his mind*, Dima Mohammed (2009) concentrates on the communicative activity type of Prime Minister's Question Time in the British House of Commons. She examines responses by the Prime Minister to critical questions by oppositional Members of Parliament concerning the government's policies, actions or plans in which the Prime Minister accuses the questioner of an inconsistency. Mohammed also formulates soundness conditions for distinguishing between sound and fallacious accusations of inconsistency. In *Internet political discussion forums as an argumentative activity type*, Marcin Lewinski (2010) focuses on how the contextual conditions of political discussion forums on the Internet affect the way in which the participants react critically. Through empirical analysis he identifies four frequently returning patterns of strategic manoeuvring in critical reactions. The main rhetorical factor underlying these four patterns is the strategic use of the burden of proof. In *Argumentation in political interviews*, Corina Andone (2013) sets out to provide an argumentative explanation for the way in which politicians react in political interviews to the interviewer's accusation that they have taken on a standpoint which is inconsistent with a standpoint they have advanced earlier. In her study, Andone shows that rephrasing one of the standpoints can be a "compensating adjustment" enabling the politician to continue the discussion even if the inconsistency seems undeniable. She distinguishes three patterns which this kind of manoeuvre can have.

In *Getting an issue on the table*, Yvon Tonnard's (2011) aim is to give an account of presentational tactics used by "one-issue" politicians in Dutch parliamentary debate to get the priority issue of their party discussed even when it is not on the agenda, thus showing their electorate that they really care about the issue. In *Pragmatic argumentation in law-making debates*, Constanza Ihnen Jory (2012) develops instruments for the analysis and evaluation of the type of argumentation in which the desirable consequences of a bill are discussed during its "second reading" in British Parliament.

With regard to strategic manoeuvring in the medical domain, Francisca Snoeck Henkemans (2011) has shown how doctors exploit their authority in discussions with the patients while trying to stick to the principle of informed consent. Thomas Goodnight and Roosmaryn Pilgram (2011) have concentrated on the role of *ethos* in

stressing the doctor's expertise. Strategic manoeuvring also takes place in medical advertisements – especially in America – in which certain drugs are promoted. Within the conceptual framework of pragma-dialectics, Lotte van Poppel and Sara Rubinelli (2011) have traced potential flaws in argumentation about the efficacy of medicines advertised directly to consumers. The main problem in these advertisements is that the link between the use of the drug and the improvement of the health condition is made without giving due account of unsuccessful uses of the drug or the possibility that other drugs can help as well. Such strategic manoeuvring often goes against the institutional preconditions for conducting a critical discussion imposed upon this type of advertising by the Food and Drug Administration.

6 A semantic-pragmatic perspective on argumentation

Many of the pragma-dialectical insights into argumentative discourse have been adapted and extended in the last few years in the University of Lugano, where Eddo Rigotti (2009), Andrea Rocci (2009) and some other scholars have been developing a semantic-pragmatic approach to argumentation. To satisfy their practical interest in argumentation they have proposed the *Argumentum Model of Topics*, which supports the design and production of arguments in specific domains such as finance, public institutions, and the media (Rigotti & Greco 2006, 2009). In the Luganese view, “topics is the component of argumentation theory by which all (theoretically possible) relevant arguments in favor and against any standpoint are generated by specifying their inferential structure through a system of *loci*” (Rigotti & Greco 2006).

Employing the pragma-dialectical distinction between procedural and material starting points, Rigotti and Sara Greco Morasso (2010) argue that an argument scheme combines a procedural starting point – the inferential connection (or maxim) that is activated – with a material starting point guaranteeing its application to the actual situation. Based on this distinction, they identify the different kinds of premises that are involved in the employment of an argument scheme.

According to Rigotti and Greco Morasso, in the description of the procedural starting points it is important to distinguish between three levels in the relation between a *locus* and the complete argument scheme: a) the level of the *locus* itself (e.g., analogy relation, cause-effect relation); b) the level of inferential connections (e.g., “If the cause is present, the effect must also occur”); and c) the level of the logical form (e.g., *modus ponens* in the case of “What holds for the genus, also holds for the species”).

With regard to the description of the material starting points, Rigotti and Greco Morasso identify “the source of the force of the statement presented as an argu-

ment in relation to the statement presented as a standpoint” (2010: 500). Consider as an illustration the following example they discuss (2010: 499–500):

A: Should we travel by train or by car?

B: Remember the traffic jams on New Year’s Eve? And today is our national holiday!

Making use of van Eemeren and Grootendorst’s (1992) analysis of the argument scheme of analogy, Rigotti and Greco Morasso reconstruct B’s argumentation in this example as follows:

1. It is true of this evening (our national holiday) that there will be traffic jams.
2. Because the fact that there were traffic jams was true for New Year’s Eve.
3. And the national holiday is comparable to New Year’s Eve.

According to Rigotti and Greco Morasso, it needs further backing that the national holiday and New Year’s Eve are comparable. This backing could be provided by the premise “that both celebrations are part of ‘a common functional genus’ – that of ‘big celebrations’, in which people allow themselves to take a day off and go on a trip somewhere” (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010: 500). Since the premise constituting the backing of the comparability is an assumption based on the discussants’ shared knowledge of the two celebrations at issue, it can be seen as a typical instance of a material starting point. This type of starting point is, in their view, comparable to the Aristotelian notion of *endoxon*: an opinion that is accepted by the relevant public or by the opinion leaders of the relevant public.

The Luganese scholars have combined semantic research with insights from argumentation theory to develop an approach to cultural *keywords*. In their view, “considerations from argumentation theory can help significantly in the complex task of hypothesizing and testing candidates to the status of keywords in a given culture” (Rigotti & Rocci 2005: 125). This results in the following proposal:

We propose to consider as serious candidates for the status of cultural keywords the words that play the role of terminus medius in an enthymematic argument, functioning at the same time as pointers to an endoxon or constellation of endoxa that are used directly or indirectly to supply an unstated major premise. More precisely, words that typically have this kind of function in public argumentation within a community, are likely candidates to the status of keywords of that community (Rigotti & Rocci 2005: 131).

In an example such as “He’s a traitor. Therefore he deserves to be put to death” (Rigotti & Rocci 2005: 130), the enthymematic argument can be reconstructed as follows:

Major premise: *Traitors* deserve to be put to death (unstated)

Minor premise: He is a *traitor*

Conclusion: He deserves to be put to death.

Because in this example the word “traitor” plays an important role in both the logical and the communicative structure of the argument and is associated with a number of culturally shared beliefs and values, the plausibility of the unstated premise is confirmed.

Another semantic-pragmatic line of research has been carried out by Rocci (2008, 2009) to establish under which conditions modal markers can act as argumentative indicators and to find out what kind of cues they provide for the reconstruction of arguments. This research concentrates on the relationship between argumentation and the semantic-pragmatic functioning of lexical and grammatical modality markers in Italian. The results of this project indicate that epistemic modals – modal expressions by means of which speakers indicate to what extent they are prepared to commit themselves to the truth or acceptability of a proposition – can serve as direct indicators of standpoints, can make explicit the degree of commitment to the standpoint, and enable the anaphoric recovery of premises. Non-epistemic modals – such as modals expressing a deontic or ontological necessity or possibility – can serve as indirect indicators of standpoints and can convey information about the argument scheme that is used by the arguer.

7 Conclusion

Our overview of the state of the art in the discipline generally known as *argumentation theory* has shown that argumentation is examined from various perspectives. The theoretical approaches to argumentation that have been developed differ not only considerably in conceptualisation and refinement, but also in scope. Some approaches, especially those having a background in discourse analysis and conversation analysis or in rhetoric, are primarily descriptive. They tend to focus on the way in which arguers try to convince or persuade their addressees by making use of certain linguistic (and sometimes also non-linguistic) devices. In approaches inspired by logic and philosophy argumentation is as a rule studied for normative purposes. The focus is then on developing soundness criteria for evaluating the quality of argumentative discourse and determining when exactly the argumentative moves that are made are fallacious. The pragma-dialectical theory combines philosophical and logical insights with insights from linguistic communication and interaction. Despite the different angles of approach, there is a common recognition that the study of argumentation has both a descriptive and a normative dimension and that in a fully-fledged argumentation theory both dimensions need to be combined.

In the approaches to argumentation we have discussed the problems involved in the production, analysis and evaluation of argumentative discourse are tackled in different ways. The differences depend in the first place on how exactly in the

various approaches the five components of the research program for the study of argumentation that we took as our point of departure in the introduction of our overview are substantiated. This is why the differences between the approaches can be characterized by indicating for each of the components what their distinctive features are.

In substantiating reasonableness in the philosophical component of the research program, the descriptive pragma-linguistic and rhetorical approaches usually opt for an anthropological view of reasonableness. As a rule, starting from such a view leads to an *emic* perspective on argumentative discourse, in which the standards of reasonableness are equated with the *intersubjectively agreed-upon* norms of reasonableness prevailing in a certain community. In normatively oriented dialectical approaches, such as the pragma-dialectical theory, the standards of reasonableness are determined by “external” considerations of *problem-solving validity* in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. Then an *etic* perspective on reasonableness in argumentative discourse is chosen, which is more often than not motivated by a critical rationalist philosophy.¹⁴

In substantiating the theoretical component of the research program in the rhetorical approaches opting for an anthropological reasonableness conception the aspects of argumentative discourse are identified that play a vital role in persuading an audience of the acceptability of a standpoint. This does not so much result in a theoretical model of argumentation but in a synthetic overview of the communicative and interactional means that can be persuasive in situated argumentative discourse depending on the type of context in which the discourse takes place. In the pragma-linguistic approaches the factors relevant to an appropriate conduct of argumentative discourse are in principle identified in the same *emic* vein. The approaches to argumentation opting for a critical rationalist conception of reasonableness, such as the pragma-dialectical theory, concentrate in the theoretical component on the development of dialectical procedures for putting the acceptability of standpoints systematically to the test. The pragma-dialecticians give substance to their reasonableness conception in a model of critical discussion that defines all rules and argumentative moves instrumental in the various stages of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. Argumentative moves which violate any of the rules for critical discussion, so that they do not comply with the critical-rationalists standards of reasonableness, are marked as fallacious.

In giving substance to the empirical component the theoretical view of argumentation developed in the theoretical component is in all cases taken as the point of departure: this view indicates what is worth investigating empirically. The empirical research that has been conducted in the pragma-linguistic and rhetorical approaches has so far concentrated for the most parts on specific speech events

¹⁴ For a discussion of the distinction between *emic* and *etic* perspectives on language use, see van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson and Jacobs (1993: 50–52).

and is almost exclusively qualitative in nature. These studies have in the first part an explanatory aim: they are directed at explaining the effectiveness (“persuasiveness”) of the argumentative moves that are made. In the pragma-dialectical approach next to qualitative research also experimental quantitative research has been conducted. As a matter of course, in this normative approach the research is not aimed at testing the theoretical model of a critical discussion empirically. All the same, this model serves as a point of orientation. In this research it is, for instance, examined how in argumentative reality the stages and the argumentative moves distinguished in the model are realized. Particular attention is paid to the extent to which the norms of reasonableness of ordinary arguers agree with the critical standards of reasonableness developed in the theory.

In the analytical component of the research programme the emphasis is on developing appropriate methods for reconstructing argumentative discourse in agreement with the theoretical requirements of a certain approach. In accounting for their reconstructions the analysts rely on various sources, ranging from the text of the discourse and its visual accompaniments (if any), the linguistic micro-context, the situational meso-context, the macro-context of the communicative activity type in which the discourse takes place and the intertextual context, to logical and pragmatic inferences the text allows for and relevant general and specific background information. In principle these sources are used in all approaches but the theoretical concepts they are linked with differ in accordance with the different kinds of theoretical views of argumentation prevailing in the various approaches. A pragma-linguistic reconstruction tends to be discourse-oriented and based on linguistic observations, a rhetorical reconstruction connects with the effectiveness of the persuasion process, and a pragma-dialectical or semantic-pragmatic reconstruction combines these two orientations with a concern for reasonableness in the problem-solving sense.

Finally, there are clear differences in the way in which the practical component of the research program is substantiated in the various approaches. In the pragma-dialectical approach and the semantic-pragmatic approach the development of instruments for improving the practices of argumentative discourse leads to proposing methods for systematically improving the arguers’ skills in producing, analysing and evaluating argumentation discourse. A lot of attention is also paid to the different kinds of implementations of theoretical insights into argumentation in the various kinds of communicative activity types that have developed in different communicative domains. In the rhetorical and pragma-linguistic approaches the contributions to the practical component tend to concentrate in the first place on illuminating how exactly argumentative goals are pursued in specific speech events, such as political speeches and public debates.

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