Frans H. van Eemeren, Peter Houtlosser and Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, *Argumentative Indicators in Discourse: A Pragma-Dialectical Study*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2007, ix, 234 pp., USD 116/EUR 90 (hb.), ISBN 9781402062438.

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Introduction

Argumentative Indicators in Discourse is the result of a long research project aimed at "identifying and analysing words and expressions that are of special significance to the analysis of argumentative discourse in discussions and texts" (p. ix). The research was first conducted in Dutch and then translated and carried forward in English. This study complements the many previous books by the Amsterdam School of argumentation by providing yet another volume on a central topic for all researchers of argumentation.

This is fundamental research that carries valuable insights regarding argumentative indicators regardless of what method one uses, but at the same time this is very much a Pragma-Dialectical study. The members of the project are all prominent members of the Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric at the University of Amsterdam. Since the beginning, two members of this project have passed away, Rob Grootendorst, in 2000, and Peter Houtlosser, in 2008.

It belongs to the basics of any course of argumentation to note what words and expressions indicate either a standpoint or an argument. The authors call these "argumentative indicators" and move far beyond the basics of standard phrases such as "in my opinion," "therefore," and "because." On the

one hand, the aim is to establish what words and expressions are used and, more precisely, how and to what end they are used, on the other. As the authors note, "[a]nyone who wishes to critically evaluate an argumentative discussion or text can only do so properly after a careful analysis of the discourse," which includes "solid grounds to establish what argumentative moves are made [...] and what these moves imply" (p. 1).

Of course, one's definition of "argumentation" has consequences for a study of this kind. The Pragma-Dialectical starting point is that argumentation is "an attempt to resolve or prevent a difference of opinion by critically testing the acceptability of a standpoint that is in doubt" (p. 2). Arguers can only be held responsible for what one has committed oneself to. Within Pragma-Dialectics this means that internal processes of reasoning or psychological dispositions are out of reach for a systematic analysis, which instead has to focus on positions that are verbally expressed or indicated. At the beginning of the book, the authors provide a brief account of the Pragma-Dialectical theory. For those not familiar with Pragma-Dialectics, it is advisable to consult van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984 and 2004.

The study is structured according to the "analytic overview" that is part of a Pragma-Dialectical reconstructive analysis (for the analytic overview, see van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992, pp. 93–94). Consequently, the chapters after the introduction (Ch. 1), and after the presentation of the ideal model of a critical discussion (Ch. 2), deal with indicators of confrontation (Ch. 3), of the distribution of the burden of proof (Ch. 4), of starting points for the discussion (Ch. 5), of argument schemes (Ch. 6), of the argumentation structure (Ch. 7), and indicators of the conclusion of a discussion (Ch. 8).

1. Dialectical Profiles

New to Pragma-Dialectics, is the concept of "dialectical profiles," which describe the course of the resolution process of the "critical discussion." The critical discussion refers to an analytical view of argumentation that advances in four stages: the confrontation, opening, argumentation, and the conclusion stage. The dialectical profiles are inspired by the "profiles of dialogue" by Walton and Krabbe (1995), and are combined with the analytical overview in the following way (p. 6):

> We identify and analyse the argumentative indicators typical of the different stages of the resolution process by determining, for each stage of the critical discussion, the words and expressions indicating the (combinations of) argumentative moves that can be carried out in that particular stage and by discussing the problems that occur in their identification and analysis. Every time we discuss clues in (1) the presentation of the moves, (2) the criticism that the moves receive, and (3) the speaker's or writer's continuation of the argumentative discussion […]

This approach gives the study a clear framework and a fairly precise instrument for a study that has the potential of growing in many directions because of the vastness of the topic. Of course, even with the framework in place, only a "fair representation" (p. 2) of words and expressions that can serve as argumentative indicators can be provided. In any case, the selection provided is extensive.

In accordance with Pragma-Dialectical theory, verbal moves are described as speech acts. The background is briefly explained (pp. 12–16): speech act theory is combined with the notion of a critical discussion by specifying which speech acts can have a constructive function in the various stages of critically resolving a difference of opinion.[1] Since the function of the different moves is linked to the discussion stages, different kinds of indicators can be classified in a functional manner. A functional approach has the advantage of being context-sensitive, including all kinds of moves that indicate argumentation, regardless of the presence any specific words or phrases.
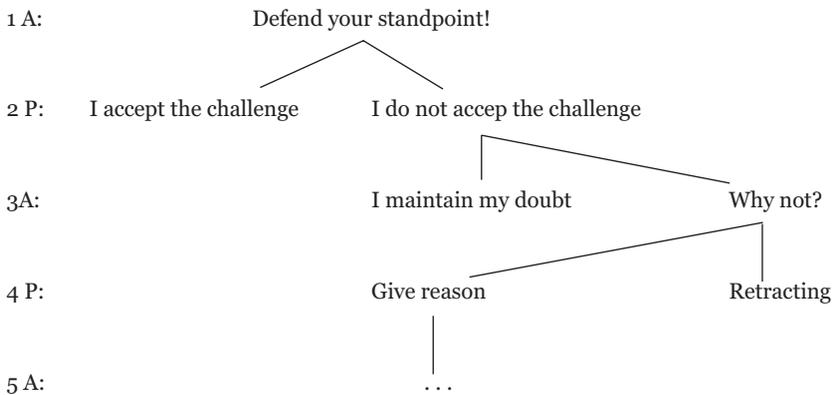
In a similar manner, the dialectical profiles are described as a heuristics developed for the purpose of providing a "step-by-step specification of the moves that can help to accomplish a specific task in a certain stage or sub-

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[1] Just to make a point clear: the critical discussion model does not prescribe how an argumentation should proceed, and in actual argumentation stages may be implicitly performed or only rudimentarily present. The notion of a critical discussion is a heuristic and critical device. On the one hand, it guides the analyst to identify all elements in a discourse that are relevant to a thorough evaluation. On the other, it specifies a standard that helps the analyst to "determine how an argumentative exchange of views deviates from the course of events conducive to resolving a difference of opinion" (p. 10). Hence the Pragma-Dialectical understanding of fallacies as moves that frustrate the resolution of a difference of opinion.

stage of the discussion" (p. 18). More specifically, dialectical profiles are defined as (p. 18)

> [...] a specification of the sequential pattern of the moves that the parties are allowed to make, or should make, in a particular stage or substage of a critical discussion in order to realise a particular goal.

An example from the book illustrates the dialectical "starting" profile (p. 19):

1 A:		Defend your standpoint!		
2 P:	I accept the challenge	I do not accep the challenge		
3A:		I maintain my doubt		Why not?
4 P:		Give reason		Retracting
5 A:		. . .		

Since the dialectical profiles specify which moves are pertinent to each of the argumentative stages, they make it easier to identify the relevant argumentative indicators for each stage. As the authors note, an obstacle is still present, because there is no one-to-one correspondence between moves and the verbal indicators of these moves (p. 19). In fact, there are no unequivocal indicators available for each move. The analysis therefore needs to be context-sensitive.

2. The Study

The main part of the book, the actual study, is presented in six chapters, in which six types of indicators are explained. In order to clarify the different

types of indicators, they are placed within categories that enable a systematic presentation. Where the existing Pragma-Dialectical categories prove insufficient for this particular task, new categories are borrowed from linguistic literature, or invented. At the same time as this allows for a systematic presentation, it makes the theory more complex. In fact, *Argumentative Indicators in Discourse* is situated among the more theoretical Pragma-Dialectical books, and one with a clear linguistic focus. However, since the chapters take their departure from key elements of the Pragma-Dialectical analytical overview, the layout is easy to follow for readers familiar with Pragma-Dialectics.

Regarding the background of this research, the authors have chosen to omit much of the discussion and to concentrate on the results, which are presented together with examples for each type of indicator. Similarly, the conversion of the original research, which was written in Dutch, and which treated argumentation in Dutch, has seamlessly, and without further comments, been carried through, so that the present study deals with specifically English indicators. In the following I will present some of the contents for each of Chapters 3-8.

The study proper begins with Chapter 3, *Indicators of confrontation.* The indicators of confrontation vary depending on the type of discussion. In addition to single and multiple discussions, which both can be either mixed or non-mixed, another distinction is here introduced: the multiple mixed dispute is divided into a quantitative and a qualitative type. The former is a multiple discussion where each standpoint can be distinguished and the discussion thus can be treated as several single disputes. The qualitative multiple mixed dispute, on the other hand, is exemplified with the following dialogue:

> Per: This state visit to China is no more than sheer opportunism!
> Åse: That's not true at all. I think it is a sincere attempt at ideological reconciliation.

Here, Åse advances both a contradictory ("That's not true at all") and a contrary, alternative ("I think it is …") standpoint. The problem is that, "it may not always be clear whether the alternative standpoint is a contrary standpoint or just a different standpoint." (p. 23). The standpoints are not

about two different issues – which would be a normal, quantitative, multiple mixed dispute – but about only one issue. In addition, a successful defence of the contrary standpoint, "I think it is a sincere attempt at ideological reconciliation," implies a successful defence of the opposite standpoint, "That's not true at all," as well. To further complicate matters, a dispute may be multiple both in the quantitative and in the qualitative sense, as in the following dialogue:

> T1: It is hot in here.
> T2: It is not hot in here.
> T1: It is.
> T2: I would say it was cold in here.

A defence of the standpoint that it is not hot is not automatically a defence for the standpoint that it is cold, but a defence of the standpoint that it is cold is at the same time a defence of the standpoint that it is not hot.

Dialectical core profiles are provided for the different types of disputes after which indicators of standpoints and indicators of the different types of disputes are dealt with. First, the nature of standpoints is specified, building upon the following definition:

> An assertive may be considered a standpoint if it is clear that the speaker supposes (or may be expected to suppose on the basis of the listener's response) that the assertive is not immediately acceptable to the listener" (p. 29). The question then is in which way it can "become clear from the presentation of an assertive that the speaker supposes that the assertive he has performed will not be acceptable to the listener at face value? (p. 29).

Here, the following categories are used: "propositional attitude indicators" and "force modifying expressions." Examples of the former are "I believe that" and "I think that," and of the latter are "In my view" and "It is quite certain." Following Hooper (1975), it is noted that the use of such expressions may signify that the speaker anticipates doubt, if the expressions can be used parenthetically, and if they are indeed used parenthetically. If they cannot be or are not used parenthetically, they cannot signify a stand-

point. For example the expression "I believe" is a propositional attitude indicator that may indicate a standpoint. "I believe that John will come in the afternoon" and "John will come, I believe, in the afternoon," both mean the same thing. Phrases that cannot be moved around within the sentence in this manner cannot indicate a standpoint. For example the sentence "I am sorry you haven't told me this earlier" cannot be changed to "You haven't told me this earlier, I am sorry," and therefore the speaker does not claim that the listener has not told something earlier, but rather that this was not told to *him* or *her*. Further, weak and strong assertives are distinguished and the propositional attitude indicating expressions and force modifying expressions for both types are presented with many examples from the Eindhoven corpus. The chapter ends with a presentation of indicators of disputes, laid out according to the types of dispute.

Whereas the third chapter dealt with the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, the fourth chapter, *Indicators of the distribution of the burden of proof*, deals with the opening stage, where the roles of the arguers and their common starting points are established. Again, with the help of core profiles, different scenarios are illustrated. Beginning with a simple "Defend your standpoint!" to profiles with seven turns, the roles of the arguers become clear for the five types of argumentative discussion described in the previous chapter. The approach draws upon formal dialectics and results in some fairly formal schemes. The most demanding type of dispute, the qualitatively multiple dispute, for example, requires two pages to display the dialectical core profile (pp. 70-71).

The chapter also discusses how to distinguish between a challenge to defend a standpoint and a request for clarification. Contextual clues are here vital, but certain words such as "actually" and "all that" reinforce an interpretation towards a challenge to defend a standpoint; for instance in the ironic form of an informative question as in the following example:

> Mr Weisglas (VVD) to Mr Rosenmöller (GroenLinks): The key argument for the turn GroenLinks made, as it emerged from the media in the past few days, is that the balance between the military and politics has been disturbed. You've just repeated this. *How do you know all that?* Are you everywhere? (Parliamentary Debate in The Netherlands about developments in Afghanistan, 15 November 2001, p. 77).

With the same systematic attention to detail, the following chapters go through indicators of a wide variety. In each chapter, well-known basics are expanded with dialectical profiles and a categorization of different types of indicators. All the stages of a critical discussion are dealt with exhaustively in the sense that all the main alternatives are presented.

Chapter 5 continues with the opening stage and deals with starting points in an argumentative discussion. In a critical discussion (i.e. in the Pragma-Dialectical model for an argumentative discussion), the dialogue in which the concessions are obtained is part of the opening stage, thus preceding the argumentation stage. In actual practice, both formal and material starting points are often either assumed or implicitly agreed upon. Expressions that typically refer to starting points are, for example, normal and rhetorical questions such as "isn't it true that?" and "do we agree that ...?" – implicit proposals to accept a proposition as a starting point – and "If you know so well how things are, *then* why ask me to explain them to you?" – an indirect attribution of a starting point. Some expressions which suggest that a starting point has been accepted (e.g. "as we agreed," "it is clear that," "of course") can also be used to "smuggle in" a particular proposition into the discussion in an illegitimate way (pp. 98–109). "Because" and "for" are typical indicators that a starting point is actually used as a point of departure in the argumentation and they are given a specific analysis (pp. 108–118), as are "but" and "however," two indicators of accepting a proposition with restrictions to its argumentative use (pp. 122–136).

Chapter 6 moves to the argumentation stage and deals with verbal clues that can be used to reconstruct the relationship an argumentation is based on. Van Eemeren et al. distinguish between (a) clues in the presentation of the relationship, (b) clues that can be extracted from the way in which the antagonist criticises the argumentation, and (c) clues in the way the protagonist responds to this criticism or anticipates it. A dialectical profile is provided for each of the Pragma-Dialectical argument schemes, i.e. the analogous, the symptomatic, and the causal argument scheme, and the different types of clues are systematically analysed.

Chapter 7 continues within the argumentation stage and presents an analysis of indicators of the argumentation structure. Within Pragma-Dialectics, the complex argumentation structures are multiple argumentation, coordinative argumentation (divided into the cumulative and the comple-

mentary type), and subordinative argumentation. Subordinative argumentation is, for example, indicated by "to substantiate" and "to support," and sometimes also by "since," and "after all," just to mention a few. Since many words and expressions can be used to indicate different structures, van Eemeren et al. clarify when which structure may be indicated. In many cases the structure can be determined based on the position of the indicator in the clause or based on the specific combination of words or expressions. For instance, "[w]hen *namely* and *after all* take second place in [...] a sequence of expressions, the combination of expressions is not indicative of subordinative argumentation" (p. 198).

The last and shortest chapter, Chapter 8, presents indicators of the conclusion of a discussion when the protagonist maintains or withdraws his or her standpoint (pp. 226–229) – "I stick to my opinion," "If that is true, (then) you are right/I agree" – and when the antagonist maintains or withdraws his or her doubt (pp. 229–230) – "I still do not agree," "I give up."

3. Evaluation

This volume is a must-read for argumentation theorists. Although many of the aspects have been researched before, such as indicators for different types of argument structure, I know of no other volume that encompasses all types of argumentation indicators, for all the stages of an argumentative discussion.

As with any study, a few minor critical questions can be put forth. First, although much work has been done in localizing the original Dutch research, one might wonder if the results truly reflect authentic English usage. After all, the main database used, the *Eindhoven colloquial language corpus*, and the Dutch newspapers (mostly *de Volkskrant*), and other Dutch material, cannot reflect natural English usage no matter how excellent the translation. A translation is always an interpretation and it would have been good to provide some reflection on this. Probably, one could argue that the core mechanisms are similar in many languages.

Second, the phenomenon under analysis is highly complex, in a very organic manner. An approach that aims at systemizing may end up either generalizing or being too complex. The authors clearly state that they are not

presenting a complete classification. However, at the same time the categories presented tend to be laid out as fairly clear-cut and conclusive. Those not familiar with the Pragma-Dialectic *modus operandi* may find themselves looking for explanations of how the researchers have reached some of their conclusions. It is at points difficult, when provided only with one or two examples, to see how a certain classification of or conclusion regarding a specific argumentative indicator is reached. Not all examples are from natural corpora – some are constructed to exemplify what needs to be exemplified.

Third, one might ask how the findings would translate to those obtained under another theoretical framework. At the same time as it is clear that the observations are in fact valuable to all argumentation theorists, due to the fairly complex Pragma-Dialectical framework it may, however, be cumbersome to extract all the benefits of this study in order to utilize them within a different framework. This leads to the question of whether the results of the analysis would have been in any way different if conducted without a normative framework.

The book is essential reading for anyone engaged in research regarding words and expressions that are crucial for the reconstruction of argumentative discourse. Especially for those who work within the Pragma-Dialectical framework, the study provides a systematic set of instruments for giving a well-founded analysis of elements that are relevant for the evaluation of argumentation. For others, *Argumentative Indicators in Discourse* gives a wealth of information and provides a substantial starting point for further research.

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