Strategic manoeuvring in argumentative discourse

van Eemeren, F.H.; Houtlosser, P.

[Link to publication](#)

Strategic manoeuvring in argumentative discourse

FRANS H. VAN EEMEREN

PETER HOUTLOSSER
UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

ABSTRACT This article reacts against the undesirable ideological separation between dialectical and rhetorical approaches to argumentative discourse. It argues that a sound evaluation of argumentation requires an analysis that reveals all aspects of the discourse pertinent to critical testing. To explain the rationale of the various moves made in the discourse and the strategic patterns behind them, not only the interlocutors' dialectical goals must be taken into account, but also their rhetorical goals. After explaining how rhetorical insight can be instrumental in deepening and justifying a dialectical analysis, an integrated analysis is made of the rhetorical strategies that are brought to bear in an advertorial published by the oil company Shell.

KEYWORDS: *argumentation (theory), dialectic, discourse analysis, rhetoric, strategy*

1. *Argumentation* in vivo

Some surprising advice to young people from RJ Reynolds Tobacco.
Don't smoke.
For one thing, smoking has always been an adult custom. And even for adults, smoking has become very controversial.
So even though we're a tobacco company, we don't think it's a good idea for young people to smoke.
Now, we know that giving this kind of advice to young people can sometimes backfire.

But if you take up smoking just to prove you're an adult, you're really proving just the opposite.

Because deciding to smoke or not to smoke is something you should do when you don't have anything to prove.

Think it over.

After all, you may not be old enough to smoke. But you're old enough to think.

More than just a well-meant piece of advice, this 'advertorial', which appeared in American magazines during the spring of 1984, is an artful defence of Reynolds' position with regard to the promotion of smoking (Van Eemeren et al., 1997a). Although the argument remains partly hidden, the text is an example of argumentation *in vivo* and, as such, an object of analysis for argumentation theorists.[1] Argumentation theorists are not only interested in the effectiveness of argumentation in convincing people of a certain viewpoint, but also in the standards argumentative discourse should ideally comply with. In this connection, we agree with those for whom the raison d'être of studying argumentation is the *critical analysis* of argumentative discourse – the interpretation and evaluation of actual cases of argumentation in light of normative standards for argumentative conduct (Van Eemeren et al., 1993: 37).

A critical analysis of misleading argumentative discourse such as Reynolds' – the advertorial undermines the very standards of critical discussion it pretends to defend – is clearly in the public interest.[2] In order to carry out such an analysis adequately, a reconstruction method is required that, among other things, systematically identifies the strategic manoeuvring that takes place in the discourse. Such a comprehensive method has not yet been developed. In this article we propose a theoretical framework upon which it can be built.

2. Pragma-dialectical analysis of argumentative discourse

Our point of departure is the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, which views argumentative discourse as an exchange of verbal moves ideally intended to resolve a difference of opinion.[3] The dialectical angle of the theory is manifested in the maintenance of critical standards of reasonableness, the pragmatic angle in the definition of all argumentative moves as speech acts functioning in a context of disagreement.

Crucial to the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation is a model of *critical discussion* that provides a procedure for establishing systematically whether the standpoint advanced by the protagonist of a viewpoint is defensible against doubt or criticism of an antagonist. The model is an analytic description of what argumentative discourse would be like if it were solely and optimally aimed at resolving a difference of opinion. It specifies the resolution process, its stages and the various types of speech act instrumental in each particular stage. Four stages are distinguished: the 'confrontation' stage, where the difference of opinion is defined; the 'opening' stage, where the starting point of the discussion is estab-

lished; the 'argumentation' stage, where arguments and critical reactions are exchanged; and the 'concluding' stage, where the result of the discussion is determined. At every stage, specific obstacles may arise to the resolution of the difference. The pragma-dialectical rules, which provide a definition of the general principles of constructive argumentative discourse, are designed to prevent such obstacles – traditionally known as *fallacies* – from arising (or to enable the analyst to point them down).

In a pragma-dialectical analysis of argumentative discourse, the reconstruction of the speech acts performed to resolve a difference of opinion results in an *analytic overview* (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992: 93–4). The analytic overview constitutes the basis for a critical evaluation. It clarifies the difference of opinion at issue and the positions of the participants. It also identifies the premisses which serve as the starting point of the discussion, the arguments and criticisms which are – explicitly or implicitly – advanced, the argument schemes that are employed, the argumentation structures that are constructed, and the conclusion that is reached. Because the model of critical discussion provides a survey of all (combinations of) speech acts that operate in the various stages of the resolution process, it is a heuristic tool in the reconstruction of implicit or otherwise opaque speech acts that are relevant for the analytic overview (Van Eemeren et al., 1993).

3. *Strategic manoeuvring in resolving a difference of opinion*

People engaged in argumentative discourse are characteristically oriented towards resolving a difference of opinion and may be regarded as committed to norms instrumental in achieving this purpose – maintaining certain standards of reasonableness and expecting others to comply with the same critical standards.[4] However, this does not necessarily mean that they are not interested in resolving the difference *in their own favour*. Their argumentative speech acts may even be assumed to be designed to achieve precisely this effect. There is, in other words, not only a *dialectical*, but also a *rhetorical* dimension to argumentative discourse.[5]

The alleged rhetorical pervasion of argumentative discourse does not mean that the parties involved are interested exclusively in getting things their way.[6] Even when they try their best to have their point of view accepted, they have to maintain the image of people who play the resolution game by the rules: they may be considered committed to what they have said, assumed or implicated. If a given move is not successful, they cannot escape from their dialectical responsibility by simply saying 'I was only being rhetorical'. As a rule, they will therefore at least have to pretend to be interested primarily in having the difference of opinion resolved.[7]

The balancing of a resolution-minded dialectical objective with the rhetorical objective of having one's own position accepted is occasion for strategic manoeuvring in which the parties seek to meet their dialectical obligations without sacrificing their rhetorical aims. In so doing, they attempt to exploit the opportunities

afforded by the dialectical situation for steering the discourse rhetorically in the direction that serves their own interests best. Because an analysis of argumentative discourse can only provide an adequate basis for a critical evaluation if it explains what every move in the discourse is designed to achieve, the analysis should take account not only of the dialectical dimension of the discourse, but also of the rhetorical dimension. We therefore include rhetorical considerations in our pragma-dialectical method of analysis. By conceiving strategic manoeuvring as a means of realizing rhetorical aims while complying with the requirements of reasonable dispute resolution, we view rhetorical moves as they occur in practice as operating within a dialectical framework.

4. Overcoming the traditional division between rhetoric and dialectic

How does our position relate to the traditional conceptions of rhetoric and dialectic? In spite of their initial close connection, since Aristotle there has been a distinct division between rhetoric and dialectic. The conceptual framework for the study of rhetoric was provided by Aristotle's 'argumentative' definition in the *Rhetoric* of rhetoric as an ability or capacity (*dynamis*) in each case to see the available means of persuasion.[8] Beside the Aristotelian perspective, an Isocratian tradition developed that concentrated more on style and literary aspects. In Cicero's *De oratore* these aspects are integrated in the Aristotelian framework. Until the 17th century western history of the theory of rhetoric is foremost Ciceronian; after its rediscovery in the 15th century, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* became the major classical authority on rhetoric in education (Kennedy, 1994: 158, 181).[9]

Dialectic was seen by the sophists as eristic, while Plato viewed it as a means of finding the truth. According to Reboul (1991), Aristotle developed dialectic in the *Topics* into a system of regulated dialogues for refuting a claim starting from concessions of the other party. In medieval times dialectic achieved an importance at the expense of rhetoric, which – after the study of *inventio* and *dispositio* was moved from rhetoric to dialectic – was reduced to a doctrine of *elocutio* and *actio*. With Ramus this development culminated in a strict separation between dialectic and rhetoric, rhetoric being devoted exclusively to style, and dialectic being incorporated into logic (Meerhoff, 1988).[10]

These precursory symptoms of a widening gap between rhetoric and dialectic existed but, according to Toulmin (1997) in his Thomas Jefferson Lecture, the division did not become ideologized before the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The result was the separate existence of two mutually isolated and incompatible paradigms, each conforming to different conceptions of argumentation.[11] In the long run, rhetoric has become within the humanities a field for scholars in communication, language and literature, and with the further formalization of logic in the 19th century dialectic has almost disappeared from sight. Recently the dialectical approach to argumentation has been taken up again, but there is still

a yawning gap between the mainly formally oriented theorists who opt for a dialectical approach and the humanist protagonists of a rhetorical approach.[12]

Nevertheless – as indicated by Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (1997) – on closer inspection there have always been authors who see some connection between rhetoric and dialectic. For Aristotle, rhetoric is the mirror image or counterpart (*antistrophos*) of dialectic;[13] in the *Rhetoric*, he assimilates the opposing views of Plato and the sophists (Murphy and Katula, 1994: ch. 2). According to Reboul, in the first chapter Aristotle wrote 'que la rhétorique est le "rejeton" de la dialectique, c'est à dire son application, un peu comme la médecine est une application de la biologie. Mais ensuite, il la qualifie comme une "partie" de la dialectique' (1991: 46). For Cicero rhetoric is also *disputatio in utramque partem*, speaking on both sides of an issue. In late antiquity, Boethius subsumes rhetoric in *De topicis differentiis* under dialectic (Kennedy, 1994: 283). According to Mack, for Boethius dialectic is more important, 'providing rhetoric with its basis' (1993: 8, n. 19). The development of humanism 'provoked a reconsideration of the object of dialectic and a reform of the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic' (Mack, 1993: 15). In *De inventione dialectica libri tres* (1479/1992), a major contribution to humanist argumentation theory, Agricola builds on Cicero's view that dialectic and rhetoric cannot be separated and incorporates the two into one theory. Unlike Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), who – much later – bring elements from dialectic into rhetoric, Agricola merges elements from rhetoric into dialectic.[14]

To overcome the sharp and infertile ideological division between rhetoric and dialectic, we view dialectic – in line with Agricola – as a theory of argumentation in natural discourse and fit rhetorical insight into our dialectical framework. By conceiving dialectic as discourse dialectic, a conception of dialectic is promoted that differs in various ways not only from Aristotelian dialectic, but also from formal dialectics. Theoretically, we connect with the approach advocated by Van Eemeren et al. (1997) and define dialectic as 'a method of regimented opposition' in verbal communication and interaction 'that amounts to the pragmatic application of logic, a collaborative method of putting logic into use so as to move from conjecture and opinion to more secure belief' (p. 214). Rhetoric we view as the theoretical study of practical persuasion techniques.[15]

The Aristotelian rhetorical norm of successful persuasion is not necessarily in contradiction with the ideal of reasonableness that lies at the heart of our pragma-dialectical approach. Why would it be impossible to comply with critical standards for argumentative discourse when attempting to shape one's case to one's own advantage? A critical audience will almost certainly require rhetorically strong argumentation to be in accordance with the dialectical norms operating in the discussion stage concerned.[16] Viewed from this perspective, there is a sound basis for integrating the rhetorical dimension into the pragma-dialectical method of analysis, and overcoming the traditional division between rhetoric and dialectic.[17]

5. *Aspects of strategic manoeuvring in different stages*

An understanding of the role of strategic manoeuvring in resolving disagreements can be provided by revealing how the opportunities available in a certain dialectical situation are used to handle that situation most favourably for the speaker or writer. Each stage in the resolution process is characterized by a specific dialectical aim. As the parties involved want to realize this aim to their best advantage, they can be expected to make strategic moves that serve their interest best. The dialectical objective of a particular discussion stage always has a rhetorical analogue. And since the kind of advantages that can be gained depends on the dialectical stages, the presumed rhetorical objectives of the participants must be specified according to stage.

In our view, strategic manoeuvring can take place in making an expedient choice from the options constituting the *topical potential* associated with a particular discussion stage, in selecting a responsive adaptation to *audience demand*, and in exploiting appropriate *presentational devices*. Given a certain difference of opinion, speakers or writers may choose the material they find easiest to handle; they may choose the perspective most agreeable to the audience; and they can present their contribution in the most effective wordings. With respect to each of these three aspects of strategic manoeuvring, they have an opportunity to influence the result of the discourse in their own favour.

The *topical potential* associated with a particular dialectical stage can be regarded as the set of relevant alternatives available in that stage of the resolution process.[18] As Simons (1990) observes, the ancient Greeks and Romans were aware that there is on any issue a range of stratagems that can be called upon when discussing a case. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) rightly emphasize that from the very fact that certain elements are selected, 'their importance and pertinence to the discussion are implied' (p. 119). Apart from endowing elements with a 'presence', deliberate suppression of presence is, in their view, also a noteworthy phenomenon of choice (p. 116).[19]

As for choosing from the topical potential, strategic manoeuvring in the confrontation stage aims for the most effective choice among the potential issues for discussion – restricting the 'disagreement space' in such a way that the confrontation is defined in accordance with the speaker's or writer's preferences.[20] In the opening stage, strategic manoeuvring attempts to create the most advantageous starting point for the speaker or writer, for instance by calling to mind – or eliciting – helpful 'concessions' from the other party. In the argumentation stage, starting from the list of 'status issues' associated with the type of standpoint at issue, a strategic line of defence is chosen that involves a selection from the available *loci* that best suits the speaker or writer. In the concluding stage, all efforts are directed towards achieving the conclusion of the discourse desired by the speaker or writer, by pointing out, for instance, the consequences of accepting a certain complex of arguments.

For optimal rhetorical result, the moves must in each stage of the discourse

also be adapted to *audience demand* in such a way that they comply with the listeners' or readership's good sense and preferences. Argumentative moves that are entirely appropriate to some may be inappropriate to others. In general, adaptation to audience demand will consist of an attempt to create empathy or 'communion'. This may manifest itself in the confrontation stage, for example, by avoidance of unnecessary or unsolvable contradictions. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969: 179), disagreement with respect to values is sometimes communicated to the audience as disagreement over facts, because that is easier to accommodate. As a rule, a speaker's or writer's effort is directed to 'assigning [. . .] the status enjoying the widest agreement to the elements on which he is basing his argument'. This explains why, in the opening stage, the status of a widely shared value judgement may be conferred on personal feelings and impressions, and the status of a fact on subjective values. In the argumentation stage, strategic adaptation to audience demand may be achieved by quoting arguments the listeners or readers agree with or by referring to argumentative principles they adhere to.

For optimally conveying rhetorical moves, the available *presentational devices* must be strategically put to good use. This means that the phrasing of the moves should be systematically attuned to their discursive and stylistic effectiveness, exploiting the Gricean maxims of Manner in a specific and deliberate way. In *De oratore*, Cicero (1949 edn) observes an unbreakable unity between expression and content – *verbum* and *res*. Anscombre and Ducrot identify expression with orientation: 'Signifier, pour un énoncé, c'est orienter' (1983: i), or, as Anscombre puts it, 'diriger le discours dans une certaine direction' (1994: 30). According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, all argumentative discourse presupposes 'a choice consisting not only of the selection of elements to be used, but also of the technique for their presentation' (1969: 119).

Rhetorical figures are specific modes of expression that can be used as presentational devices; they are ways of presenting which make things present to the mind.[21] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca regard a figure as argumentative if it brings about a change of perspective (1969: 169).[22] Among the rhetorical figures that can serve argumentative purposes are, of course, classical ones such as *praeteritio* – drawing attention to something by saying that you will refrain from dealing with it – and rhetorical questions. The success of a figure depends on the stage of the discourse in which it is employed. Figures such as *conciliatio* – in one interpretation, adopting the opponent's premises to support one's own position – can, for instance, be brought to bear in the opening stage to prepare the way for convincing the opponent in the argumentation stage.

We argue that a fully fledged 'rhetorical strategy' is being followed if the speaker's or writer's strategic manoeuvrings in the discourse converge with respect to topical potential, audience demand, and presentational devices. Rhetorical strategies in our sense are methodical designs of moves, or 'blueprints', for influencing the result of a particular dialectical stage to one's own advantage, which manifest themselves in a systematic, co-ordinated and simul-

taneous exploitation of the opportunities afforded by that stage. There are specific confrontation strategies, such as evasion or 'humpty-dumptying' in defining the difference. There are also specific opening strategies, such as creating a broad zone of agreement, or the opposite, a 'smokescreen'. The argumentation strategies include spelling out undesirable consequences that are supposed to intimidate the opponent. A notorious concluding strategy is forcing the audience to 'bite the bullet'. The various rhetorical styles of argumentative discourse can be characterized in terms of a particular combination of such strategies. Clearly, the one strategy or style is more acceptable than the other.

6. The case of Shell's Nigeria advertorial

We illustrate how taking account of the rhetorical dimension of argumentative discourse can be instrumental in achieving an adequate pragma-dialectical analysis by reconstructing the oil company Shell's strategic manoeuvring in defence of its involvement in Nigeria in an 'advertorial' published in *The Observer* of 19 November 1995. Having only just recovered from the damage suffered from the Brent Spar case, Shell responds in this ad to the massive, worldwide protests against its economic and political involvement in Nigeria. These protests were inflamed by the conviction and execution of the writer, dissident critic and environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa by the Nigerian regime.

CLEAR THINKING IN TROUBLED TIMES
 1 In the great wave of understandable emotion over the death of Ken Saro-
 2 Wiwa, it's very easy for the facts to be swamped by anger and
 3 recriminations. But people have the right to the truth. Unvarnished. Even
 4 uncomfortable. But never subjugated to a cause, however noble or well-
 5 meaning. They have the right to clear thinking.
 6   The situation in Nigeria has no easy solutions. Slogans, protests and
 7 boycotts don't offer answers. There are difficult issues to consider.
 8   First, did discreet diplomacy fail? Perhaps we should ask instead
 9 why the worldwide protests failed. Our experience suggests that quiet
 10 diplomacy offered the very best hope for Ken Saro-Wiwa. But as worldwide
 11 threats and protests increased, the Government position appeared to
 12 harden. As Wura Abiola, daughter of the imprisoned unofficial winner of
 13 the last Nigerian presidential election said on Newsnight "The regime
 14 does not react well to threats. I believe that this is the way of showing
 15 that they will not listen to threats." Did the protesters understand the
 16 risk they were taking? Did the campaign become more important than the
 17 cause?
 18   There have also been charges of environmental devastation. But the
 19 facts of the situation have often been distorted or ignored. The public –
 20 who rightly care deeply about these issues – have too often been
 21 manipulated and misled.

22   There are certainly environmental problems in the area, but as the
23 World Bank Survey has confirmed, in addition to the oil industry,
24 population growth, deforestation, soil erosion and over-farming are also
25 major environmental problems there.
26   In fact, Shell and its partners are spending US$100 million this
27 year alone on environment-related projects, and US$20 million on roads,
28 health clinics, schools, scholarships, water schemes and agricultural
29 support projects to help the people of the region. And, recognising that
30 solutions need to be based on facts, they are sponsoring a $4.5 million
31 independent environmental survey of the Niger Delta.
32   But another problem is sabotage. In the Ogoni area – where Shell
33 has not operated since January 1993 – over 60% of oil spills were caused
34 by sabotage, usually linked to claims for compensation. And when
35 contractors have tried to deal with these problems, they have been
36 forcibly denied access.
37   It has also been suggested that Shell should pull out of Nigeria's
38 Liquefied Natural Gas project. But if we do so now, the project will
39 collapse. Maybe for ever. So let's be clear who gets hurt if the project
40 is cancelled.
41   A cancellation would certainly hurt the thousands of Nigerians who
42 will be working on the project, and the tens of thousands more benefiting
43 in the local economy. The environment, too, would suffer, with the plant
44 expected to cut greatly the need for gas flaring in the oil industry. The
45 plant will take four years to build. Revenues won't start flowing until
46 early next century. It's only the people and the Nigerian Government of
47 that time who will pay the price.
48   And what would happen if Shell pulled out of Nigeria altogether?
49 The oil would certainly continue flowing. The business would continue
50 operating. The vast majority of employees would remain in place. But the
51 sound and ethical business practices synonymous with Shell, the
52 environmental investment, and the tens of millions of dollars spent on
53 community programmes would all be lost. Again, it's the people of Nigeria
54 that you would hurt.
55   It's easy enough to sit in our comfortable homes in the West,
56 calling for sanctions and boycotts against a developing country. But you
57 have to be sure that knee-jerk reactions won't do more harm than good.
58   Some campaigning groups say we should intervene in the political
59 process in Nigeria. But even if we could, we must never do so. Politics
60 is the business of governments and politicians. The world where companies
61 use their economic influence to prop up or bring down governments would
62 be a frightening and bleak one indeed.
63 **Shell.** We'll keep you in touch with the facts.

   At first sight, this text appears to be pretty straightforward: Shell informs the

public about the exact nature of their involvement in Nigeria. However, if one takes into account *when* the advertisement was published – Shell was at that time accused of lending support to the dictatorial Nigerian regime – and if Shell is assumed to be responding relevantly to existing exigencies, then it becomes clear that the ad is a sophisticated defence of Shell's actions and an attempt to convince the public of the superiority of Shell's policies in Nigeria. Given its potential impact on public opinion, a thorough analysis of the advertorial is of considerable interest.

How, then, is the topical potential of the discussion situation in question strategically used by Shell? How does Shell adapt its message strategically to the beliefs and preferences of its audience? How are presentational devices strategically exploited? These are the questions that an integrated dialectical and rhetorical analysis should answer for all four stages of the discussion process.

CONFRONTATION STAGE

The advertorial is both an apologia and a policy statement: it constitutes a response to accusations levelled against Shell's involvement in Nigeria as well as a justification of Shell's policies. In the apologetic part (lines 6–36), the argument is that Shell's involvement in Nigeria is not blameworthy.[23] The main position defended in the political part (lines 37–62) is that it is justified for Shell to continue its involvement in Nigeria.

The object of the ad's apologetic defence is 'juridical'. Shell addresses two issues inherent in its position: its involvement in the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and its part in environmental devastation. In dealing with the first issue (lines 8–17), Shell opts for the status of *qualitas*: the company has made attempts to help Saro-Wiwa, but these were frustrated by the protesters, sloganeers and would-be boycotters. In addressing the second issue (lines 18–36), Shell assumes the status *coniecturalis*, shifting the issue to various other causes of environmental devastation, and thus suggesting that Shell's share in it is negligible.

In its discussion of the main policy standpoint, Shell selects three issues to deal with: its participation in Nigeria's Liquified Natural Gas (NLNG) project (lines 37–47); its overall involvement in Nigeria (lines 48–57); and its non-intervention policy (lines 58–62). All three issues relate to the fundamental ('stock') issue of advantages and disadvantages: pulling out of the project and withdrawing from Nigeria altogether would have undesirable consequences for the people of Nigeria, and intervention would be disastrous for the political morals.

By leaving implicit the main standpoints addressed in the confrontation stage, Shell is able to select from the available *disagreement space* issues that are easy to cope with. The company does so cleverly, for one of the main accusations directed at Shell at the time was that the company indirectly supported the Nigerian regime. Shell was, of course, expected to address this difficult issue, but refrains from doing so. Apparently that is, because at the very end of the text Shell declares that the company will not intervene in Nigerian politics (lines 58–62), and adds (in line 61) explicitly that it rejects propping up a government as much

as bringing it down – thus implying that, in addition to not intervening, Shell does not support the regime. In this way, Shell also slyly accommodates to audience demand: it addresses the issue of support without explicitly answering the accusation involved. Shell can do so by exploiting the fact that the text, at this stage, has changed from an apologia into a policy statement. This makes it only natural that the last paragraph of the text should read as another justification of Shell's policy. Nevertheless, Shell is here back at apologizing: the issue is not whether the company should adopt a certain policy, but whether Shell is, politically and morally, *to blame* for the policy it is following.

Noteworthy among the devices used by Shell to 'sell' its topical and adaptive manoeuvring is its presentation of the issues as 'difficult' (line 7), eluding 'easy solutions' (line 6), and having to do with 'unvarnished truth' (line 3) rather than being 'subjugated to a cause' (line 4). In contrast, the campaigners' issues are disposed of as 'slogans, protests and boycotts' (lines 6–7).

In the mode of presentation of the issues a host of presuppositions is smuggled in which take for granted agreement which may not exist. In this way, elements enter into the confrontation stage that should not have been addressed until the opening stage of the discussion. By asking whether 'discreet diplomacy' failed (line 8), agreement is presupposed that Shell had indeed made diplomatic efforts to save Ken Saro-Wiwa, that these efforts were rightly made in secret, etc. Also striking is the far from concrete way in which the issues are phrased, thus making the accusations appear less specific than they actually are. What, for instance, did the 'charges of environmental devastation' (line 18) amount to?

OPENING STAGE

Shell creates a clear starting point for the projected discussion by emphasizing right in the opening stage the factual basis of its views, in contrast with the emotional basis of the opponents' opinions. Shell makes it clear that its own position is based on objective facts only, some known to the company from its own experience (lines 9–10), some from authorities such as Wura Abiola – the daughter of the then imprisoned winner of the previous election – (lines 12–15) or from the World Bank (lines 22–5). A few harmless concessions are even made to strengthen Shell's image of objectivity, one of them being that there are indeed environmental problems in the region of Nigeria (line 22). In contra-distinction, the campaigners and the public are both portrayed as parties that allow their judgements to be clouded by emotions (lines 1–3), that distort and ignore facts – or are manipulated and misled – (lines 18–21), whose perceptions are suffused with anger and recriminations (lines 2–3), or worse, for whom the campaign becomes more important than the cause (lines 15–17).

Shell also manipulates the positions of the parties in the discussion. Dialectically speaking, this is a standard situation with two opposing parties – Shell and the campaigners – who are having a 'mixed' dispute, and a third party – the public – who is supposedly neutral.[24] Shell capably manipulates the conventions of this dialectical situation. We know – and so did Shell – that public

opinion at the time was against rather than in favour of Shell. So Shell was in fact required to resolve a mixed dispute not only with the campaigners, but also with the public. Nevertheless, the company initially deals with the situation as if it were a 'non-mixed' dispute: it even treats the public as a possible ally, ready to close the ranks against the campaigners (lines 1–53).

This definition of the positions in the dispute is strengthened by Shell's adaptation to audience demand. Shell attempts to create communion that makes its starting point more easily acceptable. Goodwill is at this stage invoked by flattering the public: they are sensible people who are concerned about the same problems as Shell, they are entitled to clear thinking and can cope with the unvarnished truth (lines 3–5). Thus the public is dissociated from Shell's opponents in the conflict, the campaigners, who are unrealistic idealists, sloganeers, and irresponsible egocentrics (lines 6–7) for whom the campaign means more than the cause (lines 15–17). In addition, Shell calls upon the public's conscience: since rights imply duties, it is the public's duty to think clearly and accept only what is objectively true, however unsettling the truth may be (lines 3–5, 55–7, 63).

Shell establishes its credibility as an objective, disinterested, and rational protagonist by emphasizing the company's authority as an expert on Nigerian affairs (lines 9–10, 26–31, 41–6, 49–53) and its reliance on facts and respect for the truth (lines 3–7, 18–25, 29–30, 56–7, 63). To enhance its ethical ethos, Shell shifts the focus of attention from its own troubles to a concern with the problems of Nigeria: SHELL HELPS! (lines 8–10, 26–31, 41–4, 50–3). This is the perspective it thoroughly exploits in its argumentation, with its extensive elaboration on development aid.

One of the presentational devices strategically employed by Shell in the opening stage to widen the dissociation between the campaigners and the public, is the use of the passive form. The campaigners are thus portrayed as anonymous accusers: 'there have been charges' (line 18), 'the facts [have] been distorted' (line 19), 'it has been suggested' (line 37), etc. Shell's repeated use of antithesis serves to emphasize Shell's clear thinking and rational attitude, contrasting it with the irrational attitude and muddled thinking of the campaigners (and sometimes of the public): 'facts' versus 'emotions' (lines 1–5), 'discreet diplomacy' versus 'threats and protests' (lines 8–15), 'clear thinking' versus 'troubled times' (title), etc. A presentational means used for strengthening the communion with the public involves addressing them as a father would speak to his children: although the emotions they feel are 'understandable' (line 1), they should learn the truth; and although they 'rightly care deeply' (line 20), they are easily 'manipulated and misled' (line 21), especially when a cause seems 'noble and well-meaning' (lines 4–5). But if they listen to Shell, all will end well. On the other hand, if they don't listen, they may end up in the same position as the campaigners. That this is not an enviable position is made clear at the end of the text (lines 53–7), where – cloaked in a warning – the public is put on a par with those it was first, together with Shell, allowed to ridicule.

ARGUMENTATION STAGE

The arguments selected for Shell's defence are in the case of the juridical not-to-blame claim primarily factual arguments from authority; in the case of the policy standpoint, they are causal pragmatic arguments. The first issue associated with the 'Shell is not to blame' claim, that of Ken Saro-Wiwa's death (1.1a), invokes the authority of Wura Abiola (lines 12–15). The second blame-issue, that of environmental devastation (1.1b), calls in the authority of the World Bank (line 22–5) and Shell's own authority (lines 26–36) – where we have to take Shell's word that the given data are correct. The policy issue of Shell's participation in the NLNG project (2.1a) as well as its involvement in Nigeria in general (2.1b) and the possibility of intervention (2.1c) are all dealt with by emphasizing the supposedly catastrophic consequences of Shell's withdrawal from Nigeria (lines 38–47, 49–54, 59–62).

Shell's preference for factual and causal arguments is entirely in line with the recurrent emphasis on the factual status of its position. Just as a factual basis is generally perceived to be stronger than a normative basis, factual and causal arguments are often regarded as more conclusive kinds of support: facts cannot be doubted, and, unlike symptomatic or analogical relations, a causal chain suggests only a minimum of disputable connections.

There is one exception to this factual and causal treatment: Shell's refutation of the accusation that it supports the Nigerian regime (lines 59–62). Although the ad appears to provide causal argumentation for this issue, it is clear that in this case a causal argument will not do. Since the inference from Shell's non-intervention statement to the implied claim that it does not support the Nigerian regime cannot be causally warranted, a weaker symptomatic inference will have to do the job.

When we look at the way in which Shell's argument is adapted to its audience, two types of manoeuvring stand out. The first pertains to the issue of blame. In refuting any suggestion of guilt with regard to Ken Saro-Wiwa's death and with regard to environmental devastation, Shell exploits the SHELL HELPS perspective that was earlier invoked. Shell has helped Ken Saro-Wiwa by means of discreet diplomacy (lines 8–10); and Shell has helped in getting environmental devastation under control by providing financial and material aid (lines 26–31, 41–4, 50–3) – never mind that the relation between combating environmental devastation and financing roads (line 27) and health clinics (line 28) is not immediately clear. At any rate, in both cases the effects of their help were frustrated by the actions of others (lines 15–17, 32–6).

In the justification of their policy standpoint, adaptation to the audience takes place by evoking a frightening perspective of catastrophe and collapse: if Shell pulls out, calamity awaits the people of Nigeria (lines 46–7, 53–4) – and by referring to 'the people [. . .] that *you* would hurt' (our italics), the public is reminded of its responsibility (lines 53–4). By emphasizing that 'the environment, too, would suffer' (line 43), Shell introduces an argument based on *conciliatio*: Shell's opponents' supposed concern about the environment is opportunistically turned

against them. The perspective of calamity is contrasted with that of Shell's prolonged activities in Nigeria. Then the 'sound and ethical business practices' synonymous with Shell will continue to bear their blessed fruit (lines 50–3).

As can be expected, in refuting the 'blame' issues, a businesslike style prevails. The facts in lines 9–15 and 22–36 are to speak for themselves. Whether they always do is another matter. Who, for instance, are the claimants in the sabotage cases? And who precisely are the saboteurs? Perhaps Shell left these troublesome questions to the reader in order to induce a puzzlement that adds to the image of chaos already invoked in the description of the situation as 'sabotage'.

In its presentation of the arguments for the policy standpoint, Shell hammers the picture of calamity by asking suggestive rhetorical questions – 'What would happen if Shell pulled out of Nigeria altogether?' (line 48) – and by issuing warnings – 'So let's be clear who gets hurt if the project is cancelled' (lines 39–40) and 'Again, it's the people of Nigeria you would hurt' (lines 53–4). In lines 48–54, some sort of concessions are presented in a staccato of short and unconnected sentences that suggest lack of coherent thinking; they are then followed by a long and carefully construed sentence which suggests that Shell has the situation under control. There is also no lack of suggestive wording: 'the oil would certainly continue *flowing*' (with connotations of 'uncontrolled' and 'idle'), 'the business would continue *operating*' (*cui bono?*), and 'the vast majority of employees would *remain in place*' (but will they work?) (lines 49–50).

CONCLUDING STAGE

By leaving implicit the general conclusion of the discussion of their involvement in Nigeria, Shell suggests that it has said all there is to say and that the conclusion is now obvious. What else can the readers conclude but that Shell is neither to blame for the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa nor for any environmental disaster? On the contrary, Shell is a great help to the people of Nigeria and should stay there to prolong its generous development aid.

To ensure that the public reaches this favourable view, Shell emphasizes again the people's responsibilities. Having paved the way by repeated warnings that the fate of the Nigerian people is in their hands, Shell strikes the final blow at the end of the text, when it starts lecturing the people about their attitude. The public acts irresponsibly: their opinions of the Nigerian problems amount to no more than empty slogans, and their response is nothing but a knee-jerk reaction that can only harm this poor developing country (lines 55–7). They do indeed need Shell to put them straight.

Shell closes with a straightforward image of doom and horror; this image is aimed at eradicating any idea of the company doing a thing so evil as supporting the Nigerian regime (lines 60–2). The implication of this presentational device in the conclusion of the discussion is clear: if the horrific consequences of supporting the Nigerian regime are evident to all, then Shell will only be accused of this by those extreme malevolents whose sole aim is to destroy Shell's political and moral ethos. The final words, 'We'll keep you in touch with the facts' (line 63), are

not just a slogan, but should reassure the public that Shell will prevent the menace of a frightening and bleak world from becoming a reality and that clear thinking will prevail. These words, however, also convey a veiled counter-accusation: 'You, the public, are not capable of keeping in touch with the facts; that is why we will do it for you'.

7. Conclusion

Our analysis of Shell's Nigeria advertorial shows how the rhetorical opportunities for strategic manoeuvring in argumentative discourse offered by the dialectical situation can be used in choosing from the available topical potential, responding to audience demand, and exploiting presentational devices. In the advertorial, the selections with respect to these three aspects of strategic manoeuvring so strongly converge in the consecutive stages of the resolution process that it can be claimed that a rhetorical strategy is followed.

A major strategy used by Shell in the confrontation stage consists in manipulating the difference by addressing only those issues which are easy to cope with, while at the same time dealing in an indirect way with the issues the audience expects to be addressed. This is an evasion strategy that can be characterized as shifting the focus of a difference of opinion by selective highlighting. The dominant opening strategy is to involve the readers as closely as possible in Shell's view of the case by presenting the public as a possible ally rather than an opponent. Leading the readers in this way can be named the strategy of assimilation. The argumentation strategy favoured by Shell is demeaning the opponents by presenting them as not knowledgeable, lending at the same time the prerogative to causal reasoning based on 'authorized' facts – albeit facts restricted by Shell to those that can be put in a perspective attractive to the public and arranged in causal chains that have only the appearance of being unbreakable. As far as it appeals to the public's common sense, Shell's main concluding strategy is to impregnate the public with responsibilities that are at variance with its present unrealistic attitude. This strategy can be characterized as 'rubbing in the facts'.

In this article, we have thus substantiated our claim that the pragma-dialectical analysis of argumentative discourse can be deepened and strengthened by taking the rhetorical dimension into account. In the process, it may also have become apparent that, conversely, a rhetorical analysis can be carried out even more satisfactorily when dialectical considerations concerning what is at stake in the discourse are duly taken into account. It is only possible to attribute a deliberate rhetorical function to speech acts if these speech acts are first put in a well-defined dialectical framework.

A reconstruction of argumentative discourse in which the rhetorical dimension is systematically incorporated results in an analytic overview which provides an appropriate basis for a critical evaluation: some rhetorical moves may appear to be in accordance with the rules for critical discussion whereas other moves are fallacious because they are violations of these rules. The analysis makes clear that

there is no lack of fallacies in the advertorial 'issued' by Shell. Shell thus illustrates that supposedly clever strategic manoeuvring is a bad rhetorical strategy to a critical reader when it is dialectically unacceptable.

NOTES

1. For an overview of the state of the art in the study of argumentation, see van Eemeren et al. (1996).
2. Critical analysis of argumentative discourse is a prerequisite for adequate participation in public life and democracy. Apart from cultivating individual competence in dealing with argumentation, systematic reflection is required on the procedures for conducting argumentative discourse.
3. The pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation and its metatheoretical assumptions are explained by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984).
4. For some empirical confirmation of this claim see van Eemeren et al. (1997b).
5. In a general sense, *all* discourse is rhetorical: all issues need to be named and framed, all facts interpreted, and the discourse must be adapted to an end, an audience, and the circumstances (Simons, 1990).
6. Although rhetorical goals may appear to be pursued that are foreign to resolving a difference – e.g. being perceived as nice or wise – purportedly argumentative discourse is always aimed at resolving a difference.
7. We do not follow Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in differentiating between dialectical discussion as 'a sincere quest for the truth' and rhetorical debate in which the protagonists 'are chiefly concerned with the triumph of their own viewpoint' (1969: 38).
8. According to Poulakos and others, there is also a sophistic rhetoric, which is to be distinguished from Aristotelian rhetoric, but Schiappa (1991) questions the concept of such a rhetoric.
9. In later years there was a philosophically oriented persuasion rhetoric, inspired by Aristotle and Whately, and an elocutionary, decorative, belletristic rhetoric. As Gaonkar (1990) explains, in the United States there is now also a tradition stemming from Burke, in which the frontiers of rhetoric are expanded from 'persuasion' to 'identification'-as-an-explanation-for-social-cohesion. According to van Eemeren et al. (1997b: 213), modern-day persuasion theories, 'which are heavily oriented to analysis of attitude formation and change', bear little resemblance to Aristotle's rhetoric.
10. According to Mack, with the foundation of the universities, from the 13th century onwards dialectic became the 'intellectually dominant part of the *trivium*, while rhetoric was left with the important practical task of teaching official letter-writing' (1993: 8).
11. The geometrical world-view and the accompanying formal paradigm of the exact sciences became synonymous with rationality. Whereas argumentation for the humanists had been part of an attempt to resolve a difference of opinion in a reasonable way, with rhetoric playing a legitimate role in the resolution process, reasonable argumentation was in the exact sciences equated with reasoning rationally by means of formal derivations in which rhetoric did not have a part.
12. Among the dialectical theories of argumentation with a formal character are Hamblin's (1970) and Barth and Krabbe's (1982) 'formal dialectic' (based on the dialogue logic of the Erlangen School) and the formal approach of the fallacies by Woods and Walton (1989). Influential functional and contextual rhetorical approaches are Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1969) 'new rhetoric' and some well-known tra-

ditions in American speech communication and philosophy (see van Eemeren et al., 1996: Ch. 7).

13. Reboul (1991: 46) observes that for *antistrophos* the translators 'donnent [. . .] tantôt "analogue", tantôt "contrepartie"'. He adds: '*Antistrophos*: il est gênant qu'un livre commence avec un terme aussi obscur!'

14. According to Mack, Agricola's work is unlike any previous rhetoric or dialectic: '[He] has selected materials from the traditional contents of both subjects' (1993: 122). In Meerhoff's (1988: 273) view, 'pour Agricola, [. . .] loin de réduire la dialectique à la seule recherche de la vérité rationnelle, il entend parler de celle-ci en termes de *communication*'.

15. According to Simons (1990), rhetoric is, most neutrally, the study and the practice of persuasion. Kienpointner (1995: 453) points out that many scholars see rhetoric as 'a rather narrow subject dealing with the techniques of persuasion and/or stylistic devices', but others conceive of rhetoric as 'a general theory of argumentation and communication' (while still others deny that it is a discipline at all).

16. Other theoreticians, such as Reboul, also recognize that rhetorically strong argumentation should comply with dialectical criteria: 'On doit tout faire pour gagner, mais non par n'importe quels moyens: il faut jouer [le jeu] respectant les règles' (1991: 42). See also Wenzel (1990).

17. For earlier proposals to subordinate rhetoric to dialectic, see, for example, Nathanson (1955). See also Weaver (1953).

18. In the way we use the term, there are *aggregates of topical potential* or 'topical systems' for all discussion stages, not just for the argumentation stage.

19. How suppression of presence can be used strategically, is clearly illustrated in Edward Kennedy's (1994) 'Chappaquidick speech'. See van Eemeren et al. (1993: vii–xi), and van Eemeren and Houtlosser (1997).

20. For the notion of 'disagreement space', see van Eemeren et al. (1993: 95).

21. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca regard a rhetorical figure as 'a discernible structure, independent of the content, [. . .] a form (which may [. . .] be syntactic, semantic or pragmatic) and a use that is different from the normal manner of expression, and, consequently, attracts attention' (1969: 168).

22. If the argumentative role of figures is disregarded, their study will, in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's opinion, 'soon seem to be a useless [or literary] pastime' (1969: 167).

23. For the *apologia* as a text genre see, for example, Ware and Linkugel (1973) and Benoit and Lindsey (1987). In our pragma-dialectical approach, apologias are put in a speech act perspective and subjected to an analysis in terms of virtual standpoints (confrontation stage) and substandpoints (argumentation stage).

24. In a mixed dispute, two parties have contradictory standpoints; in a non-mixed dispute, one party has a standpoint which is questioned by the other party. The other party has no standpoint of its own (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992: 16–22).

REFERENCES

Agricola, Rudolph (1479/1992) *De inventione dialectica libri tres: Drei Buecher über die Inventio dialectica*, translated and edited by Lothar Mundt. Tuebingen: Niemeyer.

Anscombre, J.C. (1994) 'La nature des topoï', in J. C. Anscombre (ed.) *La théorie des topoï*, pp. 49–84. Paris: Editions Kimé.

Anscombre, J.C. and Ducrot, O. (1983) *L'Argumentation dans la langue*. Liege: Mardaga.

Barth, E.M. and Krabbe, E.C.W. (1982) *From Axiom to Dialogue: A Philosophical Study of Logics and Argumentation*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Benoit, W.L. and Lindsey, J.J. (1987) 'Argument Strategies: Antidote to Tylenol's Poisoned Image', *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 23: 136–46.

Cicero (1949) *De oratore*, translated by E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham [Loeb Classical Library]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gaonkar, D.P. (1990) 'Rhetoric and its Double: Reflections on the Rhetorical Turn in the Human Sciences', in H. W. Simons (ed.) *The Rhetorical Turn: Invention and Persuasion in the Conduct of Inquiry*, pp. 341–66. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Hamblin, Ch.L. (1970) *Fallacies*. London: Methuen.

Kennedy, G.A. (1994) *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kienpointner, M. (1995) 'Rhetoric', in J. Verschueren, J.-O. Östman and J. Blommaert (eds) *Handbook of Pragmatics: Manual*, pp. 453–61. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Mack, P. (1993) *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic*. Leiden: Brill.

Meerhoff, C.G. (1988) 'Agricola et Ramus: dialectique et rhétorique', in F. Akkerman and A. J. Vanderjagt (eds) *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius 1444–1485*, pp. 270–80. Leiden: Brill.

Murphy, J.J. and Katula, R.A., eds (1994) *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric*. Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press [Originally published 1972].

Natanson, M. (1955) 'The Limits of Rhetoric', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 41: 133–9.

Perelman, Ch. and Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1969) *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* [Translation of *La nouvelle rhétorique: traité de l'argumentation*, 1958]. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Reboul, O. (1991) *Introduction à la rhétorique. Théorie et pratique.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Schiappa, E. (1991) 'Sophistic Rhetoric: Oasis or Mirage?', *Rhetoric Review* 10: 5–18 [reprinted in E. Schiappa (ed.) *Landmark Essays on Classical Greek Rhetoric*, pp. 67–80. Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press].

Simons, H.W. (1990) 'The Rhetoric of Inquiry as an Intellectual Movement', in H. W. Simons (ed.) *The Rhetorical Turn: Invention and Persuasion in the Conduct of Inquiry*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Toulmin, S. (1997) 'A Dissenter's Life', Thomas Jefferson Lecture, Washington, DC, 24 March.

Van Eemeren, F.H. and Grootendorst, R. (1984) *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions: A Theoretical Model for the Analysis of Discussions Directed towards Solving Conflicts of Opinion*. Dordrecht: Foris/Mouton de Gruyter.

Van Eemeren, F.H. and Grootendorst, R. (1992) *Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies: A Pragma-Dialectical Perspective*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Van Eemeren, F.H. and Houtlosser, P. (1997) 'Rhetorical Rationales for Dialectical Moves', in J. Klumpp (ed.) *Proceedings of the Tenth NCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation*, pp. 51–6 Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.

Van Eemeren, F.H., Grootendorst, R., Jackson, S. and Jacobs, S. (1993) *Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse*. London: University of Alabama Press.

Van Eemeren, F.H., Grootendorst, R., Jackson, S. and Jacobs, S. (1997a) 'Argumentation', in: T. A. van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse as Structure and Process. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction,* Vol. I, (pp. 208–29). London: Sage.

Van Eemeren, F.H., Grootendorst, R., Meuffels, B. and Verburg, M. (1997b) 'Hoe redelijk vindt men *ad hominem*-drogredenen? [The (un)reasonableness of *ad hominem* fallacies]', in H. van den Bergh, D. Janssen, N. Bertens and M. Damen (eds) *Taalgebruik ontrafeld*, pp. 41–53. Dordrecht: Foris.

Van Eemeren, F.H., Grootendorst, R., Snoeck Henkemans, A.F., Blair, J.A., Johnson, R.H., Krabbe, E.C.W., Plantin, Ch., Walton, D.N., Willard, C.A., Woods, J. and Zarefsky, D. (1996) *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ware, B.L. and Linkugel, W.A. (1973) 'They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59: 273–83.

Weaver, R. (1953) 'The *Phaedrus* and the Nature of Rhetoric', in *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, pp. 3–26. Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery.

Wenzel, J.W. (1990) 'Three Perspectives on Argument: Rhetoric, Dialectic, Logic', in R. Trapp and J. Schuetz (eds) *Perspectives on Argumentation: Essays in the Honor of Wayne Brockriede*, pp. 9–26. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Woods, J. and Walton, D.N. (1989) *Fallacies: Selected Papers, 1972–1982*. Dordrecht: Foris/Mouton de Gruyter.

FRANS H. VAN EEMEREN is Professor of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory, and Rhetoric in the University of Amsterdam and Head of the Department. He published *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions* (1984, with Rob Grootendorst), *Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies* (1992, with Rob Grootendorst), *Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse* (1993, with Rob Grootendorst, Sally Jackson, and Scott Jacobs), and *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory* (1996, with an international group of colleagues). He is co-editor of the journal *Argumentation*. ADDRESS: Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric, University of Amsterdam, Spuistraat 134, 1012 VB Amsterdam, The Netherlands. [email: f.h.van.eemeren@hum.uva.nl]

PETER HOUTLOSSER, whose research is sponsored by the National Science Foundation of The Netherlands (NWO), is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory, and Rhetoric of the University of Amsterdam. His research concentrates on indicators of argumentative language use and rhetorical and dialectical analysis of argumentative discourse. He has published articles on these topics in Dutch as well as in English. He is book review editor of the journal *Argumentation*. ADDRESS: Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric, University of Amsterdam, Spuistraat 134, 1012 VB Amsterdam, The Netherlands. [email: p.houtlosser@hum.uva.nl]