

Characterising an MEP's argumentative style

Mr. Schlyter's contribution to the debate on labelling fruit juices

Frans H. van Eemeren

ILIAS, University of Amsterdam | Leiden University

There is much more to argumentative style than just the well-known presentational ("linguistic") dimension. Equally important dimensions of the argumentative styles utilised in resolving a difference of opinion are the topical dimension of the selection of the standpoints, starting points, arguments and concluding statements put forward in the discourse and the dimension of the adaptations to the presumed demand of the audience that is to be convinced. In argumentative discourse these three dimensions of argumentative style manifest themselves together in the argumentative moves that are made, the argumentative routes that are chosen and the strategic considerations that are brought to bear. Starting from this perspective, it is shown in this article how the argumentative style can be identified that was utilised by a Member of the European Parliament in a plenary debate on labelling fruit juices.

Keywords: argumentative move, argumentative style, detached argumentative style, dialectical route, engaged argumentative style, plenary parliamentary debate, stage of the argumentative process, strategic consideration, strategic manoeuvring

1. Argumentative discourse in parliament

In democratic institutions such as the European Parliament, political differences are discussed and brought to an end under established rules.¹ It is in fact the devolution of power from a group of people to a collection of rules for processing

1. According to Bachrach (1967: 18–20), systematic rules of procedure are necessary to maintain a democratic political system.

differences of opinion that is the decisive step towards democracy. The rules concerned are basically procedural regulations for conducting a constructive argumentative discourse about the problems at issue. This means that the main genre of communication in a democratic political debate is 'deliberation'. Deliberation is in political exchanges the dominant method for creating clarity concerning the political positions that are taken. Ultimately, however, the only arbiter in coming democratically to a political decision is voting by majority rule based on the discussion that has taken place.²

Democrats of different persuasions view the discussions taking place in political deliberation as quintessentially argumentative: they are instrumental in resolving the differences of opinion at issue effectively while keeping the political process rational and to a large extent reasonable (van Eemeren 2015: 835–840).³ This means that argumentative moves which do not serve this purpose because they are evidently unreasonable ('fallacious') because they obstruct or hinder the resolution process, are to be avoided. For this reason, in approaching political exchanges from the perspective of argumentation theory, it makes sense to provide an analysis of the 'pragmatic' and 'dialectical' qualities of the way in which the argumentative discourse is conducted. The intellectual tools for carrying out this analysis in the institutional context of debates about policy standpoints are provided in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation.

2. A contribution to the European parliament's debate on labelling fruit juices

The communicative genre predominantly used in the political domain, deliberation, starts as a rule from a real or projected mixed disagreement between the parties having a difference of opinion, while there is often also a listening (and watching) or reading audience (which might consist of people belonging to the politicians' electorate). Generally the arguers will take these onlookers duly into account, sometimes even up to the point that their argumentation is primarily aimed at convincing them rather than their immediate debate partners, so that they become in fact their primary audience. Like in other communicative domains, specific argumentative practices have established themselves in the political domain to meet the institutional exigencies (van Eemeren 2010: 129–162).

2. Although this is in reality not always true, in Coser's (1959) view, the differences of opinion are in this way just "terminated", i.e., temporarily suspended, rather than really resolved. As Linz (1990) puts it: democracy leads to government *pro tempore*.

3. This means that the discussion procedures, which are ideally both 'problem-valid' and 'intersubjectively valid' (van Eemeren 2018: 51–53), should be adjusted to the institutional macro-context in which the argumentative discourse takes place.

Plenary debates in the European Parliament are an example of such a communicative activity type.

The 'institutional point' of this communicative activity type is scrutinizing the merits and demerits of the European policies proposed to the European Parliament. The way in which it is conventionalised serves the realisation of this institutional point. As far as the conventionalisation of a communicative activity type is immediately relevant to resolving a difference of opinion, it can be recapitulated in an *argumentative characterisation* (van Eemeren 2010: 146–151). This argumentative characterisation describes how the equivalents of the four stages of a critical discussion in the argumentative process are regulated in this communicative practice: in the initial situation representing the confrontation stage the difference of opinion at issue is externalised, which is in principle a well-defined dispute about a prescriptive or evaluative standpoint, with the decision about it up to the MEPs; in the empirical equivalent of the opening stage explicit and implicit parliamentary rules are established or tacitly recognised and explicitly mentioned concessions on both sides; in the equivalent of the argumentation stage critical exchanges take place of arguments and criticisms; and in the concluding stage the participants' come to conclusions that lead to a decision by voting.

Depending on the specific institutional requirements, in the various communicative activity types the argumentative dimension is substantiated in different ways. Because the conventionalisation of a communicative activity type imposes certain external constraints on the argumentative discourse that is allowed to take place, the argumentative characterisation is a suitable point of departure for determining the prevailing *institutional preconditions* for strategic manoeuvring. According to the 'standing orders' of the European Parliament, it is, for instance, a 'primary' institutional precondition in plenary debates that the MEPs are to address the Chair, instead of each other. The 'secondary' institutional preconditions applying to a certain macro-context, which generally relate to values and attitudes, and are usually informal and unofficial, remain as a rule implicit. When they defend their views about European policies, the MEPs are, for instance, supposed to speak in the interest of Europe as a whole while observing at the same time the tacit secondary institutional precondition that their strategic manoeuvring should not go against the interests of their own country.⁴

To illustrate how the argumentative style that is utilised by MEPs in their argumentative discourse in a plenary debate in the European Parliament can be identified, I shall identify by way of an exemplary analysis the argumentative style of the following contribution made by Carl Schlyter, a Swedish Member of the

4. Van Eemeren and Garssen (2010:9) baptised this complicated informal requirement the *European Predicament*.

European Parliament for the European Greens, to the debate on labelling fruit juices, a quite ordinary plenary deliberation that took place on 13 December 2011:

- 1 *Mr President, I would like to thank everyone involved in the negotiations. At times, the negotiations were rather amusing. It could be considered strange that we have spent so many hours on such a limited subject as fruit juices, but at the same time, it was a question of rather important principles. Should we maintain the EU's high standard,*
 5 *where one exists, as opposed to the standard incorporated into international agreements? If we are to have a properly functioning single market, we must stop deceiving consumers.*

During the negotiations, I brought these juice cartons with me and I am still bringing them with me right to the bitter end. Here is one example of juice packaging:
 10 *high quality, full of lovely cranberries. The problem is that cranberries are not the main ingredient of the juice – it is apple. However, I do not see apple mentioned on the packaging or in the name. This is a product from France.*

Here I have a product from Sweden/Finland. It is called raspberry/blueberry and there are raspberries and blueberries on the packaging. Hidden behind an
 15 *enormous blueberry there is a very tiny apple. This is misleading, because this juice consists mostly of apple – it contains 10 times as much apple as raspberry and blueberry. Here is another fruit drink that is also sold on the European market. It has lovely strawberries and passion fruit on the packaging, but what do you think is the dominant fruit? It is apple, of course.*

20 *Here is another one that is sold in six other countries in Europe. It states strawberry here, but do you think it contains any strawberries? Yes, it contains a very small amount of strawberries, but as usual it is mostly apple, and the apple on this packaging is hidden behind a symbol so that you can barely see it. This is misleading and fraudulent, and we are at last doing something about it. This is what I have been*
 25 *fighting for, and I am very pleased that this was the end result.*

3. The pragma-dialectical notion of argumentative style

In the pragma-dialectical perspective recently developed (van Eemeren 2019), the treatment of style concentrates fully on its argumentative function in resolving a difference of opinion by convincing the intended audience of the acceptability of the standpoint at issue. This new notion of 'argumentative style' is broader than the traditional notion of 'style',⁵ because it does not only involve the presentational ('linguistic') choices that are made, but also the selection from the available top-

5. It should be born in mind that 'style' is an elusive concept that is not univocally defined. See van Eemeren (2019: 153–154).

ical options and the adaptation to presumed audience demand (van Eemeren 2010: 93–127; 2018: 112–113).⁶ Viewing the three aspects of strategic manoeuvring as different dimensions of argumentative style, enables us to characterize the way in which the conduct of argumentative discourse is shaped as utilising a certain argumentative style.

The argumentative style of a discourse is clear from the shape that is given to the argumentative discourse by the selection that is realised from the topical options, by the choices that are made in adapting to audience demand, and by the possibilities that are exploited in using presentational devices.⁷ The way in which these three dimensions of argumentative style give shape to the discourse manifests itself in the argumentative discourse in the argumentative moves that are made to resolve the difference of opinion at issue (which are included in the ‘analytic overview’ of the discourse), in the dialectical routes that are followed in this endeavour (which is expressed in the ‘argumentative pattern’ of the discourse), and in the strategic considerations that are brought to bear (which determine the ‘strategic design’ of the discourse). The identification of the argumentative style that is utilised in a particular argumentative discourse should therefore always start from an adequate reconstruction of the analytic overview, the argumentative pattern, and the strategic design of the discourse.

The observations just made can be summarised in the following definition of argumentative style (van Eemeren 2019: 165):

Argumentative style is the particular shape systematically and consistently given to the selection of topical choices, adaptation to audience demand, and exploitation of presentational devices in the strategic manoeuvring in a representative part of an argumentative discourse, which manifests itself in the argumentative discourse in the argumentative moves included in the analytic overview, the dialectical routes indicated by the argumentative pattern, and the strategic considerations reflected in the strategic design.

4. An analysis of Mr. Schlyter’s argumentative discourse

4.1 The analytically relevant moves that are made

In order to identify the argumentative style utilised in Mr. Schlyter’s contribution to the plenary debate in the European Parliament, it is necessary to determine

6. Due to its argumentative focus, this new perspective is at the same time also more specific.

7. Crucial to the identification of argumentative styles in the conduct of argumentative discourse is the observation that in the strategic manoeuvring taking place in the discourse in all three dimensions of argumentative style certain choices have been made for which the arguer can be held responsible.

first which analytically relevant argumentative moves he makes in his discourse. In carrying out a full-fledged reconstruction of Schlyter's discourse to determine which argumentative moves may play a role in resolving the difference of opinion at issue, I make use of the analytical instruments that have been developed for this purpose in pragma-dialectics, i.e., the typologies of standpoints (descriptive, evaluative, or prescriptive), differences of opinion (single or multiple and mixed or non-mixed), argument schemes (causal, comparison, or symptomatic, and their sub-schemes), and argumentation structures (single, multiple, coordinative, or subordinative, and their combinations) (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992:13–102). The following analytic overview provides a reconstruction of Schlyter's discourse that indicates which analytically relevant moves have been made.

a. *The difference of opinion*

There is a single difference about the prescriptive standpoint *The proposed legislation regarding juice packaging should be adopted*. It is mixed with (a small minority of 33 of) the fellow-MEPs who are against the legislation, and assumedly non-mixed with some other MEPs and interested people not officially addressed. Although the standpoint is not phrased in so many words, it is indicated unequivocally at the end of the contribution (lines 23–24).

b. *The point of departure*

The point of departure is made rather explicit at the beginning: *The EU should maintain its high quality standard and stop allowing European consumers to be deceived* (lines 3–7). The evaluation criteria for judging the EU ruling that are suggested are honesty, openness, and fairness (lines 7, 15, 23–24).

c. *The argument schemes employed*

In the main argumentation the pragmatic argument that the proposed legislation will solve the problem with food labelling in Europe turns into *complex pragmatic argumentation*.⁸ This happens by first supporting on the second level of the defence the preparatory premise that there is indeed a problem with the food labelling by claiming that on many labels the ingredients are not properly indicated, and then supporting this symptomatic argumentation on the third level of the defence by a coordinative series of arguments by example: a wrong packaging from France, another from Sweden/Finland, and still other examples.

8. I call pragmatic argumentation *complex* when it is (coordinatively or subordinatively) supported by other arguments. See for the notion of complex problem-solving argumentation, which inspired the differentiation between pragmatic and complex pragmatic argumentation, Garssen (2017: 36).

d. *The argumentation structure*

The main argumentation for the standpoint at issue (1) consist of a coordinative argumentation (1.1a & 1.1b). Its first part is on the second level of the defence supported by another coordinative argumentation (1.1a.1a & 1.1a.1b). On the third level of the defence this coordinative argumentation is in its turn supported by a series of coordinative arguments (1.1a.1a–b.1a & 1.1a.1a–b.1b & 1.1a.1a–b.1c).

1. The proposed legislation regarding juice packaging should be adopted

(1.1a) (There is a problem with food labelling in Europe)

(1.1a).1a On many labels the ingredients are not properly indicated

(1.1a).1b This is misleading and fraudulent

(1.1a).1a–b.1a See the packaging of a particular product from France

(1.1a).1a–b.1b See the packaging of a particular product from Sweden/
Finland

(1.1a).1a–b.1c See the packaging of still another product

1.1b Adopting the proposed legislation solves the problem

e. *The outcome*

At the end of the advertisement, the standpoint that is defended is indicated as a conclusion: *The proposed legislation regarding juice packaging should be adopted*. Since the arguer's standpoint in the matter is at that point already known, this retrogressive presentation does not lead to a surprising outcome.

4.2 The dialectical route that is followed

The argumentative style always manifests itself in the argumentative moves that are part of the dialectical route that is chosen in justifying the standpoint at issue. In identifying the argumentative style one should therefore concentrate on the argumentative pattern that can be discerned in the analytic overview of the argumentative discourse (van Eemeren 2018: 150). A dominant prototypical basic pattern that can be observed in contributions to a legislative debate in the European Parliament consists of a prescriptive standpoint supported by pragmatic argumentation pointing out that accepting this standpoint leads to the solution of a problem.⁹ In the case I am examining, Schlyter turns his pragmatic argumentation

9. The argument scheme underlying this pragmatic subtype of causal argumentation is as follows:

1 Standpoint: X should (not) be carried out.

1.1 X leads to positive (negative) result Y.

(1.1') (If X leads to a positive (negative) result such as Y, it must (not) be carried out).

into a complex pragmatic argumentation¹⁰ by supporting the preparatory premise that there is indeed a problem by claiming that on many labels the ingredients are not properly indicated, and supporting this sub-argument in its turn by a series of arguments by example. This elaboration anticipates certain responses by critical questions.¹¹

The dialectical route realised by Mr. Schlyter in the prototypical argumentative pattern displayed in his argumentative discourse is described in Figure 1.¹²

4.3 The strategic considerations motivating the strategic design of the discourse

The identification of the argumentative style that is utilised also needs to be based on an adequate understanding of the strategic considerations underlying the strategic design of the discourse. The strategic design always consists of a calculated use of certain modes of strategic manoeuvring and argumentative strategies. The strategic considerations the arguer brings to bear in creating the design will differ depending on the institutional preconditions of the macro-context in which the argumentative discourse takes place.¹³ In the case of Mr. Schlyter's contribution to the European Parliament's plenary debate about labelling fruit juices, the strategic design of the discourse is completely in accordance with his enthusiastic and unreserved support of the standpoint that the proposed legislation

10. In van Eemeren's (2017: 22–26) terminology, argumentation can only be called *pragmatic* without any further qualification if it is supposed to provide “immediately”, i.e., by itself, sufficient support for the standpoint at issue.

11. According to van Eemeren (2018: 159), pertinent critical questions evoked by the use of pragmatic argumentation are:

- (a) Does action X indeed lead to result Y?
- (b) Is result Y really positive (i.e., desirable) [or, in the negative variant, undesirable]?
- (c) Does action X not have unavoidable negative (i.e., undesirable) side-effects (or, in the negative variant, desirable side-effects)?

If in a certain argumentative practice the circumstances call for it, this list could be expanded:

- (d) Could Y not be achieved more easily or more economically by other actions?
- (e) Would another result (Z) not be even more desirable than Y?
- (f) [Could the undesirable side-effects not be prevented or suppressed?]

12. The portrayal of this dialectical route is based on the following argumentative pattern:

1[*pres*](*<1.1a[prep](<(1.1a.1a&1.1a.1b)(<1.1a.1a–b.1a&1.1a.1a–b.1b&1.1a.1a–b.1c)[exam])*)[*symp*]&1.1b[*prag*]

13. It goes without saying that only strategic considerations may be ascribed to the arguer that can be adequately accounted for by referring to the strategic manoeuvres and the argumentative strategies that are carried out in the specific circumstances of the macro-context concerned.

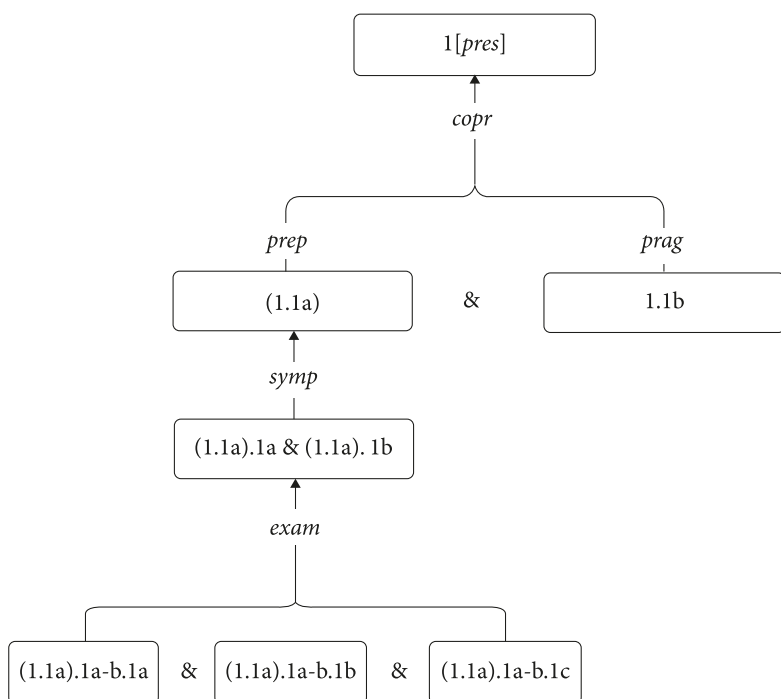


Figure 1. Dialectical route chosen in Schlyter's contribution

copr = complex pragmatic argumentation
prag = pragmatic argumentation
pres = prescriptive standpoint
 & = coordinative argumentation

exam = argumentation by example
prep = preparatory argument
symp = symptomatic argumentation

should be adopted. Schlyter only advances argumentation in its favour and does not see the need to make any effort to point out any complications.

Mr. Schlyter's point of departure firmly rests on the principle that the European Union should always have a well-functioning single market. In his view, this means that the EU has to promote policies that are open and fair and should avoid allowing any measures that are misleading or even fraudulent. Schlyter's strategic consideration can be summarized as follows: it can be reasonably and effectively maintained that *European consumers may expect the EU to keep up high standards involving a properly functioning single market where openness and fairness prevail*.

Members of the European Parliament are supposed to act at all times, however difficult this may be, in the interest of the European Union as a whole, rather than in the interest of particular member countries, let alone solely in the interest of their own country. This requirement is one of the tacitly accepted 'secondary' institutional preconditions applying to the plenary debates of the European Par-

liament, called the *European Predicament* (van Eemeren & Garssen 2010: 9), that MEPs are supposed to speak in the interest of Europe as a whole but cannot ignore the specific interests of their electorate in their home country. Schlyter's intervention does not centre around the interests of consumers from any specific country, but by choosing a series of examples stemming from a variety of European countries he makes all the same sure that he remains explicitly in line with the established tradition. His more specific strategic consideration appears to be that it can be reasonably and effectively maintained that both his primary and his secondary audience *will accept the proposed measures for labelling fruit juice when it is made clear to them that the problem of unclear and deceptive labelling plays a role across Europe, in virtually all member countries of the EU.*

5. The argumentative style utilised in MEP Schlyter's contribution

5.1 The identification of the argumentative style

In the article in which I introduced the notion of argumentative style (van Eemeren 2019), I made a preliminary distinction between two broad and general categories, which I labelled *detached* argumentative styles and *engaged* argumentative styles. I explained that the argumentative style utilised in a discourse can only be reckoned to belong to the category of detached argumentative styles if the strategic manoeuvring that is carried out is characterised by radiating objectivity in the topical selection, conveying reliability in the adaptation to audience demand, and expressing openness to an independent judgment in exploiting presentational devices. The argumentative style utilised in a discourse can only be reckoned to belong to the category of engaged argumentative styles, if the strategic manoeuvring that takes place in the discourse is characterised by radiating commitment in the topical selection, conveying communality in the adaptation to audience demand, and expressing inclusivity in the exploitation of presentational devices. The amalgam described has to manifest itself in both cases systematically and consistently in the argumentative moves made by the arguer throughout the dialectical route in defence of the standpoint in accordance with the strategic considerations underlying the strategic design of the discourse.¹⁴ In Table 1 the defin-

14. In argumentative practice it can also happen that the argumentative style that is utilised is from a different category or from a specific sub-category of the detached or engaged argumentative styles. An argumentative style can also be detached or engaged to some extent or to some degree. In addition, there may be a certain amount of overlap between argumentative styles or a mixture of argumentative styles.

ing characteristics of these two argumentative styles in the various stages of the argumentative process are further specified for all three dimensions of argumentative style (van Eemeren 2019: 166–167; van Eemeren et al. 2022: Chapter 3).

Table 1. Characteristics detached and engaged argumentative styles in stages argumentative process

Detached argumentative styles		Engaged argumentative styles
General argumentative style		
<i>Topical selection</i>	Radiating objectivity	Radiating commitment to the cause at issue
<i>Adaptation to audience demand</i>	Conveying reliability	Conveying communality with the audience
<i>Choice of presentational devices</i>	Expressing openness to independent judging	Expressing inclusiveness
Confrontational argumentative style		
<i>Topical selection</i>	Businesslike selection of what is to be discussed	Selection of issues showing the arguer’s involvement in the case
<i>Adaptation to audience demand</i>	Ensuring preservation of intersubjectivity	Connecting with presumed interests of the audience
<i>Choice of presentational devices</i>	Expressing independence	Expressing personal involvement
Opening argumentative style		
<i>Topical selection</i>	Starting points consisting primarily of verifiable facts and generally recognized norms	Starting points demonstrating the arguer’s association with the cause
<i>Adaptation to audience demand</i>	Starting points that are likely to be considered undisputable by the audience	Starting points showing the arguer’s identification with what is important to the audience
<i>Choice of presentational device</i>	Expressing a focus on a straightforward presentation with references to relevant data and rules	Expressing a focus on inclusiveness

Table 1. (continued)

	Detached argumentative styles	Engaged argumentative styles
Argumentational argumentative style		
<i>Topical selection</i>	Arguments pointing out concrete results, advantages or another clear rationale for accepting the standpoint	Arguments putting the standpoint in a familiar light or making it easier to judge its acceptability
<i>Adaptation to audience demand</i>	Arguing in a way that makes the audience consider the rationality of accepting the standpoint	Arguing in a way that connects the standpoint at issue with the frame of reference and preferences of the audience
<i>Choice of presentational devices</i>	Expressing level-headedness and impartiality	Expressing empathy and compassion
Concluding argumentative style		
<i>Topical selection</i>	Making clear which conclusion is made plausible by the argumentation that has been advanced	Embracing the conclusion that is reached emphatically as the favoured outcome of the argumentative process
<i>Adaptation to audience demand</i>	Making the audience realize that the conclusion is the rational consequence of the argumentative process	Making the audience realize that the conclusion is based on the argumentative process the parties have gone through together
<i>Choice of presentational devices</i>	Presenting the conclusion that is reached matter-of-factly in a reporting manner	Presenting the conclusion that is reached in an appealing way to the audience

In this article, I will concentrate on determining whether, and to what extent, the argumentative style utilised in Mr. Schlyter's contribution to the parliamentary debate on labelling fruit juices can be considered detached or engaged. In identifying MEP Schlyter's argumentative style, I will go through all four stages of the argumentative process and describe for all of them the distinctive features of the argumentative style that has been utilised. All analytically relevant argumentative moves made in a specific stage that are part of the dialectical route followed by Mr. Schlyter will be discussed, taking account of the relevant strategic considerations. In all cases, I will pay attention to the topical selection, the adaptation to audience demand, and the choice of presentational devices that have taken place. To begin with, I will concentrate on the characteristics of Mr. Schlyter's confrontational argumentative style.

5.2 Characteristics of his confrontational style

Although in his contribution Schlyter does not mention in so many words the main standpoint, (1) *The proposed legislation regarding juice packaging should be adopted*, it is evident from the beginning that this is his standpoint, and that he adopts it enthusiastically. This is immediately clear from his explicit thanks to “everyone involved in the negotiations” (in line 1), and he confirms it emphatically at the end of his speech: “This is what I have been fighting for, and I am very pleased that this was the end result” (lines 24–25). Since a big majority of MEPs can be reckoned to be open to the standpoint, just as the consumers listening in who will benefit from its acceptance, Schlyter’s argumentative discourse in dealing with this non-mixed difference is predominantly aimed at removing all remaining traces of doubt. The dialectical route he chooses is geared to serve this purpose.

The most likely confrontational topical selection, involving Schlyter’s strong commitment to the standpoint that the legislation regarding juice packaging should be adopted, does not explicitly come to the fore, but is tacitly understood. It even remains unexpressed when the acceptance of this standpoint is warmly welcomed in the concluding stage (“what I have been fighting for”, “I am very pleased”). By then, Mr. Schlyter has made abundantly clear why the legislation regarding juice packaging is badly needed. Even though his standpoint is not explicitly mentioned, Schlyter’s outspoken commitment to it is always obvious, and his strong involvement in the case points to the utilisation of an engaged confrontational style. Had a more businesslike detached confrontational style been used, the standpoint would have been mentioned straightforwardly at the start of the discourse, and all tokens of the protagonist’s enthusiasm would have been left out.

Mr. Schlyter’s adaptation to audience demand is not explicitly made manifest either. However, when he states his consumer-friendly point of departure in the first sentences of his contribution (lines 4–7), his reference to “rather important principles” makes clear that he connects with the presumed interests of the listening consumers and includes his audience emphatically in the case (“we must stop deceiving consumers”). This inclusive approach is in line with his political position as a member of the European Greens, who always sympathize with consumers who are out to get a fair deal. In this way, Schlyter’s confrontational adaptation to audience demand, however weakly represented, confirms my earlier analysis of his confrontational argumentative style as being engaged.

The confrontational exploitation of presentational devices in Schlyter’s contribution connects well with my observations concerning the other two dimensions of the argumentative style he has utilised in this stage. Instead of clearly

showing his personal involvement by the use of charged formulations that express his engagement, Schlyter refrains from stating the standpoint at issue altogether, and presents it only as a presupposition. However, taking into account how enthusiastically he applauds this presupposition, my characterisation of the argumentative style as engaged can still be maintained.

5.3 Characteristics of his opening style

Right at the beginning of his contribution, Schlyter introduces explicitly as his point of departure the general starting point that *The EU should maintain its high quality standard and stop allowing European consumers to be deceived*. In his view, this includes that the EU must stop deceiving consumers by the labelling of fruit juices. By emphasizing this point so strongly, Schlyter implies that food labelling is a problem in the European Union – which is the very reason why this plenary debate of the European Parliament takes place. If the labelling of fruit juices continues to fall short, European consumers will not have the well-functioning single market they are, according to crucial EU principles, entitled to. The main strategic consideration motivating Schlyter's intervention therefore is that it can be reasonably and effectively maintained that European consumers may expect the EU to keep up high standards involving a properly functioning single market, where openness, honesty, and fairness prevail.

After stating his general starting point, Schlyter takes it for granted that the bulk of his fellow-MEPs as well as interested consumers listening in will share this starting point without any further justification, and also accept the suggested evaluation criteria of honesty, openness, and fairness for judging the EU legislation. Since Schlyter's topical selection of his point of departure seems quite straightforward, there is no reason to think that he might have any hesitations about it. Although a further concretisation of the starting point is not provided until the concluding stage, in the opening stage Schlyter's association with the cause is already clear from his immediate and determined answer to his earlier rhetorical question about maintaining a high standard: "If we are to have a properly functioning single market, we must stop deceiving consumers". Therefore, this topical choice should in this case be seen as an indication of the utilisation of an engaged argumentative style.

Mr. Schlyter's adaptation to audience demand in his opening style becomes particularly clear through his adjustment of his starting point to fellow-MEPs sharing his political ideal of a properly functioning internal market and conscious consumers whose interests are at issue and should no longer be deceived. In stressing the leading principle, again, Schlyter's political position as an MEP for the European Greens comes to the fore. By thus showing his identification with

what is important to the intended audience, he gives shape to his point of departure in a way that is indicative of an engaged argumentative style. At the same time, however, he avoids preaching too much to his own parish by keeping his dealings with the crucial political principle general, short and to the point, continuing his contribution immediately with providing argumentation for the vital preparatory argument in support of the main standpoint: *There is a problem with food labelling in Europe*.

Just as in other stages of the argumentative process, Mr. Schlyter's exploitation of presentational devices in the opening stage is characterised by the use of plain language. Jargon he avoids as much as possible and the general tone of his contribution is informal. Schlyter introduces the point of departure by means of a highly suggestive rhetorical question: "Should we maintain the EU's high standard, where one exists, as opposed to the standard incorporated into international agreements?" By using this inclusive strategical device, Schlyter already suggests that he belongs to the camp of those in favour of an open, honest, and fair EU that has a properly functioning single market – his actual starting point. In spite of this utilisation of an engaged argumentative style, personal or even compassionate language use, with empathetic appeals to the audience and other presentational devices to express inclusiveness, is in Schlyter's contribution completely absent. In spite of this lack of abundancy in the manifestation of the distinctive characteristics of an engaged argumentative style, Schlyter's opening argumentative style is engaged rather than detached – but moderately engaged.

5.4 Characteristics of his argumentational style

In Schlyter's contribution to the European Parliament's plenary debate on labelling fruit juice packaging, the standpoint at issue, (1) *The proposed legislation regarding juice packaging should be adopted*, is on the first level of the defence defended by a coordinative argumentation consisting of the implicit preparatory argument¹⁵ (1.1a) *There is a problem with food labelling in Europe* and the pragmatic argument (1.1b) *Adopting the proposed legislation solves the problem*. Whereas the pragmatic argument (1.1b) is not defended any further, the preparatory argument (1.1a) becomes the focus of attention in the extended argumentation on the second and the third level of the defence, so that the pragmatic argument becomes part of a complex pragmatic argumentation. In this way, the dialectical route that is followed in giving substance to the complex pragmatic

15. A preparatory argument covers a presupposition that needs to be fulfilled before the next part of the (coordinative) argumentation can apply: there needs to be a problem before it can be solved.

argumentation consists for the most part of a defence of the implicit preparatory argument (1.1a).

On the second level of the defence, the preparatory argument (1.1a) *There is a problem with food labelling in Europe* is supported by the symptomatic coordinative argumentation (1.1a.1a) *On many labels the ingredients are not properly indicated* and (1.1a.1b) *This is misleading and fraudulent*. On the third level of the defence, this coordinative argumentation is in its turn supported by a series of (symptomatic) coordinative arguments by example: (1.1a.1a–b.1a) *See the packaging of a particular product from France*, (1.1a.1a–b.1b) *See the packaging of a particular product from Sweden/Finland*, and (1.1a.1a–b.1c) *See the packaging of still another product*. The strategic consideration that motivates this strategic manoeuvring in defence of the preparatory main argument (1.1a) is that it can be reasonably and effectively maintained that the intended audience will accept the proposed legislation for labelling fruit juices if it is made clear that the problem of unclear and deceptive labelling plays a role in virtually all countries across the European Union.

As happens prototypically in argumentative practices in which a prescriptive standpoint is defended that involves a policy statement, in the main argumentation advanced on the first level of the defence a pragmatic argument is advanced: (1.1b) *Adopting the proposed legislation solves the problem at issue*. In the context of a plenary debate of the European Parliament this topical selection puts the standpoint automatically in a familiar light and the argumentational style that is utilised can in this respect be qualified as engaged. However, when the arguer knows or expects that the existence of the problem will not immediately be acknowledged by the intended audience, a preparatory argument is required, issuing the claim that such a problem does indeed exist: (1.1a) *There is a problem with food labelling in Europe*. In the institutional context of this plenary debate, this claim can be left implicit, because in the European Parliament it is almost considered a given that in Europe there is a problem with food labelling. Nevertheless, Mr. Schlyter's contribution to the debate concentrates on defending this claim and convincing the audience that there is a serious problem. In his argumentative discourse, Schlyter leaves the initially pragmatic argument without further defence, but makes an effort to defend the assisting preparatory argument extensively, thus making the pragmatic argument part of a complex pragmatic argumentation.

The argumentational topical selection made in MEP Schlyter's contribution boils for the most part down to a choice of argumentative moves aimed at gathering support for the implicit preparatory argument (1.1a) *There is a problem with food labelling in Europe*. First, on the second level of the defence of the main standpoint, this claim is defended by the coordinative combination of symptomatic arguments (1.1a.1a) *On many labels the ingredients are not properly indicated*

and (1.1a.1b) *This is misleading and fraudulent*. Arguing that an existing practice is a problem because it is misleading and even fraudulent, involves a selection of arguments that in the context of a parliamentary debate immediately makes clear that action is required. The urgency of this consequence makes it in any case easier for the intended audience to see that there is indeed a need for considering the acceptability of the standpoint that there is a problem. The choice of this part of Mr. Schlyter's topical selection in the argumentation stage should therefore be characterised as indicating an engaged rather than a detached argumentative style. The same goes even more strongly for Schlyter's topical selection of a coordinative series of arguments by example on the third level of the defence: (1.1a.1a–b.1a) *See the packaging of a particular product from France*, (1.1a.1a–b.1b) *See the packaging of a particular product from Sweden/Finland* and (1.1a.1a–b.1c) *See the packaging of still another product*.

The adaptation to audience demand in the argumentation stage of the argumentative process is also carried out in an engaged argumentative style. The use of the pragmatic argument on the first level of the defence as well as the use of the symptomatic coordinative argumentation on the second level and the use of the coordinative combination of symptomatic arguments on the third level are connecting the standpoint at issue (1, 1.1a, and 1.1a.1a–b, respectively) with the frame of reference and preferences of the audience. It is immediately clear to colleagues as well as interested bystanders that it is good to adopt a certain measure (1) when there is a serious problem (1.1a) and the measure is suitable to put an end to the problem (1.1b); it is also clear to them that there is indeed a problem (1.1a) when in many cases an established practice is seriously failing (1.1a.1a) and wrong (1.1a.1b); and it is, finally, clear to them, too, that a practice is seriously failing and wrong (1.1a.1a–b) when there are various obvious examples of performances of this practice (1.1a.1a–b.1a–c) that provide evidence of its inadequacy.

The exploitation of presentational devices manifests itself in the argumentation stage of Mr. Schlyter's contribution primarily in a very subdued way: by leaving it to the audience to conclude for themselves on the basis of Schlyter's accurate and visually supported argumentation how badly the criticised practice of labelling fruit juices works out for those who are really interested in the well-functioning of such a practice. These people include in any case those MEPs who detest any established practice operative in the EU's single market they feel responsible for which is untransparent, misleading and fraudulent, and the consumers listening in who take an interest in the practice of labelling. Mr. Schlyter's use of presentational devices is, again, engaged, because he uses the presentational means he chooses to employ in an inclusive way to illustrate clearly and appealingly the points he wants to make. Although Schlyter expresses his message in a restrained manner, without any explicit expression of empathy or compassion, its

inclusive meaning cannot escape the consumers and other people seriously interested in the labelling issue.

5.5 Characteristics of his concluding style

The outcome of the argumentative process is at the end of the dialectical route not explicitly formulated as a conclusion, but only indicated: “we are at last doing something about it” (line 24). This satisfied phrasing makes it fully clear that the standpoint at issue, (1) *The proposed legislation regarding juice packaging should be adopted*, is in Schlyter's view effectively justified by his argumentation. In lines 24–25, Schlyter embraces this outcome emphatically as the favoured outcome of the argumentative process. This – rather limited – topical choice in the concluding stage is indicative of an engaged argumentative style.

Schlyter's adaptation to audience demand in the concluding stage is in his contribution well-prepared in the preceding stages. By opting in the opening stage for the consumer-friendly evaluation criteria of maintaining high standards and not deceiving consumers, and in the argumentation stage for a justification of the standpoint at issue that agrees with these criteria, Mr. Schlyter makes the audience realize that they play an important role in the outcome of the argumentative process. In this way, he makes sure that the audience is involved in the concluding process. The creation of this communality is again an indication of the utilisation of an engaged argumentative style.

Mr. Schlyter's exploitation of presentational devices in the concluding stage is characterised by the expression of his strong commitment to this favoured outcome, which he had shown already in earlier stages of the argumentative process by his careful topical selection in preparation of this outcome, his calculating adaptation to audience demand in reaching it, and his opportune use of presentational devices. The arguer's commitment is confirmed by his personal, and therefore appealing, presentation of the conclusion that is reached: “This is what I have been fighting for, and I am very pleased that this was the end result” (lines 24–25). Therefore Schlyter's argumentative style in the concluding stage can be unreservedly qualified as engaged.

6. Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how the argumentative style that is utilised by MEPs in their argumentative discourse in a plenary debate of the European Parliament can be identified. For this purpose, I have determined by way of an exemplary analysis the argumentative style of a contribution of a Swedish MEP for the Euro-

pean Greens, Carl Schlyter, to the plenary debate of the European Parliament on the labelling of fruit juices on 13 December 2011. In the case I examined, Mr. Schlyter turns his pragmatic argumentation that the European legislation proposed will solve the problem of food labelling into a complex pragmatic argumentation by advancing argumentation in support of the preparatory premise that there is indeed a problem. Schlyter argues that in the current situation on many labels the ingredients are not properly indicated and supports this claim by a series of arguments by example stemming from various countries in the European Union.

In order to do full justice to the notion of argumentative style, I do not maintain the traditional limitation of style to the (linguistic) presentation, but extend its scope in the context of argumentative discourse to all aspects of strategic manoeuvring. Viewing the three aspects of strategic manoeuvring as different dimensions of argumentative style, makes it possible to characterize the way in which the conduct of argumentative discourse is shaped as utilising a particular argumentative style. The way in which the three dimensions of argumentative style are shaped manifests itself in the argumentative discourse in the argumentative moves that are included in the analytic overview of the discourse, in the dialectical routes expressed in the argumentative pattern of the discourse, and in the strategic considerations that determine the strategic design of the discourse. Depending on the specific requirements of the institutional macro-context in which the argumentative discourse takes place, the strategic manoeuvring is shaped differently in communicative activity types from different communicative domains. My analysis concentrates on how it is shaped in a plenary political debate in the European Parliament.

My analyses of the topical dimension, the audience demand dimension, and the presentational dimension of the argumentative style utilised in Mr. Schlyter's contribution have made clear that the confrontational, opening, argumentational, and concluding argumentative styles he employs are all predominantly engaged in all their three dimensions. In all four stages of the argumentative process, Schlyter's argumentative style radiates in its topical dimension commitment to the cause at issue, conveys in its audience demand dimension communality with the audience, and expresses in its presentational dimension inclusiveness. This means that the amalgam of distinctive features that characterises the utilisation of an engaged argumentative style manifests itself systematically and consistently in the argumentative moves that are made in the argumentative process throughout the dialectical route that is chosen in defence of the standpoint at issue, and in accordance with the strategic considerations underlying the strategic design of the discourse. Although its engaged characteristics are not always really outspoken, and the argumentative discourse shows occasionally signs of the objectiv-

ity, reliability and openness to independent judgement that are characteristic of a detached argumentative style, it can be safely concluded that the general argumentative style utilised in MEP Schlyter's contribution may be characterised as *engaged* – or at any rate engaged to a high degree, i.e., *moderately engaged*.

It goes without saying that the analysis reported here is not enough for drawing far-reaching conclusions about the argumentative style prototypically utilised by MEP Schlyter, by Members of the European Parliament, or even by politicians in general. Much more qualitative research is needed to reach any conclusions of that kind. This article is only meant to be an inspiration to undertaking that kind of research by providing the theoretical and analytical tools for it. If all goes well, my research will be followed by other research projects,¹⁶ which should also include quantitative empirical research into stereotypical argumentative styles and comparative research of the characteristics of argumentative styles that are utilised in other communicative activity types in different kinds of communicative domains.

Funding

Open Access publication of this article was funded through a Transformative Agreement with University of Amsterdam.

References

- Bachrach, P. (1967). *The theory of democratic elitism: A Critique*. Boston: Little and Brown.
- Coser, L. (1959). *The functions of social conflict*. New York: Free Press.
- Eemeren, F. H. van. (2010). *Strategic maneuvering. Extending the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation*. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Argumentation in Context 2. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aic.2>
- Eemeren, F. H. van. (2015). Democracy and argumentation. In F. H. van Eemeren, *Reasonableness and effectiveness in argumentative discourse. Fifty contributions to the development of pragma-dialectics* (pp. 827–841). Cham (Switzerland) etc.: Springer. Argumentation Library 27. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20955-5_45
- Eemeren, F. H. van. (2017). Argumentative patterns viewed from a pragma-dialectical perspective. In F. H. van Eemeren (Ed. 2017), *Prototypical argumentative patterns. Exploring the relationship between argumentative discourse and institutional context* (pp. 7–29). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Argumentation in Context 11. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aic.11.02van>

16. At this moment, a joint study co-authored by seven argumentation theorists is already in preparation in which the argumentative styles are explored that are utilised in some representative speech events from the political, the legal, the facilitatory, the diplomatic, the academic, and the medical domain (van Eemeren et al. 2022).

- Eemeren, F.H. van. (2018). *Argumentation theory. A pragma-dialectical perspective*. Cham (Switzerland): Springer. Argumentation Library 33.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95381-6>
- Eemeren, F.H. van. (2019). Argumentative style: A complex notion. *Argumentation* 33(2), 153–171. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-019-09478-y>
- Eemeren, F.H. van, & Garssen, B. (2010). *In varietate concordia* – United in diversity. European parliamentary debate as an argumentative activity type. *Controversia* 7(1), 19–37.
- Eemeren, F.H. van, Garssen, B., Greco, S., Haafte, T. van, Labrie, N., Leal, F., & Wu Peng. (2022). *Argumentative style. A pragma-dialectical study of functional variety in different communicative domains*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Argumentation in Context. To be published.
- Eemeren, F.H. van, & Grootendorst, R. (1992). *Argumentation, communication, and fallacies. A pragma-dialectical perspective*. Hillsdale (NJ): Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Garssen, B. (2017). The role of pragmatic problem-solving argumentation in plenary debate in the European Parliament. In F.H. van Eemeren (Ed. 2017), *Prototypical argumentative patterns. Exploring the relationship between argumentative discourse and institutional context* (pp. 31–51). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Argumentation in Context 11. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aic.11.03gar>
- Linz, J. (1990). Transitions to democracy. *Washington Quarterly*, Summer, 143–164.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01636609009445400>

Address for correspondence

Frans H. van Eemeren
Groenburgwal 53
1011 HS Amsterdam
The Netherlands
f.h.vaneemeren@uva.nl

Publication history

Date received: 10 October 2021

Date accepted: 16 December 2021