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The aim of this book is to provide a pragma-dialectical analysis and evaluation of the way in which politicians maneuver strategically in response to an interviewer's accusation in a political interview that their position is inconsistent with another position they have advanced before.

The author shows first what kinds of responses politicians can provide when they are confronted with a criticism of inconsistency. Next, she identifies the most important preconditions imposed on the argumentative discourse by the requirements of a political interview. Her analysis concentrates on the kinds of advantages a politician can gain in a political interview by responding to an accusation of inconsistency by retracting a standpoint that has been advanced earlier and subsequently reformulating this standpoint. In order to evaluate a politician's responses, the author formulates a set of soundness conditions which she applies to a number of concrete cases taken from BBC interviews to judge whether the responses concerned are reasonable.

MANEUVERING STRATEGICALLY IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW

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MANEUVERING STRATEGICALLY IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW

*Analyzing and evaluating responses to an
accusation of inconsistency*

MANEUVERING STRATEGICALLY

IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW

**ANALYZING AND EVALUATING RESPONSES TO
AN ACCUSATION OF INCONSISTENCY**

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MANEUVERING STRATEGICALLY IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW

Analyzing and evaluating responses to an accusation of inconsistency

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

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aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom
ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties
ingestelde commissie,
in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel
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To my mother, Ioana

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 RESPONDING TO AN ACCUSATION OF INCONSISTENCY IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW	3
1.2 A PRAGMA-DIALECTICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ARGUMENTATION	7
1.3 OBJECTIVES AND METHOD OF THE STUDY.....	11
1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY	13
CHAPTER 2	
ANALYTICALLY RELEVANT RESPONSES TO AN ACCUSATION OF INCONSISTENCY	15
2.1 INTRODUCTION	15
2.2 COMMUNICATIVE AND INTERACTIONAL PURPOSES OF AN ACCUSATION OF INCONSISTENCY .	16
2.3 RESPONSES TO AN ACCUSATION OF INCONSISTENCY.....	21
2.4 CONCLUSION	31
CHAPTER 3	
THE POLITICAL INTERVIEW AS AN ARGUMENTATIVE ACTIVITY TYPE	33
3.1 ARGUMENTATION IN THE POLITICAL INTERVIEW	33
3.2 THE INITIAL SITUATION	37
3.3 STARTING POINTS	43
3.4 ARGUMENTATIVE MEANS	49
3.5 THE POSSIBLE OUTCOME.....	53
3.6 CONCLUSION	55
CHAPTER 4	
STRATEGIC MANEUVERING IN RESPONSE TO AN ACCUSATION OF INCONSISTENCY IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW	57
4.1 ACCUSATIONS OF INCONSISTENCY IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW.....	57
4.2 RETRACTING A STANDPOINT IN RESPONSE TO AN ACCUSATION OF INCONSISTENCY	59
4.3 EXPLOITING COMMITMENTS TO WIN THE DISCUSSION.....	66
4.4 CONCLUSION	88
CHAPTER 5	
THE REASONABLENESS OF RESPONSES TO AN ACCUSATION OF INCONSISTENCY IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW	91
5.1 THE REASONABLENESS OF CONFRONTATIONAL STRATEGIC MANEUVERING	91
5.2 SOUNDNESS CONDITIONS	95
5.2.1 Soundness condition of openness.....	95
5.2.2 Soundness condition of relevance.....	102
5.2.3 Soundness condition of clarity	108
5.3 CONCLUSION	111
CHAPTER 6	
CONCLUSION	113
6.1 MAIN FINDINGS	113
6.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	117
APPENDIX	123

SAMENVATTING	135
REFERENCES	139
LIST OF FIGURES.....	145
INDEX OF SUBJECTS AND NAMES	146

Foreword

In this foreword I would like to thank all those who offered me guidance and support during the process of writing this dissertation.

First of all, I thank my supervisor Frans van Eemeren, and my co-supervisor, Francisca Snoeck Henkemans for the best supervision I could wish for. I want also to express my gratitude to Peter Houtlosser, under whose co-supervision I started this research; his constructive comments and knowledge of the subject of my research have contributed to a great extent to the outcome of the first part of this study.

Frans van Eemeren has guided me from the start of the project until its completion with utmost dedication. Together with Peter Houtlosser, he decided that I am a suitable person for carrying out this project in the Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric at the University of Amsterdam. His confidence in me all along has been of invaluable importance to my work on this dissertation and my intellectual development in general. I am grateful for his most precise reading of the different chapters, for arousing my curiosity and enthusiasm for argumentation, and for always being ready to share his expertise. His friendliness and concern ‘whether everything goes fine’ have contributed moreover to much of my personal development in the last years.

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October 13, 2010

Corina Andone

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Responding to an accusation of inconsistency in a political interview

Accusing a politician of being inconsistent is common practice for interviewers in a political interview. In a political interview, interviewers are interested in gaining information from their interlocutors but, more often than not, their questions require the politician to clarify and justify his views. Questions by means of which an inconsistency is pointed out are an excellent means of urging the politician to justify his views before the listening, reading or television-watching audience, that is, in fact, the primary addressee in a political interview. The audience presumably values political consistency and expects a politician who is inconsistent to account for this lack of consistency.

A charge of inconsistency may affect the politician's image in the eyes of the public negatively. The politician, being well aware of the possible damage, usually tries to answer in a way that makes him no longer look inconsistent. He will deny that there is an inconsistency, point at a change of circumstances justifying his change in view or avoid discussing the criticism. The following exchange from a political interview between BBC interviewer Jon Sopel and John Hutton illustrates how a politician avoids discussing the inconsistency of which he is accused. At the time of the interview, Hutton was the British Business Secretary of State. The fragment is an extract from an interview broadcast on

February 24, 2008 on the *Politics Show* in which the issues of the regulation of small firms, flexible working and agency workers are discussed.¹ In the question below, regarding the protection of agency workers, Sopel seems to suggest that Hutton's party takes a pro-business stance – in line with the party policy – not because this would be most appropriate in the present case, but in order to 'compensate' for frequent non-pro-business stances adopted lately. According to Sopel, the party that Hutton represents has a reputation of being pro-business, but has acted contrary to it lately in areas such as nationalizing Northern Rock, capital gain tax and the status of non-domiciled persons:

Jon Sopel:

The reason that you're taking many might say is a pro-business stance is that your reputation as being the party that is pro-business, has taken such a hammering over recent weeks. You look at the nationalization of Northern Rock, you look at the U-turn over capital gains tax, you look at the U-turn over non Doms, it hasn't been exactly a purple patch has it, for you.

John Hutton:

We've had a consistent view about agency workers over a number of years, about trying to get this balance right. So there's been no change in that position and we are currently trying to find a way forward with the European Commission and other governments in the European Union which is where this issue fundamentally, has to be addressed.

In this example, Sopel's question conveys two criticisms. Sopel first criticizes Hutton for taking a pro-business stance towards agency workers although this is not the best solution. Second, he criticizes Hutton for acting inconsistently over recent weeks in three areas. In his answer, Hutton does not address the criticism of inconsistency in the three areas, but concentrates instead on the issue of agency workers. He emphasizes that a consistent view on this issue has been maintained over the years. In addition, the first steps towards a good package of measures have been taken by discussing the issue with the European Commission.

In another interview, which took place on July 12, 2009 between Jon Sopel and Sir Gus O'Donnell, at the time Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service, Sir Gus does not avoid discussing the inconsistency with which he is charged but finds a way to show that acting inconsistently can have a positive side:²

¹ All examples in this study have been selected from the BBC programme *Politics Show* (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/politics_show/default.stm). According to the BBC website (last visited on September 2, 2010), "The *Politics Show* interviews senior politicians - ministers, leading opposition figures and other influential people about their views and policies - and hold them to account for their decisions and actions." The examples in this study are presented as transcribed on the BBC website. For my purpose, a transcription that guarantees readability is sufficient, because prosodic and other conversational phenomena are irrelevant. The examples are reproduced as they appear on the BBC website (sometimes without question marks, commas, etc).

² For brevity, the word 'politician' is used to refer to the interviewee in a political interview. In my use, the word includes political decision-makers, people such as trade union leaders, senior leaders or any other public figure playing a role in national or international politics. These people may already hold or still seek to hold public office. Sir Gus O'Donnell, whom Sopel interviews on the efficiency of the Civil Service, does

Jon Sopel:

And you talk about efficiencies that you need to introduce. How efficient is it, the endless re-naming of government departments? We used to have a Department for Education, we now have the Department for Cushions and Soft Furnishings I think the civil servants call it because they can never remember the right way round that it's Children, Schools and Families. We had two years ago the heralding of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills which has been killed off two years later. So lots of letterheads, lots of name plates all changing all the time.

Sir Gus:

Well ministers decide and we're a very flexible civil service, one of the things we have to be.

In the discussion, Sopel questions whether Sir Gus is really aiming for more efficiency of the Civil Service, because he has taken measures that seem to point in the opposite direction. To support his charge of inconsistency between Sir Gus' words and actions, Sopel provides the example of two departments, the names of which have been changed several times during the last years. In order to avoid being judged negatively by the audience watching the interview, Sir Gus redefines what the interviewer claims to be a sign of inefficiency as an indication of flexibility, thereby giving the inconsistency a positive character. According to Sir Gus, the service he leads is flexible in the collaboration with ministers, who are in fact deciding about such changes as mentioned by Sopel.

Unlike the previous examples, in which the interviewer's accusations attribute an inconsistency to the politician between his words and his actions,³ the following argumentative exchange is a case in which the politician responds to an accusation of inconsistency between his words.⁴ The interviewer claims that the proponent of a standpoint cannot be committed to it because he is also committed to another standpoint with which the standpoint is inconsistent. By means of this accusation, he attempts to lead the politician to retract a standpoint, thus putting an end to the disagreement. The discussion took place on December 9, 2007 between Jon Sopel and Alan Duncan, at the time Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform:

Jon Sopel:

And on nuclear, the government says that obviously has to be part of the mix. Are you on that page as well.

not hold a political function, but is a British Civil Servant. In the literature on political interviews, the discussions with those who hold public offices without fulfilling political functions fall under the category of a political interview.

³ The actions are reconstructed in terms of propositional commitments. In the first example, the commitment attributed to the politician concerning Northern Rock can be reconstructed as *you have accepted to nationalize Northern Rock*.

⁴ There can also be an inconsistency between one's words or actions and one's principles. Such inconsistencies are particularly frequent in a political context: a politician says something or acts in a way that is incompatible with, for example, party policies.

Chapter 1

Alan Duncan:

Our policy is absolutely clear and it's again, very similar, we want approval for sites and designs. We want a proper carbon price, we want honesty about costs, with no subsidy. Get on with the decision to do something with the waste, again, David Cameron said that this week, and I think the government has been a bit slow on working out what to do with nuclear waste. So then people can invest and I think probably they will.

Jon Sopel:

You were rather more skeptical the last time I spoke to you when you were on this programme – we can just have a listen to what you said last time.

‘we think that the nuclear power sector, should be there as a last resort in many respects. We want to explore every conceivable method of generating electricity before we go to nuclear’

Alan Duncan:

so fluent.

Jon Sopel:

Yes. But you were completely different, you were very skeptical there. It has to be the last option, now you're saying, we're on the same page as the government and yes, let's get on with it.

Alan Duncan:

I think what's important with nuclear is to explain the policy. I think it's unhelpful to get hooked on two words and I think the policy as it has always been is exactly as I've just explained.

According to Sopel, Duncan's opinion expressed in the first turn of this exchange that he is in favor of “getting on with nuclear waste,” seems to suggest a view that favors the use of nuclear energy. This view, the interviewer claims, is exactly the opposite of what the politician said in a previous interview. Sopel quotes Duncan's earlier words which indicate that before he did not favor the use of nuclear energy, but instead advocated that it should be the last option. Consequently, one of the two inconsistent commitments should be given up. To avoid losing the discussion, Duncan responds by making a dissociation. Without doing so explicitly, he assumes a distinction between the nuclear energy *policy* (of which he now approves) and nuclear energy *practice* (which he earlier had opposed).⁵ The introduction of the dissociation enables Duncan to give a particular interpretation of his standpoint – presented as the less important one (concerning the practice) – in which he gives up this standpoint, while maintaining another interpretation of the standpoint (concerning the policy) presented as the most important one.

The three examples presented so far show that a politician may respond to an accusation of inconsistency in various ways. Possible responses are avoiding discussing the criticism of inconsistency (*example 1*), giving the inconsistency a positive connotation (*example 2*) and retracting the earlier standpoint (*example 3*) so that the politician is no

⁵ Van Rees (2009: 31-44) provides various kinds of clues that can serve as indicators for the existence of a dissociation. Two of these clues are present in Duncan's response: (a) it comes in an attempt to resolve an inconsistency pointed out by the other party (*But you were completely different, you were very skeptical there*), and (b) one of the dissociated terms is valued as being more important (*what's important with nuclear is to explain the policy*).

longer committed to two inconsistent standpoints. In all these cases, in the context of a political interview the politician's response constitutes an attempt at turning the discussion in his favor by trying to create a positive image before the public. Because the public is in fact his primary addressee rather than the interviewer, who judges the outcome of the discussion in the long term (say, when deciding how to vote later), the politician designs his moves in a way that makes them more easily appealing to them. For example, Sir Gus portrays the inconsistency pointed out by Sopel between claiming efficiency and frequently renaming departments as a sign of flexibility in order to make his actions acceptable to the public. Sir Gus realizes that someone who cannot act consistently in such minor matters cannot be expected to manage the Home Civil Service well.

This study will be undertaken to gain insight into the kind of advantages a politician may obtain in responding to an accusation of inconsistency in a political interview. In addition, the study will evaluate the quality of responses as they occur in the argumentative practice of a political interview. This evaluation will be carried out by applying criteria for identifying moves as reasonable or unreasonable. Such an evaluation is vital to judge whether the politician's responses make a constructive contribution to the exchange or obstruct the exchange in which the participants are involved. In 1.2, I will outline my theoretical framework for providing an analytic and evaluative account of responses to an accusation of inconsistency.

1.2 A pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation

In order to analyze and evaluate a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency from an argumentative perspective, I will make use of the pragma-dialectical theoretical framework developed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 2004) and extended by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002, 2003, 2009) and van Eemeren (2010). The view of argumentation advocated in this approach and the tools developed for the analysis and evaluation of argumentative discourse make this theoretical framework particularly suitable for the purpose of this study.

In the pragma-dialectical approach, argumentation is viewed as part of a critical discussion in which the participants try to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004: 1) define argumentation as "a verbal, social and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint." This view of argumentation makes it possible to study the argumentative moves at issue as part of an argumentative discourse in which standpoints

are defended and refuted so that they are tested for their acceptability. This means that in the kind of cases dealt with in this study a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency are seen as part of an argumentative exchange in which the politician attempts to convince the interviewer and the audience at home that his standpoint is acceptable. In the context of the institutional expectations inherent in a political interview, the politician's responses can be seen as refutations of the interviewer's criticism.

In a pragma-dialectical approach, the politician's responses are analyzed and evaluated by applying an ideal model of critical discussion. This model is a normative representation of how an exchange could proceed if it was aimed solely at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. In the exchange, the politician adopts the role of protagonist of a standpoint and exposes it to the critical scrutiny of the interviewer acting as antagonist in the discussion. The pragma-dialectical model specifies the various stages that are to be distinguished in the resolution process, in each of which a particular aim is pursued. Thus, in the *confrontation stage* of a critical discussion, the aim is to make clear the difference of opinion that is at stake: clarity must be achieved as to which standpoints are disputed and the kind of criticism that the protagonist has to overcome. In the *opening stage*, the purpose is to establish the shared material and procedural starting points in accordance with which the tenability of the standpoint will be put to the test. The aim of the *argumentation stage* is to systematically test the arguments advanced in support of the standpoint. Finally, in the *concluding stage*, the outcome of the discussion is established: if the standpoint has been defended conclusively, the antagonist withdraws his doubt; if that is not the case, the protagonist retracts his standpoint. In either case, the difference of opinion can be said to have been resolved.

For each of the four analytically distinguished stages, the model of critical discussion specifies the speech acts that are analytically relevant, i.e. those speech acts that are used to perform argumentative moves that potentially contribute to the resolution process. The different kinds of speech acts specify the rights and obligations each party has in the critical exchange. For example, in the confrontation stage the protagonist who advances a standpoint has the right to maintain or retract his standpoint when he is confronted with the antagonist's doubt. In case the antagonist requests a clarification, the protagonist has the obligation to provide a 'usage declarative.'

As an analytic tool, the ideal model of critical discussion is an instrument for reconstructing argumentative discourse as it occurs in reality. For this purpose, a discussion as it is actually conducted must be reconstructed in terms of the ideal model. The reconstruction results in an analytic overview of the argumentative moves that the parties have made in the discussion. For example, because an accusation of inconsistency by the interviewer in a political interview is a criticism in response to a standpoint of the politician that is being interviewed, it constitutes an instantiation of the moves of casting

doubt and advancing an opposite standpoint. In terms of the ideal model of a critical discussion, such moves are reconstructed as occurring in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion. The politician's responses to such criticism can be analyzed as playing a role in the definition of the difference of opinion. For instance, in example 2 presented in section 1.1, Sopel's accusation of inconsistency is a way of casting doubt on Sir Gus's claimed efficiency. Should the accusation have pertained to an inconsistency in starting points, it would have been reconstructed as a challenge in the opening stage and the interviewee's response as a reaction to that type of challenge. Possible reactions to the challenge include accepting the challenge, not accepting it or accepting it conditionally (van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans 2007a: 90).

As an evaluative tool, the ideal model of a critical discussion serves as a template against which argumentative moves can be assessed as reasonable or unreasonable. In the model, the exchange of speech acts is regulated by a critical discussion procedure specifying the rules in accordance with which the resolution of the difference of opinion could be achieved on the merits. The rules for critical discussion constitute for each stage the norms of reasonableness authorizing the performance of certain types of speech acts. For the discussion to proceed reasonably, fifteen rules have been formulated that need to be followed for a difference of opinion to be resolved on the merits (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 135-157).⁶ The evaluation of argumentative discourse is made by checking whether the argumentative moves carried out in practice adhere to the rules for critical discussion and thus contribute to the resolution of the difference of opinion. Starting from this dialectical view of reasonableness, a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency will be judged as reasonable when they make a contribution to the definition of the difference of opinion in the confrontation stage. If they hinder the critical testing procedure, they will be judged as fallacious. Given that an interviewer's accusation of inconsistency subjects the politician's standpoints to critical testing, it makes sense to evaluate the reasonableness of the politician's responses as part of the critical testing procedure. The result of such an evaluation can provide valuable insight into the quality of the argumentative practice of a political interview.

The model of critical discussion outlines the dialectical procedure for resolving a difference of opinion reasonably. In argumentative practice, however, arguers can be regarded as striving not only to satisfy the dialectical interest related to resolving the difference of opinion. They also have a rhetorical interest in resolving the difference of opinion in their own favor. In trying to balance both interests, the participants to a

⁶ In addition to the fifteen rules for critical discussion, van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004: 190-196) formulated a set of ten rules known as "the code of conduct for reasonable discussants." The ten rules express requirements for reasonableness in a less technical language than the fifteen rules. They constitute a list of prohibitions of moves in an argumentative discourse that hinder or obstruct the resolution process.

discussion engage in strategic maneuvering (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2000, 2002, 2003, van Eemeren 2010), i.e. they put their standpoints to the test, but are also concerned with having their standpoints accepted. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser explain that in their attempt to remain dialectically reasonable and at the same time rhetorically effective, arguers make a topical selection that is most favorable to their position, take into account the audience whom they address and choose presentational means that are optimal for their purpose. For example, in the confrontation stage a politician can choose to respond to criticism by maintaining a standpoint (topical choice) that best meets the preferences of the audience (audience adaptation) and formulating it in a way that makes it the easiest to defend (presentational choice).

The concept of strategic maneuvering can be used to understand how the arguers' various choices contribute to remaining reasonable while trying to obtain at the same time an advantageous outcome of the discussion. By making use of this concept, the analysis of a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency does justice both to the dialectical interest in maintaining reasonableness and to the rhetorical interest in being effective.

In addition to playing a role in analyzing argumentative discourse, the concept of strategic maneuvering can also be useful in the evaluation of argumentative moves. The identification of fallacies is better accounted for if one pays attention to the inherent tension that exists in the simultaneous pursuit of dialectical and rhetorical interests in argumentative moves. Fallacies are seen as the result of failing to find the appropriate balance between dialectical reasonableness and rhetorical effectiveness. The imbalance manifests itself in the fact that arguers allow their commitment to having a reasonable exchange to be overruled by their interest in rhetorical effectiveness. In cases in which the balance is not maintained, an arguer's move can be said to have derailed (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2003). The evaluative account of a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency can benefit from this view because the responses can be seen as dialectically sound as long as the pursuit of a *favorable* definition of the difference of opinion does not hinder the critical testing process; otherwise they are fallacious.

In addition to understanding that arguers maneuver strategically whenever they are involved in an argumentative exchange, it is important to realize that the maneuvering always takes place in a certain institutional context, i.e. in a conventionalized activity type "that can be identified on the basis of careful empirical observation" (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2005: 76). In the case of an activity type that is predominantly argumentative, such as a political interview, an *argumentative* activity type is at issue. Starting from the general characteristics of the activity type and its specific characteristics that are important from an argumentative perspective, it is possible to identify the institutional constraints

imposed on the strategic maneuvering. By gaining insight into these constraints, an analyst can account better for the arguers' possibilities to steer the discussion in their own favor.

The conventions of a political interview play a significant role in examining a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency. It is, for example, important that a politician cannot escape from providing an account of his words and actions regarding an issue chosen by the interviewer. Although this constraint limits his possibilities to advance opinions on any matter, at the same time it opens up an opportunity for him to redefine difficult issues to his advantage. A case in point is Sir Gus' response to Sopel's accusation of inconsistency in which he addresses the accusation but redefines being inconsistent as a sign of flexibility.

Characteristics of the argumentative activity type can also be useful in the evaluation of the argumentative moves. The general criteria that are used to determine whether a move is fallacious need to be interpreted and amended in the specific context in which the move is advanced. For instance, in the context of a political interview judging whether a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency are sound or not needs to take into account the roles of the participants. The interviewer should challenge the politician and the latter should leave open this possibility by avoiding resorting to tactics that have the effect of inhibiting the interviewers from pursuing a particular line of inquiry. In the next section I will formulate the research questions that will be answered in the various chapters.

1.3 Objectives and method of the study

The major objective of this study is to provide an analytic and evaluative account of a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency in a political interview. These responses are examined as confrontational strategic maneuvers by means of which a politician attempts to balance dialectical reasonableness with rhetorical effectiveness. The analytic account will make clear what the strategic function of the politician's responses is and the evaluative account will provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for judging the reasonableness of these argumentative moves in a political interview. By aiming to realize the objective of providing an analytic and evaluative account, this study is situated within a larger project dealing with confrontational strategic maneuvering in political argumentation. The project is aimed at examining *Strategic maneuvering in argumentative confrontations: Norms and criteria, manifestations and effects* as it occurs in public

political discussions.⁷ As part of this larger project, Mohammed (2009) concentrated on the examination of the British Prime Minister's strategic maneuvering with the use of an accusation of inconsistency to criticize members of the Opposition in Question Time. Tonnard (2010) analyzes how one-issue politicians in the General Debate in Dutch Parliament maneuver strategically by exploiting presentational devices to create a polarizing effect among the parliamentarians and the voting public.

Analyzing and evaluating a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency from an argumentative perspective is crucial to fully understand what happens in a political interview. Previous studies in which such responses have been dealt with have been in the first place carried out by discourse analysts (Jucker 1986, Clayman and Heritage 2002, Piirainen-Marsh 2005, Emmertsen 2007). They concentrated on the description of the form, practice and function of a politician's responses by viewing the transmission of information as the core activity in a political interview, while ignoring the vital role of argumentation. The latter becomes clear if one realizes that asking for an account (by the interviewer) and providing an account (by the politician) are the central objectives of a political interview, and the final aim is convincing an audience of the acceptability of one's opinions. Only a few studies have been conducted in which a political interview is recognized as an argumentative discussion and the participants' contributions are seen as oriented towards convincing an audience (Fetzer and Weizman 2006, Johansson 2005, Fetzer 2007). Although these studies show a better understanding of how arguers typically behave in a political interview, they lack a systematic theoretically-situated analysis that could provide an insight into the argumentative function of a politician's moves. In addition, these studies are not concerned at all with the quality of the arguers' contributions.

To achieve the main objective of this study, I will first specify a finite number of analytically relevant responses which a politician, acting as protagonist, can give in an argumentative confrontation when he is faced with an accusation of inconsistency. Next, I will characterize the political interview as an argumentative activity type by describing the relevant conventions that characterize this activity type argumentatively. Finally, the institutional insight gained from the characterization of the macro-context of the argumentative activity type will be used in the analysis and evaluation of one particular kind of response which a politician gives to an accusation of inconsistency involving the retraction of one of the (allegedly) inconsistent standpoints.

⁷ The project has been financed by the National Science Foundation (NWO) in the Netherlands and has been carried out at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA) as part of the research concerned with *Argumentation in discourse*.

The following research questions will be answered:

1. Which analytically relevant responses can a protagonist give in answer to an antagonist who accuses him of an inconsistency?
2. Which constraints do the rules of a political interview impose on the simultaneous pursuit of dialectical reasonableness and rhetorical effectiveness?
3. What is the strategic function of a politician's retraction of a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency in a political interview?
4. On which conditions is a politician's retraction of a standpoint an instance of reasonable strategic maneuvering?

1.4 Organization of the study

To make clear how the four research questions in section 1.3 will be answered, I will now explain the structural division of this study. The study is divided into six chapters. Except for the introduction (*Chapter 1*) and the conclusion (*Chapter 6*), each of the chapters answers one of the four research questions formulated in the previous section.

Chapter 2 gives an answer to the first research question that aims at establishing the analytically relevant responses which a protagonist can provide when it is pointed out that his standpoint is inconsistent with another standpoint. An accusation of inconsistency is characterized as being aimed not only at making the addressee understand that he is being criticized for an alleged inconsistency. It is also designed at securing a response that answers the charge. Specifying the responses that answer the charge is possible by taking into account the analytically relevant moves that the accusation at hand can instantiate. It will be shown that a charge of inconsistency is a form of criticism and the responses to it constitute the answers to such criticism.

The second research question concerns the constraints the conventions of a political interview impose on the arguers' strategic maneuvering. In *Chapter 3*, I will identify the pertinent institutional constraints on the arguers' maneuvering by characterizing a political interview as an argumentative activity type. I will describe and discuss the conventions affecting the initial situation of a political interview, the procedural and material starting points, the argumentative means and the possible outcome of the discussion.

The third research question, dealing with the strategic function of a politician's retraction of a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency, will be answered in *Chapter 4*. In this chapter, I will provide a detailed analytic account of the move at hand by making use of the insights into the institutional context gained in Chapter 3. It will thus be

Chapter 1

possible to explain the advantages that a politician may still obtain in a political interview when he has no other choice to respond to an accusation of inconsistency than by retracting a standpoint.

In *Chapter 5*, I will answer the fourth research question concerning the conditions on which the politician's retraction of a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency is a reasonable instance of strategic maneuvering. The evaluative account will be based on the view that a politician's response is reasonable when his attempt to pursue a favorable definition of the difference of opinion does not obstruct the critical testing process; otherwise it is fallacious. I will formulate soundness conditions for the evaluation of a politician's response which will be applied to the cases analyzed in Chapter 4.

The last chapter, *Chapter 6*, is the conclusion of this study. I will outline the findings from the previous chapters and propose some directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Analytically relevant responses to an accusation of inconsistency

2.1 Introduction

In the Introduction to this study, I have shown by means of examples that a politician can give various kinds of responses to an accusation of inconsistency. He can avoid discussing the inconsistency of which he is accused, he can deny that there is an inconsistency, and he can retract the earlier standpoint his current standpoint is allegedly inconsistent with. These are only some examples of possible responses to an accusation of inconsistency. Depending on the specific point in the discussion and the results he wants to obtain, a politician can give different kinds of responses.

In this Chapter, I will specify a finite number of types of responses a politician can choose from in an argumentative confrontation when he is criticized for being inconsistent. Although in argumentative practice a politician can choose from countless options for responding to a charge of inconsistency, it is theoretically possible to establish certain types of responses that can be given to respond to criticism.

Before it can be determined which responses a politician can give in an argumentative confrontation to a charge of inconsistency (2.3), the communicative and interactional dimensions of an accusation of inconsistency will be clarified (2.2). Such a clarification is important because it provides useful insight into accusations of

inconsistency as ways of expressing criticism the purpose of which is to obtain a response that answers the charge. Next, I will discuss these responses in the context of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits.

2.2 Communicative and interactional purposes of an accusation of inconsistency

Accusing someone of something amounts to performing an assertive illocutionary act implying that the speaker commits himself to the truth, or more generally, to the acceptability of the proposition expressed and is supposed to have good grounds for putting it forward (Searle 1969). Accusations are made to serve a communicative purpose of bringing about illocutionary effects and an interactional purpose of realizing perlocutionary effects (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984). What are these purposes and how can they be specified for the case in which the accusation concerns an inconsistency?⁸

The act of making an accusation has received relatively little scholarly attention. Searle (1969: 28) refers only briefly to the act of accusing, leaving it at an observation concerning the performative verb *accuse* realizing the illocutionary act of accusing: “[...]‘accuse’ or ‘blame’ all add the feature of [...] badness to their primary illocutionary point.” A similar observation is made by Fillmore (1970) in a semantic description of verbs of judgment, such as *accuse*, which bring with them the presupposition that something bad or blameworthy has been done by the addressee. Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 179) do not go much further in their account of the act of accusing than observing that an accusation is a public act, which, due to its mode of achievement, has a higher degree of strength compared to similar acts such as blame.

Closer attention to the illocutionary act of *accusing* is paid by Kauffeld (1986, 1998), who formulates the necessary and sufficient conditions for carrying out an accusation. Since it is one of Kauffeld’s aims to provide an account of ‘the essentials of accusing’ by specifying the felicity conditions that must obtain for an accusation, his views

⁸ A dictionary definition could provide the first clues to understand the act of accusing. The Oxford English Dictionary includes the following meanings of the verb to accuse: “1. To charge with a fault; to find fault with, blame, censure. a. Of persons. b. Of things. 2. (With the charge expressed.) To blame, charge, indict. 3. To betray, disclose. Hence, *fig.* to reveal, display, indicate, show, or make known. (*Rare* in mod. Eng., and when found, perhaps in imitation of mod. Fr., in which this is a common sense of *accuser*.)” The Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives two meanings: “1. to charge with a fault or offense... 2. to charge with an offense judicially or by a public process.”

may be taken as a starting point for explaining the communicative and interactional purposes of an accusation of inconsistency.⁹

Kauffeld proposes three basic conditions which the paradigmatic act of accusing (in which a speaker addresses directly his interlocutor) must fulfill: a speaker must “(i) state her charges by saying that some other party (*accused*) did *x*, implying that the speaker believes it may be wrong of *accused* to *x*; and (ii) demand that accused or accused’s representatives answer the charge by way of a denial, admission of guilt, justification, excuse, etc.; and (iii) act as if she intends that the charge and her demands provide her addressee with reason to answer to her charges” (1998: 252). As will be clear, these conditions include the basic requirements for a correct accusation. For each kind of accusation, more conditions apply in which the specific charges are mentioned as well as the expected interactional effects for each case. The conditions formulated by Kauffeld can be taken as a point of departure providing the most salient characteristics of an accusation as an ordinary phenomenon of language use.

In order to specify what is ‘at stake’ in advancing an accusation of inconsistency, I take as a guide the four meta-theoretical principles adopted in the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 52-57). Following these methodological principles is vital because in this way both the *communicative* dimension of an accusation of inconsistency (as an illocutionary act) and the *interactional* dimension (as an act aimed at eliciting certain responses from the addressee) are taken into account. First, the principle of functionalization is followed in this study in order to do justice to the fact that an accusation of inconsistency is put forward through, and in response to, the performance of another illocutionary act (advancing a standpoint). By adopting a perspective based on functionalization, the act at hand is seen as being performed in an argumentative exchange that is viewed as a discussion in which standpoints are defended and refuted. An accusation of inconsistency plays a functional role in this exchange by expressing criticism with regard to the accused’s standpoint. Second, the principle of socialization is pertinent because an accusation of inconsistency is part of a dialogue in which also other people (the direct addressee and/or a third party) are involved. Third, the principle of externalization helps to identify an accusation of inconsistency as a discursive act that creates well-defined commitments both for the speaker and for the addressee, for which they can be held accountable. Fourth, the principle of dialectification is followed because in this way it becomes possible to examine an accusation of inconsistency as a move making an appeal to reasonableness in a critical testing procedure. According to the pragma-dialectical view, an inconsistency is an obstacle to the resolution process (van

⁹ In his account, Kauffeld concentrates on the analysis of the burden of proof incurred by an accuser. He formulates the essential conditions an accusation should fulfill in order to show how different kinds of obligations are created for an accuser as a result of performing the illocutionary act of accusing.

Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992a: 95) and pointing out that the other party is inconsistent is part of an effort to remove this obstacle.

Guided by the four methodological principles, I will formulate the constitutive conditions that must be fulfilled for an utterance to count as an accusation of inconsistency. I will specify what the consequences are if making an accusation fails to meet one or more conditions.¹⁰ The speaker must fulfill the constitutive conditions if he wants to perform an accusation of inconsistency. The addressee may regard them as having been fulfilled when he treats an utterance as such an accusation. In principle, as will be shown, they have consequences for both speaker and addressee.¹¹

Similar with other illocutionary acts, there are two groups of conditions applying to an accusation of inconsistency: (1) *identity* conditions, which can be used to recognize an utterance as an accusation of inconsistency, and (2) *correctness* conditions, defining what counts as a correct illocutionary act (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984: 42).¹² The identity conditions, which include the essential condition and the propositional content condition of an accusation of inconsistency, read as follows (Andone 2009a: 155):

Essential condition:

An accusation of inconsistency counts as raising a charge against an addressee for having committed himself to both *p* and *-p* (or informal equivalents thereof) in an attempt to challenge the addressee to provide a response that answers the charge.

¹⁰ These consequences will be discussed based on van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 43-46).

¹¹ The important role played by the addressee is also underlined by Moeschler (1982) and Alston (1991) in their criticism of Searle (1969). Moeschler (1982: 66) demonstrates that the sincerity condition which defines the psychological state of the speaker is not a necessary condition for assertives. In his view, “in the process of communication, what matters is not so much the truth of the belief (that is the psychological state) of the speaker, but its being recognized by the hearer.” Moeschler’s view coincides with van Eemeren and Grootendorst’s (1984: 42) opinion that a speaker is held committed to what he externalizes irrespective of whether he is sincere or not. It is for this reason that van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) propose to refer to the sincerity conditions as responsibility conditions in order to make it clear that, no matter whether the sincerity condition has been met or not, the speaker takes upon himself a certain responsibility to which he can be held. Searle (1969), on the other hand, believes that a genuine promise is made only when the sincerity condition has been fulfilled.

¹² When formulating the conditions that must obtain for a felicitous performance of the illocutionary act of accusation in which an inconsistency is pointed out, I assume that Searle’s (1969) “normal input and output conditions” are fulfilled: the language users act seriously, willingly, mean what they say and are bound by what they say.

Propositional content condition:

Ascription to the addressee of a commitment to both p and $\neg p$ (or informal equivalents thereof).

In this formulation of the essential condition that must be fulfilled for an utterance to count as an accusation of inconsistency, I establish an explicit link between the performances of the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary effect of securing a response that answers the charge raised by the speaker against the addressee.¹³ As Kauffeld explains, an accusation always requires the accused to answer for an alleged offence and “the accuser must openly speak with an intention which resembles the purpose speakers have in asking questions” (1998: 252).¹⁴ Kauffeld is of the opinion that the answer should “tell why the accused acted as alleged” (1986: 105). Whether this is the only possible response to an accusation of inconsistency will be discussed in section 2.3, in which I will turn my attention to the perlocutionary effects of an accusation of inconsistency.

A failure to meet the essential condition of an accusation of inconsistency means that the utterance in which the inconsistency is pointed out is not an attempt at securing a response that answers the charge raised. That is to say that the addressee will not be able to recognize the speaker’s utterance as an accusation of inconsistency. It is possible that the speaker has not even performed the illocutionary act of an accusation of inconsistency. He may, for example, merely have pointed out that an inconsistency is at issue for the information of a third party.

The formulation of the propositional content condition indicates that a charge of an alleged inconsistency is based on the assumption that an assertion or a non-verbal act have been performed before. The speaker expresses that the assertion or non-verbal act performed at the moment at which the discussion takes place create commitments that are incompatible with commitments assumed by the same speaker on the same issue in the past.

¹³ Searle (1969: 71) suggests that the perlocutionary effect to be achieved by the speaker should be included in the formulation of the essential condition of an illocutionary act such as a directive when he states that “requesting is, as a matter of its essential condition, an attempt to get a hearer to do something.” The attempt to get a hearer to do something is referred to as the perlocutionary effect of the illocutionary act of requesting. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 43) formulate the essential condition of the speech act of argumentation by connecting it with an attempt at achieving the perlocutionary effect of convincing, with which argumentation is conventionally linked. These authors have made it their principle that in the case of all illocutionary acts, including assertives, the intended perlocutionary effects are the core elements in the formulation of the essential condition.

¹⁴ The same is suggested by Drew (1978) in his analysis of the grounds for the accusation of a witness’ action.

If the propositional content condition is not fulfilled, this means either that the speaker has not expressed a proposition or that he has expressed a proposition in which no inconsistent commitments are ascribed to the addressee. In the first case, the assertion put forward is void and there is nothing for the addressee to respond to. In the second case, the speaker may have expressed a speech act with a different illocutionary force (for example, blaming), and the addressee would have to respond to this other act.

In the case in which an inconsistency is pointed out, the felicitous performance of an accusation requires furthermore the fulfillment of a set of correctness conditions. These conditions include the preparatory conditions and the sincerity conditions. The latter, in van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1984: 21) terms, count as responsibility conditions. These two kinds of conditions are formulated as follows (Andone 2009a: 156):

Preparatory conditions:

- (a) The speaker believes that the addressee who is inconsistent will accept that an inconsistency is indeed at issue;
- (b) The speaker believes that the addressee will acknowledge that the presence of an inconsistency obstructs the argumentative exchange he and his interlocutor are engaged in;
- (c) The speaker believes that the addressee will take on the obligation to provide a response that answers the charge of inconsistency.

Sincerity conditions:

- (a) The speaker believes that the addressee is inconsistent;
- (b) The speaker believes that the presence of an inconsistency constitutes an obstruction to the exchange he and his interlocutor are engaged in;
- (c) The speaker wants the addressee to respond in such a way that he answers the charge.

If the first preparatory condition for the illocutionary act of an accusation of inconsistency is not met, the performance of the illocutionary act is superfluous, as it is a waste of time to express an accusation of inconsistency if the speaker believes that the addressee will not even accept having committed himself to an inconsistency. The same happens in case the second preparatory condition is not met. It is a waste of effort to raise a charge when the speaker already expects that the addressee will not acknowledge any wrongdoing. The addressee, for example, may have a different view of inconsistency according to which

holding inconsistent commitments is not an obstruction to a discussion.¹⁵ If the third preparatory condition is not met, this implies that the speaker does not believe that the addressee will take on the obligation to respond to the charge. In that case, the performance of the illocutionary act is pointless from the accuser's perspective. In practice, it depends on the accused whether this assumption is correct or not.

If the first sincerity condition is not met, this implies that the speaker acts as if he believes that the addressee is inconsistent, whereas he does not believe that. The speaker's utterance can then be described as a case of lying. Failure to fulfill the second sincerity condition implies that the speaker does not believe that the presence of an inconsistency is an obstruction to the argumentative exchange in which the participants are involved. The speaker wrongfully acts as if he believes that there is an obstruction, whereas, in fact, he does not believe this. Failure to meet the third sincerity condition implies that the speaker deceits the addressee by pretending to have the intention of obtaining an answer that he does not want to obtain.

Turning back to the essential condition for an accusation of inconsistency, I linked the performance of the illocutionary act at hand with securing a response that answers the charge. In terms of van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1984) distinction between the inherent perlocutionary effect of acceptance and consecutive consequences, the responses to an accusation of inconsistency can be said to constitute the consecutive consequences.

2.3 Responses to an accusation of inconsistency

In the case of illocutionary acts such as an accusation of inconsistency, characterized by an essential condition in which a goal to be achieved with the addressee is indicated, there is an inherent perlocutionary effect of *accepting* preceding any consecutive consequences (such as responding by dealing with the charge). According to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 57), acceptance is a commissive illocutionary act performed by the addressee which entails certain commitments with regard to his further behavior.¹⁶ The way in which these commitments are brought about can be identified on the basis of the

¹⁵ In formulating the correction conditions, it is assumed that the participants to the discussion share the idea that being inconsistent is an obstruction to the discussion. Should the participants adopt, for example, paraconsistent logic (Priest 2006), which does not consider an inconsistency as obstructive in a discussion, the preparatory conditions do not apply.

¹⁶ According to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 57), when a speaker performs a speech act, minimally he wants to obtain the perlocutionary effect of acceptance and optimally he wants to bring about other consequences as an extension of the acceptance. The consecutive consequences are different for each illocutionary act.

relevant identity and correctness conditions applying to the illocution of *accepting* (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984: 71). As Cohen remarks, acceptance is “a speech act of assent whereby a person may orally (or in writing) agree to the truth of a proposition whether or not this oral (or written) agreement accords with his actual state of mind” (1995: 23) and “people are held responsible and accountable for what they accept or fail to accept.” This acceptance implies, among other things, acceptance of the consecutive consequences of the act and creates a presumption about how the addressee will act as far as he may be presumed to know these consequences.¹⁷

With regard to the *propositional content*, the acceptance of an accusation of inconsistency concerns the inconsistency pointed out by the accuser. The *essential condition* is that the acceptance must count as an act of agreement with the speaker’s charge and consequently as an expression of the success of the speaker to secure a response dealing with the charge. The *preparatory condition* stipulates that the speaker who performs the act of acceptance of an accusation of inconsistency must believe that the one expressing the accusation of inconsistency attempts seriously to secure a response to the accusation. As a result, he becomes committed to providing a response to the charge. The *sincerity condition* indicates that the speaker commits himself to the belief that the proposition expressed in the accusation is correct.

In short, accepting an accusation of inconsistency can be considered to involve the following: (a) the performance by the addressee of the speech act of assent by which it is admitted that the speech act expressed by the person putting forward the accusation was understandably and correctly performed¹⁸ and (b) the addressee’s immediate commitment to provide a response dealing with the charged raised, as indicated in the essential condition of the illocutionary act of accusation of inconsistency. Which are the responses dealing with the charge of inconsistency?

In order to answer this question, I will start from examining the responses to an accusation identified by other authors. That there is always a link between the illocutionary act of *accusation* (in this case an accusation of inconsistency) and the perlocution of *responding to the charge raised* (in this case dealing with the inconsistency) is similar to other authors’ views. How do other authors specify the responses to an accusation? Austin, for one, is of the opinion that the accused, or someone on his behalf “will try to defend his conduct or get him out of it. One way of going about this is to admit flatly that he, X, did

¹⁷ This observation coincides with Hamblin’s (1970a, 1970b) explanation of commitments. Hamblin points out that as soon as commitments are incurred, they entitle speakers to hold each other accountable for what they have expressed and for the consequences created by these acts.

¹⁸ Rogers (1978) refers to the act of accepting as amounting to a tacit admittance by the addressee that he understood the speech act, that he recognizes its performance as correct, and that the act becomes part of the common ground of the conversation in which he is involved.

do that very thing, A, but to argue that it was a good thing, or the right or sensible thing, or a permissible thing to do, either in general or at least in the special circumstances of the occasion. To take this line is to *justify* the action, to give reasons for doing it: not to say, to brazen it out, to glory in it, or the like. A different way of going about it is to admit that it wasn't a good thing to have done, but to argue that it is not quite fair or correct to say *baldly* 'X did A.' [...] In the one defence, briefly, we accept responsibility but deny it was bad: in the other, we admit it was bad but don't accept full, or even, any responsibility" (1956/1957: 1, original italics). Kauffeld (1998) remarks briefly that admissions of guilt, denial, justification, explanation, apology or excuse are appropriate responses to an accusation. Similarly, Drew points out that "it routinely happens that if an utterance is heard as an accusation, then this can set some sort of expectation concerning what kind(s) of utterances will, or, should follow: that is, there is a conventional procedure whereby the class(es) to which an utterance following after an accusation can be expected to belong to is limited to denials/acceptances/modifiers" (1978: 5). By modifiers, Drew refers to justifications and excuses.

Most notable in the case of these authors is that they lack criteria with the help of which they identify the responses to an accusation. A direct consequence of this is that any other response than those mentioned will do as long as it seems appropriate to the charge. To avoid such problems in identifying the possible responses to an accusation of inconsistency, a threefold distinction made by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 26-28) with regard to consecutive consequences (the responses dealing with the charge are the consecutive consequences of the perlocutionary effect *accept*) can be useful. First, a difference needs to be made between accidental and intended consecutive consequences. Doing justice to the principle of externalization mentioned earlier, I will concentrate on the responses to an accusation of inconsistency put forward with certain intentions, communicated verbally in the utterance performed. Second, a distinction needs to be drawn between consequences that are not brought about on the basis of an understanding of the accusation of inconsistency and consequences that are brought about by understanding. Understanding the accusation of inconsistency is a necessary preliminary for responding to the charge, as understanding always precedes acceptance. Third, van Eemeren and Grootendorst establish a distinction between consequences brought about on the basis of rational considerations on the part of addressee and those that are not the result of rational decision-making. The principle of dialectification invoked before calls for an exclusive interest in responses that are achieved on rational grounds.

Thus, the basic criteria to be applied in identifying responses to an accusation of inconsistency are that they should be intentional, brought about after understanding the charge and realized on rational grounds. In order to establish in a more systematic and precise way which types of responses meet these basic criteria in the context of an

argumentative confrontation, I will make use of the dialectical profile of the confrontation stage.

The dialectical profile of the confrontation stage specifies the sequential patterns of moves which two discussants in a critical discussion can make or have to make (van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans 2007a, 2007b). The moves are relevant to the dialectical goal of the confrontation stage to define the difference of opinion. The profile includes all dialectical routes which arguers can follow for the achievement of the dialectical goal of defining the difference of opinion and are therefore seen as normative representations. Because the moves in the profile could potentially make a contribution to a rational resolution of the difference of opinion, they are analytically relevant (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992a), i.e. they constitute an ideal argumentative confrontation aimed at a reasonable resolution. The various routes in the profile do not represent a description of how argumentative exchanges proceed in reality, but how an argumentative confrontation would proceed if it was aimed only at reasonably defining the difference of opinion. Starting from the illocutionary acts specified by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 105) in the ideal model of a critical discussion, Mohammed (2009: 31) sketches the basic dialectical profile of a single dispute (*Figure 1.1*) in the following way:

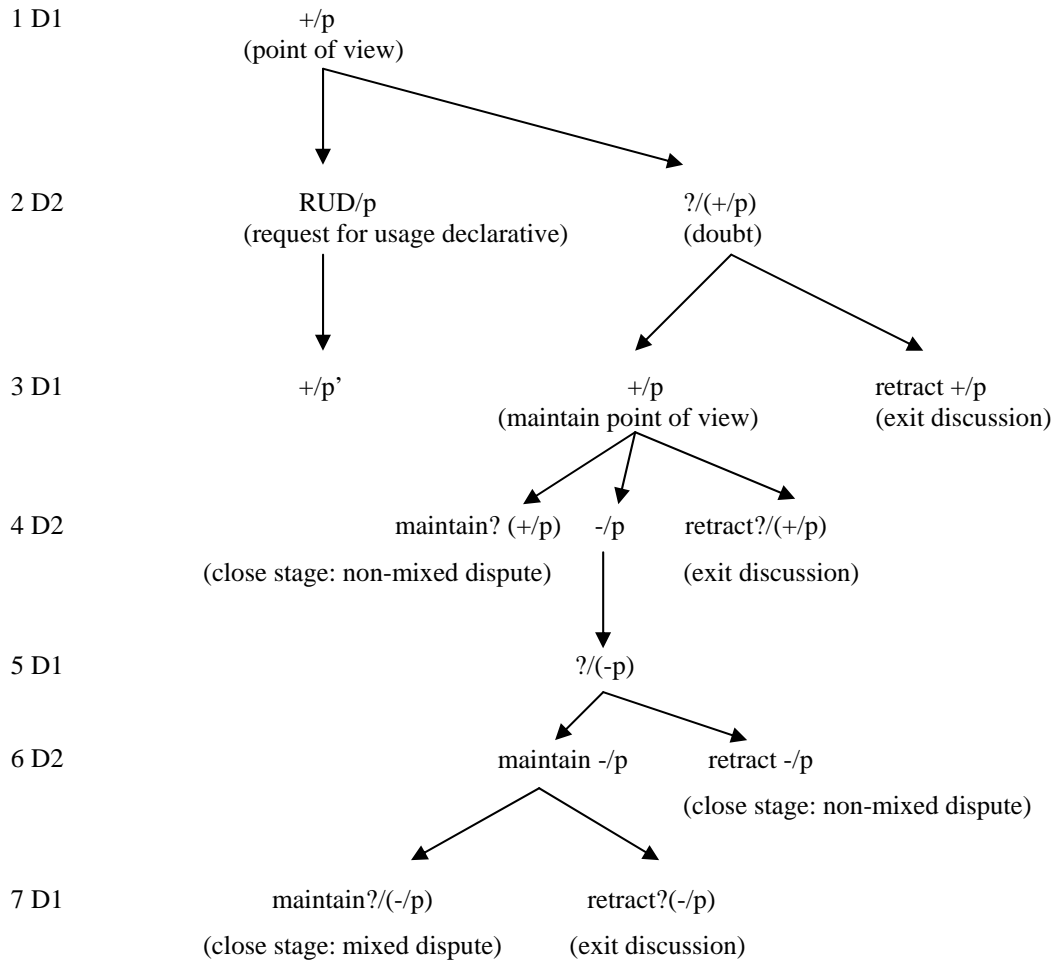


Figure 2.1 Basic dialectical profile of the confrontation stage of a single dispute

In this dialectical profile of the confrontation stage the discussion is initiated by a protagonist (discussant 1, D1) who advances a positive standpoint (+/p) that is either doubted (?/+p)) by an antagonist (discussant 2, D2) or required to be clarified by means of a usage declarative (RUD/p). In the latter case, the protagonist has to provide a usage declarative that clarifies the positive standpoint (+/p'). In response to the antagonist's doubt, the protagonist can either maintain his positive standpoint or retract it. In case the protagonist maintains his positive standpoint, the antagonist has three possibilities to react: he can maintain his doubt, he can advance a negative standpoint (-/p) or he can retract his doubt. When the antagonist advances a negative standpoint, the protagonist may respond by doubting it (?/(-p)). The antagonist may in turn react by maintaining the negative standpoint or by retracting it. In the last turn, the protagonist can either maintain his doubt regarding the antagonist's maintained negative standpoint or retract his doubt.¹⁹ By

¹⁹ For a complete account of all the dialectical routes that can be followed in the confrontation stage, see Mohammed (2009: 31-34).

following the outlined sequential patterns of moves, participants can obtain three kinds of outcomes in the confrontation stage: the discussion ends immediately (*turn 3*, *turn 4* and *turn 7*), the stage is closed with a non-mixed dispute (*turn 4* and *turn 6*) or the stage is closed with a mixed dispute (*turn 7*).

This outline of the analytically relevant moves in the confrontation stage is not a representation of the moves which arguers carry out in practice. In argumentative exchanges as they occur in reality, arguers often fail to achieve a definition of the difference of opinion that does not hinder the critical testing procedure or they may simply stop the process. Moreover, arguers do not necessarily perform all the moves prescribed in the dialectical profile. For instance, an antagonist (D2) can express doubt by means of an opposite standpoint immediately after the positive standpoint has been advanced. To do justice to the gap that exists between reality and the ideal model, van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2007b) propose to regard the illocutionary acts playing a constructive role in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits (advancing a standpoint, casting doubt, etc.) as slots. That is to say that they could be realized in practice in different kinds of ways (by asking a question, using a certain presentational device, etc.) filling up these slots, which are then reconstructed into one of the illocutionary acts represented in the dialectical profile. The reconstruction makes clearer the argumentative function of each move in the context of defining a difference of opinion. For example, a rhetorical question can be assigned the argumentative function of expressing a standpoint and is thus a realization of the slot of advancing a standpoint.

Taking into account the analytically relevant moves from the dialectical profile of the confrontation stage, carrying out an accusation of inconsistency can be seen as a way of expressing criticism concerning the protagonist's standpoint.²⁰ The responses to the accusation of inconsistency will be instantiations of the slots from the dialectical profile that are adjacent to the slots filled by the charge. That means that an accusation of inconsistency fills in a slot in a dialectical route, the continuation of which is filled in by the response to the charge. With the help of some invented examples, I will illustrate which slots from the dialectical profile an accusation of inconsistency and the corresponding responses can fill in.

One of the slots which an accusation of inconsistency can fill in is that of casting doubt at turn 2 in the profile. At this turn, the antagonist criticizes the protagonist for a standpoint advanced at turn 1. This dialectical route can be continued by the protagonist in two ways: either he maintains his standpoint (*P1* below) or he retracts his standpoint (*P2* below):

²⁰ Obviously, an accusation of inconsistency can also be carried out by a protagonist, but in this study I concentrate on an accusation of inconsistency put forward by an interviewer playing the role of antagonist and on the politician's responses to it, playing the role of protagonist.

P: I think students should pay higher fees.

A: How can you say that when three years ago you were in favor of lowering fees?

P1: Well, I now think students should pay higher fees.

P2: Well, indeed, maybe it is not such a good idea.

In this example, A's accusation of inconsistency is the realization of an expression of doubt concerning P's standpoint that students should pay higher fees. More precisely, A's accusation conveys that P cannot hold this standpoint because it shows a commitment to an increase in fees that is incompatible with an earlier commitment that students should not pay higher fees. In response to that, P can maintain his standpoint (P1) or he can retract his standpoint (P2). By making the latter choice, the difference of opinion ends in the confrontation stage, because the basic ingredients (at least a standpoint and doubt regarding this standpoint) are not there anymore.

Apart from the simple case in which a protagonist advances a standpoint (turn 1) and the antagonist casts doubt on it (turn 2), in the dialectical profile of the confrontation stage the antagonist can advance the opposite standpoint (turn 2) immediately after the protagonist advances a positive standpoint (turn 1). Van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2007a: 26) observe that when this is the case two situations can be created: (a) the antagonist reduces the opposite standpoint to doubt (turn 4) after the protagonist maintains his standpoint (turn 3), and (b) the antagonist maintains the opposite standpoint (turn 4) after the protagonist maintains his standpoint (turn 3). Because the antagonist's opposite standpoint in the first case is reduced to doubt, van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans describe the difference of opinion as non-mixed. In the second case in which the antagonist maintains the opposite standpoint, the difference of opinion is mixed. The two situations just outlined can be represented in the dialectical profile of the confrontation stage as in Figure 1.2 (the opposite standpoint is reduced to doubt) and Figure 1.3 (the opposite standpoint is maintained):

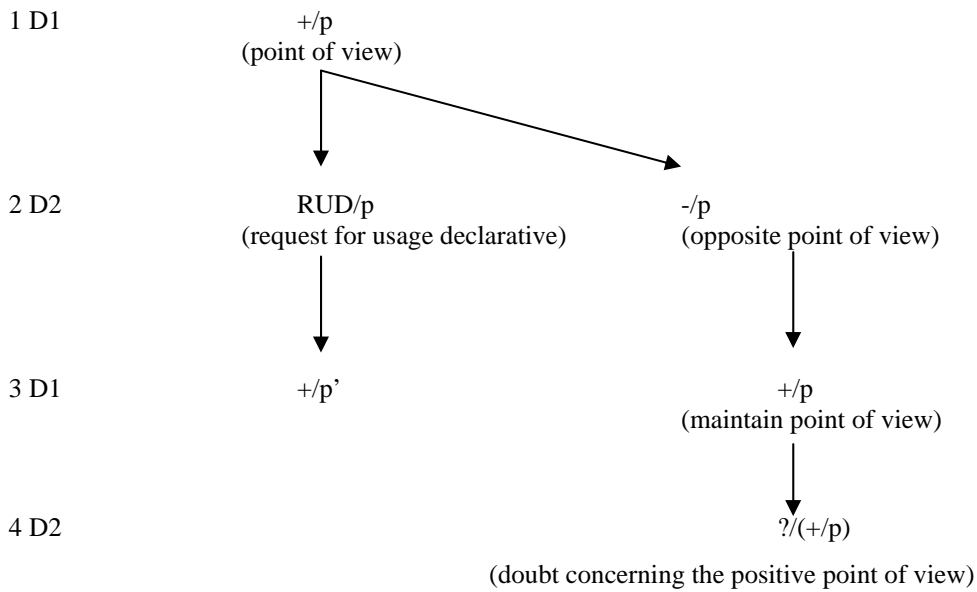


Figure 2.2 The first four turns of a dialectical profile of the confrontation stage of a single non-mixed dispute in which the opposite standpoint is reduced to doubt

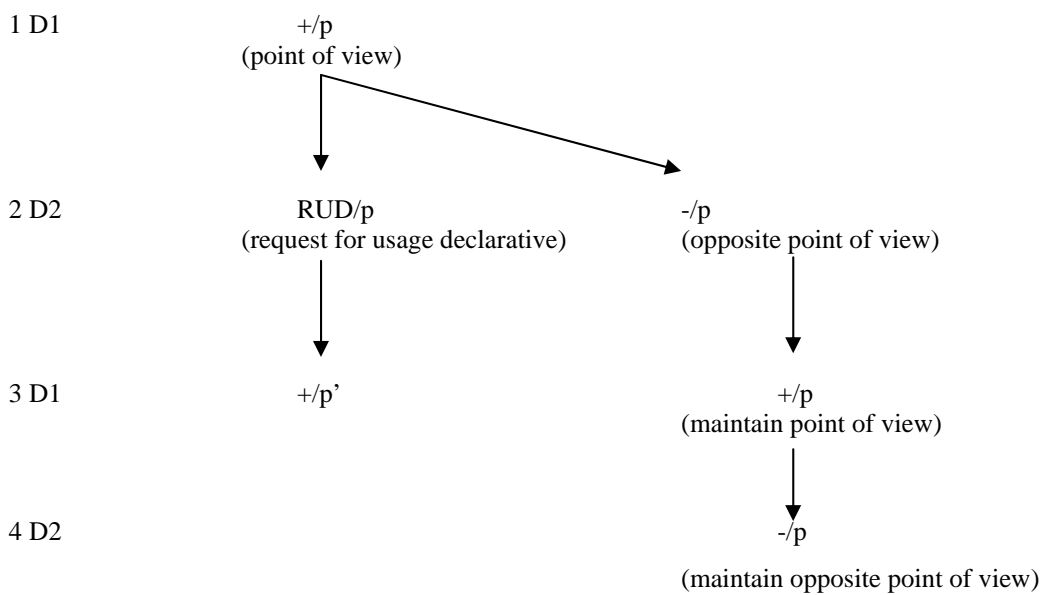


Figure 2.3 The first four turns of a dialectical profile of the confrontation stage of a single mixed dispute

In the case in which the antagonist advances the opposite standpoint immediately after the protagonist advances a positive standpoint and subsequently reduces it to doubt, an

accusation of inconsistency can fill in the slot of casting doubt on the protagonist's maintained positive standpoint. Such is the case in the following invented example:

P: I think students should pay higher fees.

A: I don't think so. The fees they pay are high enough.

P: Well, not if you compare them to other countries. Then you'll realize that students should really pay higher fees.

A: It's strange you say that. Three years ago you were in favor of lowering fees.

P1: Well, I now think students should pay higher fees.

P2: Well, maybe indeed they are high enough.

This example shows that when the antagonist reduces the opposite standpoint to doubt (as A does in his second reply) and criticizes the protagonist for being inconsistent, the latter can maintain his standpoint (*P1*), indicating that he does not accept the antagonist's criticism, and he can retract his standpoint (*P2*) to indicate that the antagonist's criticism of inconsistency is correct.

In the case of a single mixed difference of opinion, an accusation of inconsistency can be made by means of the move of advancing the opposite standpoint, as in the following example:

P: We have a realistic plan for dealing with so many immigrants.

A: I wouldn't think your plan, which so obviously goes against your party's principles, is realistic at all.

P1: I think it is. It does not go against any of our principles.

P2: If you think of our principle of equality, indeed you can say it's not realistic.

In this example, the antagonist's accusation that the protagonist's plan goes against his party principles, embedded in the expression of the opposite standpoint that the protagonist's plan is not realistic, is rejected by the protagonist who denies that the plan is not realistic as the antagonist claims (*P1*). On second thoughts, the protagonist accepts the antagonist's charge (*P2*) by granting a concession: if one thinks of the principle of equality, his plan is indeed not realistic.

In addition to the slots of casting doubt and advancing the opposite standpoint, an accusation of inconsistency can fill in the slot of maintaining a negative standpoint at turn 6 in the dialectical profile of the confrontation stage.²¹ Just like in the previous case, in

²¹ An accusation of inconsistency can also fill in the slot of maintaining doubt at turn 4 concerning the protagonist's standpoint. But because the antagonist's maintained doubt at turn 4 ends the confrontation stage at this point, the protagonist cannot provide a response in this stage.

which the accusation of inconsistency filled in the slot of casting doubt at turn 2, the protagonist has two possibilities for responding: in this case either he maintains doubt regarding the antagonist's negative standpoint (*P1* below) or he retracts his doubt concerning the antagonist's maintained negative standpoint (*P2* below):

P: It's quite strange that your party is considering increasing tuition fees.

A: How can you be so sure that we are considering that?

P: I'm quite sure, actually.

A: Well, if I were you I would be less sure of that. We are not considering increasing tuition fees.

P: You want to bet?

A: I don't have time for betting. I can only repeat to you that we are not considering increasing tuition fees. Instead of losing your time judging me you should mind your own business. The word goes that you voted against religious schools, while you had a more positive attitude towards them last time I heard you talking about it.

P1: I know what I'm talking about. You'll see.

P2: OK, if you insist, maybe I'm wrong, then.

This confrontation is initiated by P expressing a standpoint that A's party is considering increasing tuition fees, which A doubts. In the next turn, P upholds his expressed standpoint, in response to which A chooses to advance an opposite standpoint according to which the party he represents is not considering increasing tuition fees. By means of this move, A conveys both that he upholds doubt concerning P's expressed standpoint and that he expresses a negative standpoint. The only option for P is to cast doubt on A's negative standpoint. In response to P's doubt, A upholds his negative standpoint and launches also an accusation of inconsistency against P. P has the freedom of either maintaining his doubt concerning the negative standpoint (*P1*) or retracting it (*P2*). If the first option is chosen, then the disagreement about this standpoint is confirmed. The confrontation stage closes with a definition of the difference of opinion as a mixed dispute in which the arguers have opposite standpoints. Furthermore, by upholding doubt concerning A's negative standpoint, P maintains his own positive standpoint. If P chooses the other option, of retracting his doubt concerning A's negative standpoint, the disagreement about this standpoint ends at this point. As a consequence of taking the second option, P implicitly retracts his own positive standpoint: he cannot maintain his positive standpoint having no doubt about its opposite.

To summarize, because an accusation of inconsistency is a form of criticism that can either be accepted or not, the protagonist of a standpoint has two analytically relevant

options for responding to a charge that his position is inconsistent with another position advanced previously: he can maintain his standpoint (and defend it later), and he can give in to the antagonist's criticism by retracting his standpoint.²² Do both options meet the three basic criteria distinguished earlier in relation to the consecutive consequences of an illocutionary act: intended, based on understanding and based on rational considerations? My answer to this question is that maintaining a standpoint fails to meet the first criterion and only the retraction of a standpoint meets all three criteria. An accusation of inconsistency, it will be recalled, is an illocutionary act put forward with certain intentions. An accuser wants to obtain *minimally* the perlocutionary effect of acceptance and *optimally* he wants to bring about other consequences as an extension of the acceptance. More specifically, the accuser wants to obtain minimally admission of 'guilt' and optimally he wants to secure a response that eliminates the alleged inconsistency. This does not mean that maintaining a standpoint is not a possible way in which the accused can respond to a charge of inconsistency. It only means that the sole *intended* response to the accusation is admitting that the charge is correct and that subsequently the inconsistency that is pointed out needs to be eliminated. The only option that conveys admission of the accusation and is at the same time an attempt at eliminating the alleged inconsistency is retracting a standpoint.²³

2.4 Conclusion

An accusation of inconsistency is an illocutionary act by means of which a speaker conveys criticism of his addressee: he points at the opposition between two of the addressee's statements or between his statements and his actions. The accusation of inconsistency is aimed at making the other party understand that he is being criticized for having done something which obstructs the discussion in which the participants are involved. Besides this communicative purpose, an accusation of inconsistency is made with the interactional purpose of obtaining a response from the addressee that deals with the charge raised.

²² By taking the first option, the difference of opinion may close the confrontation stage with a non-mixed or a mixed dispute, and by taking the second option the only possible outcome is that the discussion ceases to exist.

²³ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958/1976: 262-263) and Hamblin (1970b: 264) are also of the opinion that an inconsistency needs to be eliminated by retracting one of the inconsistent commitments. Likewise, Cohen (1995: 36) remarks that "acceptance is inherently motivated towards the elimination of inconsistency."

In an argumentative confrontation in which a protagonist advances a standpoint and an antagonist casts doubt on it, an accusation of inconsistency is a means used by the antagonist to point out that the protagonist is committed to two inconsistent standpoints. That is to say, the accusation criticizes the acceptability of the protagonist's current standpoint because it is the opposite of another standpoint advanced by the same protagonist on the same issue on a different occasion or earlier in the same discussion. The antagonist's criticism can be the instantiation of three moves in the ideal model of an argumentative confrontation: the move of casting doubt on a standpoint, the move of advancing the opposite standpoint and the move of maintaining the negative standpoint. Depending on the kind of criticism that the accusation instantiates, two types of responses that answer the criticism are possible: maintaining the standpoint and retracting the standpoint at issue. Although both types of responses are options a protagonist can choose from in order to take away the accuser's doubt to respond to the charge of inconsistency, the accuser's preference goes for the protagonist at least accepting that the charge is correct. If he is to give the preferred response, the protagonist needs to retract a standpoint in order to accept the charge and thereby admit that the accusation is correct.

CHAPTER 3

The political interview as an argumentative activity type

3.1 Argumentation in the political interview

The goal of this chapter is to provide an argumentative characterization of the activity type of a political interview. The intended characterization will indicate the conventions of a political interview creating institutional preconditions for argumentation. As van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2005) observe, knowledge of such preconditions is vital for an empirically adequate account of argumentative exchanges. In principle, these preconditions shape the argumentation by creating constraints for the arguers' strategic maneuvering, but they can also create special opportunities for arguing. For example, in the activity type of a Dutch criminal trial certain strategic possibilities are closed off for the prosecution as a consequence of the convention of not allowing arguments from analogy. At the same time, other possibilities are opened up for the defense (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2009).

The aim of this study, to provide a realistic analysis and evaluation of the politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency, can only be realized by taking into account exactly how the macro-context of a political interview affects the participants' strategic maneuvering. At all times, the arguers maneuver strategically by being out to balance reasonableness with effectiveness, but their possibilities for maneuvering are determined to a great extent by the preconditions prevailing in the activity type. Van

Eemeren and Houtlosser (2003) explain that the concern for being reasonable can be seen as a dialectical aim and the concern for being effective as a rhetorical aim. At every stage of a critical discussion, the dialectical aim is pursued by arguers in an attempt at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. The rhetorical aim, which is the counterpart of the dialectical aim, is pursued at every stage in attempting to resolve the difference of opinion in their favor. In the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, for example, the arguers' dialectical aim is to define the difference of opinion clearly. The rhetorical aim is to do so in their own favor by discussing issues they find easiest to defend. Whether they are arguing in a political interview, a parliamentary debate, an adjudication encounter or any other communicative activity type, arguers always attempt to maintain reasonableness and to have their standpoints accepted at the same time. This combined attempt is in each case shaped differently depending on the institutional aim and the conventions of the activity type concerned. For instance, the arguers' strategic maneuvering in adjudication is carried out to advance the realization of the institutional aim of convincing a judge to resolve a dispute in their favor. The maneuvering is preconditioned by the largely explicit codified rules and established concessions of the activity type concerned (van Eemeren 2010: 151).

In this study, I view a political interview as an activity type that is aimed at convincing the direct interlocutor but primarily the audience at home. Even though a political interview is designed in such a way that informing the public is one of the institutional concerns, it is essentially an activity type in which an accountability procedure is carried out. The political interview will be viewed as a specimen of a predominantly argumentative activity type in the political domain implementing the genre of deliberation, the institutional point²⁴ of which is to preserve a democratic political culture (van Eemeren 2010: 140).²⁵ To realize this point, the interviewer acts as the representative of the

²⁴ Van Eemeren (2010: 138-151) points out that an understanding of activity types from an argumentative perspective is possible if one takes into account a few important factors that affect the argumentative exchanges. One of these factors is the *domain* of discourse to which the activity belongs. These domains are broad spheres of communicative practice defined by the *institutional point* which the activities within the domain aim to realize in society. Van Eemeren distinguishes, without aiming to be exhaustive, various domains such as the legal, political, diplomatic, medical and scholarly domains. The general institutional point, for instance, of activity types in the political domain is to preserve a democratic political culture. In realizing the institutional point of each domain, certain *genres* of communication are implemented that vary from adjudication and deliberation to mediation, negotiation, consultation and others. Furthermore, other factors that affect the argumentation are the *conventions* specific to every activity type, some of which are explicitly stated (especially in highly institutionalized contexts) and others are unwritten. These conventions are functional in achieving the *institutional goal* that is conventionally assigned to every activity type. For instance, the institutional goal of Question Time in British House of Commons is to hold the government to account concerning its general performance (Mohammed 2009).

²⁵ This idea resembles Clayman and Heritage's remark that in a political interview "journalists perform certain core democratic functions: soliciting statements of official policy, holding officials accountable for their actions, and managing the parameters of public debate, all this under the immediate scrutiny of the citizenry" (2002: 2).

electorate and the mass media. His main aim is not simply to obtain and impart information to the public on matters of general interest, but more importantly, to ask the politician to account for his words and actions. The politician is a political representative who not only gives information, but also clarifies and justifies his views by providing the expected account of his words and actions.²⁶

Viewing a political interview as predominantly argumentative calls for a characterization of this activity type from an argumentative perspective. The argumentative characterization of a political interview will be carried out by identifying the institutional conventions which arguers are expected, or even obliged, to follow in the activity type concerned. Just like other activity types, which are “cultural artifacts that can be identified on the basis of careful empirical observation of argumentative practice” (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2005: 76), the political interview is a conventionalized practice that can be examined by observing its distinctive characteristics.

Unlike the theoretical construct of the ideal model of a critical discussion, the political interview has an empirical status and manifests itself in reality. The model of a critical discussion is not a description of some actual argumentative discussion. It constitutes a reasonable dialectical representation of what argumentative discourse would be like if it were to be aimed exclusively at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits.²⁷ The model of critical discussion can be instrumental for approaching methodically the actual context of the communicative activity of a political interview from an argumentative perspective. Starting from the four stages of a critical discussion, four counterparts can be distinguished in a political interview: (a) the initial situation of the argumentative exchanges, corresponding to the confrontation stage of a critical discussion (3.2), (b) the procedural and material starting points of the argumentative exchanges, corresponding to the starting points established in the opening stage of a critical discussion (3.3), (c) the arguers’ argumentative means and the advancement of criticisms, corresponding to the means available in the argumentation stage (3.4) and (d) the possible outcome of the discussion, corresponding to the concluding stage of a critical discussion

²⁶ Viewing a political interview as a predominantly argumentative activity type in which an accountability procedure is carried out differs from the view of other scholars. Political interviews have been the subject of research from different viewpoints varying from conversation analysis (Heritage and Greatbatch 1991, Greatbatch 1986, 1988, 1992, Clayman, 1991, 1992, Clayman and Heritage 2002) and media studies (Scannell 1991, 1998) to socio-pragmatics (Blum-Kulka 1983, Fetzer 2000, Jucker 1986, Harris 1986, Johansson 2005, Lauerbach 2004, Weizman 2008) and social psychology (Bull and Mayer 1993, Bull and Fetzer 2006, Bull 2008). In these approaches, political interviews are seen as being aimed at making known public policies, informing the public on matters of general interest or simply familiarizing the public with the politician.

²⁷ Although it is not a description of reality, ordinary arguers can, and do, recognize the norms embodied in the ideal model of a critical discussion (van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009).

(3.5).²⁸ The model of critical discussion is thus a heuristic for characterizing the activity type argumentatively, without being an activity type itself.²⁹ The study of the specificities of the actual argumentative practice is carried out against the background of the model of critical discussion which spells out the argumentative interests of the different stages: defining the difference of opinion clearly (in the confrontation stage), establishing unambiguously the starting points for the discussion (in the opening stage), exchanging arguments and criticisms (in the argumentation stage) and deciding about the outcome of the discussion (in the concluding stage).

In describing the argumentative features of a political interview I will take into account two kinds of conventions:³⁰ (a) explicit procedural conventions established by institutions that have the power to regulate broadcasting activities (for example, The Office of Communication in Britain), and (b) implicit conventions agreed upon by the participants when they enter this activity type (for example, it is implicitly agreed that the interviewer should at all times question the politician and the latter should answer).³¹ It goes without saying that these conventions, in particular the explicit procedural conventions, vary from country to country. However, Clayman and Heritage (2002: 6) remark that, though they are subject to cross-cultural variation and historical change, the conventions of a political

²⁸ Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2005) and van Eemeren (2010) provide an argumentative characterization of some genres of communicative activity, such as adjudication, deliberation, mediation and negotiation. They describe the characteristic conventions which arguers follow in order to reach the aim of the genre concerned. For example, in the case of adjudication, the institutional aim is to convince a judge to resolve a dispute in their favor. The initial situation of adjudication is characterized by the existence of a dispute between two parties in the presence of a third party with jurisdiction to decide (usually a judge). The starting points are largely explicit codified rules and explicitly established concessions. The argumentation of the parties is based on the interpretation of concessions in terms of facts and evidence. The outcome consists in the settlement of the dispute by the third party and no possible return to the initial situation.

²⁹ Taking the ideal model of critical discussion as a point of departure for the intended characterization does not mean that resolving a difference of opinion on the merits is assigned to the activity type of a political interview. This dialectical goal can be ascribed analytically to the arguers, in the same way in which the rhetorical goal of being effective is assigned. An adequate analysis of argumentative discourse will take into account these two kinds of goals, but, to be realistic, it will consider also the institutional goal. The latter creates context-specific restrictions and opportunities for balancing the realization in practice of the dialectical and the rhetorical goals.

³⁰ The concept of conventionality is inspired by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 59) who, relying on Lewis (1977), provide a definition of a language usage convention. In their view, three conditions need to be fulfilled by a convention. The first one is factual and stipulates that “the language of the members of the community displays a certain regularity in strictly delineated cases.” The second condition is social and requires that “members of the community expect these regularities to occur in those cases.” The third condition is normative and imposes that “the members of the community prefer the regularity to occur in those cases because it solves a problem of communication and interaction.”

³¹ Borrowing a distinction made by van Eemeren (2010: footnote 48) concerning institutional preconditions, a difference can be made between *primary* conventions, which are formally enforced and often constitute procedural rules and *secondary* conventions, which are usually informal and are often substantial. In the European Parliament there are, for instance, the primary conventions constituted by the rules of order and secondary conventions, such as that the parliamentarians need to serve the European interest and at the same time the interest of their home countries (van Eemeren and Garssen 2010).

interview are remarkably similar everywhere. Examining the differences and similarities between the conventions of various countries, it becomes clear that there is a great number of commonalities in the general standards which participants in a political interview are expected to follow. In this study, in which all cases come from BBC interviews, references to the conventions of a political interview concern in the first place Great Britain.

3.2 The initial situation³²

The initial situation in a political interview starts from a difference of opinion between an interviewer and a politician. The discussion, taking place as a question-answer exchange, concerns words or actions for which the politician can be held to account in public.³³ The topics of discussion in such exchanges, chosen solely by the interviewer, are debatable matters of ‘newsworthy character’ and political controversy (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 61). The meaning of “matters of political [...] controversy and matters relating to current public policy” is explained in *The Broadcasting Code*, issued by the Office of Communication,³⁴ in Section Five, regarding Due Impartiality and Due Accuracy and Undue Prominence of Views and Opinions:

Matters of political [...] controversy are political [...] issues on which politicians [...] and/or media are in debate. Matters relating to current public policy need not be the subject of debate but relate to a policy under discussion or already decided by a local, regional or national government or by bodies mandated by those public bodies to make policy on their behalf, for example non-governmental organizations, relevant European institutions, etc. (*Section 5.3*)

³² The initial situation of the argumentative activity type of a political interview is not the same as the ‘opening’ of a political interview, described in purely structural terms (Clayman and Heritage 2002). The opening is described as comprising a *headline* – through which the topic of the discussion is introduced – a *background* – which gives details about the context – and a *lead-in* – where the politician is introduced to the public. Unlike the opening, the initial situation, corresponding to the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, is described from a functional argumentative perspective. A characterization of the initial situation makes clear how the difference of opinion is defined.

³³ Being held to account in public does not mean only that the issues can be discussed in public. As Mulgan points out, “the concept of account-ability includes an implication of potentiality, literally an ability to be called to account” (2000: 56).

³⁴ The current Broadcasting Code was issued in October 2008 by the Office of Communication and contains a set of principles, meanings and rules. It also contains in Section Seven (Fairness) and Section Eight (Privacy) two sets of practices to be followed by broadcasters in the United Kingdom. As specified in the Code (2008: 5), “the principles are there to help readers understand the standard objectives and to apply the rules. Broadcasters must ensure that they comply with the rules as set out in the Code. The meanings help explain what the Office of Communication intends by some of the words and phrases used in the Code.”

In addition, the Broadcasting Code distinguishes the category of matters of major political controversy and major matters relating to public policy, which it describes in the following way:

These will vary according to events but are generally matters of political [...] controversy or matters of current public policy which are of national, and often international, importance, or are of similar significance within a smaller broadcast area. (*Section 5.11*)

The controversial matters of political or major political importance are the subject of all argumentative exchanges in a political interview. Similar to other activity types in the political domain in which an accountability procedure is carried out (such as a parliamentary debate in which a government renders account to an elected parliament), matters of political importance are associated with, though not limited to, policy making, procedural correctness, ethical standards, the use of public money and the observance of legal rules. Some examples of controversial matters that are at the centre of a discussion in a political interview have been given in Chapter 1: the issue of agency workers (about which John Hutton is questioned), the efficiency of the service a civil servant manages (in the exchange between Jon Sopel and Sir Gus) and the use of nuclear energy (in the interview with Alan Duncan). With regard to the issues that are discussed, the politician is in favor of a positive evaluation of his words or actions, while the interviewer raises doubts concerning this evaluation and, more often than not, goes further than expressing mere doubt by suggesting a negative evaluation of the politician's words or actions. For instance, in the discussion between Jon Sopel and Sir Gus, Sir Gus claims that he manages the Civil Service well, while Sopel doubts his claimed efficiency. To support his criticism, Sopel refers to Sir Gus's frequent renaming of departments, characteristic of his recent activity.

At all times, the discussion takes place between the interviewer and the politician, but as in most activity types making use of the genre of deliberation, the audience at home is the primary addressee.³⁵ Although the direct addressee is the immediate interlocutor, in a political interview the participants always try to convince the listening, reading or television-watching audience. The politician's words and actions are scrutinized by the interviewer in order to respond to the audience's presumed interest in the politician's performance and the latter is primarily concerned with conveying statements to the public.

³⁵ Van Eemeren (2010: 109) makes a distinction between the *primary* audience, i.e. the audience which the arguer considers the most important to reach, and the *secondary* audience, the persons instrumental in reaching the primary audience.

The conventions of a political interview precondition not only the issues for discussion, but also the type of difference of opinion. In the simplest case, the politician puts forward a standpoint and the interviewer casts doubt on it, so that from a pragma-dialectical viewpoint, a non-mixed difference of opinion is at issue. In the argumentative exchanges taking place in a political interview, the interviewer questions and sometimes criticizes the politician's words or actions. He asks the politician to advance a standpoint or doubts the acceptability of a standpoint already advanced. The politician is institutionally obliged to respond to criticism by answering for the words and actions for which he is held accountable. In his answers, the politician defends himself and the party he represents; consequently, his answers can usually be interpreted as conveying a commitment to a standpoint that can be reconstructed as *My words and/or actions are adequate*.³⁶ In this standpoint, it is implied that the words and actions concern not only the politician's own performance, but also that of the party which he represents.

The following example, selected from an interview broadcast on February 10, 2008 on the *Politics Show* illustrates a non-mixed discussion between Jon Sopel and Nick Clegg, at the time leader of the Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom:

Jon Sopel:

What about faith schools?

Nick Clegg:

I think faith schools, personally, what I would like to see is a much greater pressure on faith schools to act as agents for integration rather than segregation. I think it is crucial (interjection)

Jon Sopel:

You're hesitating on that answer.

In this fragment, Sopel brings up a controversial issue of 'newsworthy character' in Britain, namely faith schools. Clegg is asked to express his view on the issue selected for discussion, which is what he does in his reply in the fragment just quoted: he is of the opinion that more pressure should be put on faith schools to act as integration agents. In response to Clegg's answer, the interviewer doubts whether the politician's words convey indeed Clegg's belief, by pointing at some hesitance in his reply.

Because of his institutional obligation to question the politician's words and actions, the interviewer commonly goes beyond mere doubt. In order to hold the politician thoroughly to account, the interviewer challenges him to defend his standpoints against criticisms advanced by means of an opposite standpoint. The interviewer not only raises doubt concerning the politician's positive evaluation of his words or actions, but he expresses a negative evaluation by advancing, on behalf of the audience at home, an opposite standpoint that can be reconstructed as *The politician's words and/or actions are*

³⁶ The words and actions are used here in a general sense to refer also to plans, policies and decisions.

not adequate. In pragma-dialectics, such a difference of opinion in which two opposite standpoints are advanced and upheld constitutes a mixed discussion.

In the literature dealing with political interviews it is often claimed that what pragma-dialectics calls a mixed difference of opinion cannot arise in a political interview. The prevailing view is that the interviewer is institutionally obliged to be neutral and impartial in the sense that he “cannot express opinions, or argue with, debate, or criticize the interviewees’ positions” (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 98). Similar to many other authors, Clayman and Heritage stipulate that “the interviewers should (i) avoid the assertion of opinions on their own behalf and (ii) refrain from direct or overt affiliation with (or disaffiliation from) the expressed statements of the interviewees” (2002: 126). The main reasons behind this belief are related to the question-answer framework and the formal requirement of neutrality imposed on the interviewers by the rules of procedure enforced by the broadcasting institutions.

In her investigation of the interviewer’s questions, however, Harris (1986) shows that, in contrast to the generally held view, each kind of question in a political interview is “used to express opinions, convey new information, put forward ideas, commit the questioner to a particular point of view on an issue” (1986: 60). In her corpus research on political interviews, Harris convincingly shows that the restriction to questions is not enough reason to believe that opinions cannot be imparted by the interviewer. She demonstrates, for example, that *wh*-questions in a political interview encode usually presuppositions that convey a negative evaluation of the politician’s words or actions. In one of her examples, Harris (1986: 62) shows that the interviewer’s remark *Prime Minister – how did the Government get itself so out of touch with its own supporters* contains the presupposition that the government has got out of touch with its own supporters somehow, in which “out of touch” marks a negative evaluation.

A close look at the codified rules in Great Britain reinforces the view that interviewers are allowed to make their views known (Andone 2009b: 47). Section Five of the Broadcasting Code makes clear that ‘impartiality’ is to be interpreted as part of the expression ‘due impartiality,’ in which the word ‘due’ is an important qualification of impartiality. Section 5.9 stipulates that the word ‘impartiality’ refers to “not favoring one side over another” and ‘due’ means “adequate to the subject and nature of the programme.” The expression ‘due impartiality’ refers to allowing for a variety of views to be made known without giving more prominence to one view over another, that is to say, maintaining a balance in the representation of views.³⁷ Contrary to the common opinion that an interviewer should not express his own views, Section 5.9 of The Broadcasting

³⁷ Sections 6.3 and 6.4 of the Broadcasting Code illustrate how the principle of due impartiality should be maintained during election period, when ‘appropriate coverage’ should be given to all parties to secure a balance of views.

Code specifies that “presenters and reporters [...], and chairs of discussion programmes may express their own views on matters of political [...] controversy or matters relating to current public policy”.³⁸

In the following fragment selected from an interview with Michael Wills on the *Politics Show* on February 10, 2008, Jon Sopel advances explicitly a standpoint that gives an evaluation of Wills’ words. At the time, Wills was a Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice. In this fragment, the issue concerns a statement of Britishness:

Jon Sopel:

And what are we going to do with this statement once we've got it.

Michael Wills:

Well, that's one of the questions that the summit will decide upon. They will be looking at four things: firstly, should there be such a statement and we, the government believe that there should be. But it's for them to decide finally. If there should be, what it should be, how it should be expressed and then very importantly, what it should be used for.

Jon Sopel:

We could have it printed on the back of our ID cards.

Michael Wills:

Well, as I say, the Summit is going to decide on all these important questions and I'd be very interested to see what they do in fact decide.

Jon Sopel:

It sounds a bit amorphous if you don't mind my saying, just listening to kind of, it's up to the Citizen's Summit whether they have it, what it has, what we do with it.

Michael Wills:

No, I don't think there's anything amorphous about this.

Asked by Sopel about the usefulness of a statement of Britishness, Wills explains that the Citizen’s Summit will decide on that. This answer is met with Sopel’s criticism when he ironically points out that the statement could be printed on the back of the ID cards. In reply to Wills’s reiteration that the Summit will decide, Sopel advances a view according to which it is quite unclear what the function of the statement will be. Wills responds to this by advancing the opposite standpoint.

The mixed difference of opinion that arises in a political interview can be moreover explained by the interviewer’s role as a critic who plays the devil’s advocate. More often than not, the interviewer expresses a view that is unpopular, not necessarily true or counterintuitive just to prompt the interviewee to respond (Bell and van Leeuwen 1994). Due to his challenging role, the interviewer is expected at least to doubt the politician’s

³⁸ Nevertheless, Rule 5.9 makes clear that “presenters must not use the advantage of regular appearances to promote their views in a way that compromises the requirement of due impartiality.” In addition, Section 5.10 conditions the expression of a personal view to be “clearly signaled to the audience at the outset.”

standpoint that *The politician's words and/or actions are adequate* and, if he thinks that this is in the public interest, to advance and uphold his own contrary standpoint. Such is the case in the following exchange which took place on February 10, 2008 between Jon Sopel and Nick Clegg, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, on the issue of tax burden in Britain:

Jon Sopel:

[...] Let's concentrate on one of those things; they're looking for you to be bold and we heard from Mark Littlewood saying, you should simply come out and say, 'the tax burden is too high.' Do you think it is too high.

Nick Clegg:

I've said, and I'll say it again, that the tax burden should not rise, but I'm not advocating the tax burden should be lowered from where it is at the moment for the simple reason that there are a number of priorities, social priorities, education, health, improving our infrastructure - transport and so on, which I just don't think would necessarily be possible by significantly reducing the tax burden as a whole. But can I just say (interjection)

Jon Sopel:

So the government has got it absolutely right.

Nick Clegg:

No, no, no, this is the key thing. The really interesting debate about tax is not where the overall burden is; I am not advocating any further increase in the overall tax burden. The really interesting debate however is what you do within that ceiling. Where does the tax burden rest most heavily, where does it rest most lightly. So, for instance, I want to see a radical cut in income tax for low and middle income earners of 4p in the pound income tax cut. I want to see more people pay a bit more for activities: driving polluting cars, which are bad for the environment. It's how you re-distribute the tax burden within that ceiling that I think is where the debate is now.

Jon Sopel:

But you would keep government spending taxes exactly as is.

Nick Clegg:

No. I would want to actually quite, quite the reverse, I'd want to dramatically change the list of spending priorities.

Jon Sopel:

No, no, I put the total.

Nick Clegg:

No. No, well the, the total, what I'm trying to say to you is that I think the key thing is how do you re-order the priorities within the total amounts available at the moment. I for instance have set out an ambition that I want to see the party, the Liberal Democrats, reallocate about twenty billion pounds worth of spending, government spending, on to key priorities. So not wasted on ID cards, but spend it on the poorest children. Not waste it on the Euro Fighter, defence project, but spend it on better health services. That is the debate which I think we're going to have between now and the next General Election.

Jon Sopel:

But why not position yourself as the tax cutting party. The Tories seem, if you read their pronouncements, a bit too timid to do that at the moment. You could occupy that ground.

Nick Clegg:

I don't think there's any point occupying ground for the sake of it. You've got to do it credibly. If I could meet, if the Liberal Democrats could meet our public policy priorities

with less money, with less, you know with a much significant - lower level of overall taxation, of course I'd be prepared to do that. Who knows, we might get there by the next General Election. My estimate though, is that the real difficult choices, and these are going to be tough choices, are scrapping public spending where it's not being well spent at the moment and spending it better in other areas.

In this question-answer exchange, Sopel plays the role of the devil's advocate by maintaining a critical attitude towards Clegg's standpoints on the issue of tax burden. As is usually the case in a political interview, Sopel's first question is not just a demand for information, but creates the expectation that the politician should express his view on the matter, which is what he does: *the tax burden should not rise, nor should it be lowered*. In reply to this standpoint, Sopel makes the remark that Clegg agrees completely with the government's present tax policies. As can be expected, Clegg does not accept Sopel's remark and advances a standpoint in which doubt is implied: *No, no, this is the key thing. I am not advocating any further increase in the overall tax burden*. Sopel challenges Clegg once more to accept a position which he would rather not take when he says that *you would keep the government spending as is*. In this way, Sopel wants to make Clegg endorse a position that the total amount of tax money spent by the government would remain the same. As Clegg replies, that is not what he wants to do, but rather change the priorities: who pays taxes, how much tax and what happens with the money. Sopel makes a new proposal to the leader of the Liberal Democrats to position themselves as the tax cutting party, suggesting that such a bold decision would be adequate at the moment, especially that the Tories do not dare to do that: *The Tories seem, if you read their pronouncements, a bit too timid to do that at the moment. You could occupy that ground*. Clegg rejects this proposal as there is no point occupying that ground just for the sake of it. Accepting Sopel's proposal would lead to the party losing credibility in the eyes of the audience. Public policy priorities could not be met, should the proposal be put in practice.

3.3 Starting points

The argumentative exchanges in a political interview take place in accordance with a set of procedural and material starting points which the participants accept upon entering the activity type concerned. In this institutionalized argumentative practice, the rights and obligations of the discussants are regulated by explicit and implicit conventions. In Great Britain, the broadcasting activity of the BBC is regulated by *The Broadcasting Code*

already mentioned. It is also subject to the *Agreement*³⁹ and the *Royal Charter*⁴⁰ in accordance with which broadcasters function, and to the editorial guidelines that regulate the content of programmes on politics and public policy.⁴¹

In close connection with the topics at the centre of the discussion in a political interview, Section 5 of The Broadcasting Code and Section 44 of the Agreement precondition the content of the matters to those that are not an infringement of privacy, unless warranted. The term ‘warranted’ is defined in the following way:

It means that where broadcasters wish to justify an infringement of privacy as warranted, they should be able to demonstrate why in particular circumstances of the case, it is warranted. If the reason is that it is in the public interest, then the broadcaster should be able to demonstrate that the public interest outweighs the right to privacy. Examples of public interest would include revealing or detecting crime, protecting public health or safety, exposing misleading claims made by individuals or organizations or disclosing incompetence that affects the public. (*Rule 8.1*)

Should the public interest not outweigh the right to privacy, as required by the above rule, the politician may protect confidential information by refusing to express an opinion because it is an infringement of privacy. Such a refusal may also be expressed when the matters discussed do not fall under the politician’s responsibilities, constitute *sub judice* matters or simply cannot be disclosed to the public. In the discussion between Jon Sopel and Sir Gus O’Donnell on July 12, 2009, Sir Gus refuses to make known information about the discussions held between the Civil Service, which he represents, and the Opposition, about some databases. In his reply to the interviewer’s question, he says:

Sir Gus:

[...] I am going to keep private [about the databases]. I do not tell the Prime Minister what's going on so I'm afraid, John, I'm not going to tell you either.[...] That's what we're doing but I make them absolutely private and I never feed back from those discussions to the Prime Minister. So I'm not going to feed back to anybody else either.

³⁹ The full title is “An Agreement Between Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Broadcasting Corporation.” The document currently in force dates from July, 2006 and covers the BBC’s regulatory obligations. It is accompanied by an Amendment dated December 4, 2003.

⁴⁰ The full title of the current Royal Charter is “the Royal Charter for the continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation.” It dates from September 19, 2006.

⁴¹ Such programmes concern political broadcasts, ministerial broadcasts, reports on national and international elections, reports on opinion polls, online voting, surveys, broadcasting of Parliament. The editorial guidelines of these programmes are outlined under the strict advice of the Chief Adviser Politics.

The content of questions is preconditioned further by The Royal Charter which stipulates in Article 23, paragraph (c) that the interviewer should formulate questions that “carefully and appropriately assess the views of licence fee payers.”⁴² Likewise, editorial guidelines prescribe that in a political interview “[...] arrangements must not prevent the programme asking questions that our audiences would reasonably expect to hear.” The requirements set by these documents explain why the interviewer plays the role of the devil’s advocate. They are also indicative of the fact that the question-answer procedure gains institutional significance in a political interview only if the participants are oriented towards an audience. There is no point in trying to hold the politician to account through an argumentative exchange if there is no mutual commitment to do so for the benefit of the audience.

The discussion format in a political interview is institutionally conventionalized as a question-answer exchange in which the interviewer is expected to ask questions and the politician is expected to give answers, albeit that the latter can also ask rhetorical questions. In this activity type, the interviewer’s questions are not limited to interrogatives, but are often accompanied by assertions.⁴³ Emphasizing that a question-answer exchange is always the format in which a political interview is carried out, Heritage and Greatbatch (1991: 103) describe this kind of turn-taking as a norm, the violation of which is not considered acceptable. That this is the case becomes clear when the politician departs from the expected format: the interviewer may then initiate a return to the opening stage in which he points out a reversal of roles (Andone 2010: 78). In the following exchange broadcast on October 19, 2008, between Jon Sopel and the British MP Phil Woolas, the interviewer draws on this convention to point out that the politician is trying to ask questions instead of answering them:

Jon Sopel:

So, hang on, so there will be a cap or there won’t be a cap.

Phil Woolas:

Well you tell me what you mean by a cap Jon and I’ll tell you the answer to the question, and this has be-devilled this debate. We recognize of course that we (interjection)

Jon Sopel:

Well, sorry, let me answer your question, cos you’ve been kind enough to start interviewing me. A number of people in this country.

⁴² According to Article 57 of the Royal Charter, a licence fee payer “is not to be taken literally but includes [...] any [...] person in the UK who watches, listens to or uses any BBC service, or may do so or wish to do so in the future.”

⁴³ Heritage and Roth (1995) use the term ‘questioning’ in order to make clear that the interviewer does not put forward strictly interrogatives, but also other kinds of utterances which, even if they are not in question form, function as questions to which an answer is expected.

Chapter 3

Phil Woolas:

The population as a whole? Including temporary visitors?

Jon Sopel:

Yeah.

Phil Woolas:

Students, tourists?

Jon Sopel:

Well, I mean you know – okay. Let's go back to me interviewing you.

Asked whether there will be a limit on the number of immigrant workers in Britain, Woolas is trying to avoid a clear answer by pretending that he does not understand the term 'cap' used by Sopel. After Sopel ironically accepts to answer Woolas' question (*let me answer your question, cos you've been kind enough to start interviewing me*), the politician continues the discussion by asking more questions. Because such a way of proceeding goes against the conventional format, Sopel explicitly requires a return to the institutionally pre-allocated situation (*let's go back to me interviewing you*) in which the interviewer should ask questions and the politician should answer them.

The question-answer format preconditions the assignment of the discussion roles and the division of the burden of proof. Conventionally, in a non-mixed difference of opinion, the politician, who is expected to clarify and defend his views, acts as protagonist of the standpoint that *My words and/or actions are adequate*. As an accountable agent who has to clarify and justify his performance, the politician should defend not only prior views and actions, but also his future policies and plans. As Schedler explains, accountable agents "have to stand up not only for what they have done (retrospective or ex post accountability) but also for what they plan to do (prospective or ex ante accountability) (1999: 27).⁴⁴ Because the interviewer is institutionally expected to question and criticize the politician, he acts as the antagonist who casts doubt on the acceptability of the politician's standpoint.⁴⁵ As an accounting agent, he is in essence interested in challenging the politician to justify his views and actions. The fact that a political interview constitutes a context in which a process of *political* accountability takes place in *public* obliges the interviewer to act as a critic. Holders of political authority, such as government

⁴⁴ Curtin and Nollkaemper point out that accountability is traditionally understood as "a retrospective process that involves giving an account of prior conduct. However, this view of accountability is being increasingly challenged by approaches that argue for a more participative and ongoing process of accountability" (2005: 8). More attention is being paid, especially when the purpose of holding to account is to prevent certain things from happening, to connecting past and future conduct. Curtin (2007: 525) refers also to *dumque* accountability, which involves holding an agent to account during the process of taking a decision or action.

⁴⁵ In a mixed difference of opinion, the discussants obviously play the role of protagonists of their own standpoints and antagonists of the standpoints of the other.

representatives, render an account of their performance not so much to the interviewer, but essentially to the public.⁴⁶ In this process, the interviewer acts as an intermediary between the public and the holders of public office. His main role is to secure answers from the politicians for their performance that go beyond purely providing information. Therefore, the interviewer is expected to put the politician's views to critical testing by criticizing them.

The division of the discussion roles has direct consequences for the division of the burden of proof. As the politician has to give an account of his words and actions, he is obliged to argue for his standpoint, once challenged to do so by the interviewer. When giving an account is avoided, the interviewer initiates more often than not a sub-discussion in which he criticizes the politician for his attempt to avoid providing the expected justification by explicitly demanding and re-demanding the politician to answer.⁴⁷

One famous example of such questioning is the 1997 interview between Jeremy Paxman and Michael Howard on the BBC's *Newsnight* program. At the time of the interview, Howard, formerly a Home Secretary under John Major, was a challenger of the leadership of the Conservative Party. As Home Secretary, he played a contentious role regarding the British prison system. Two years before, after a prison escape, Howard appeared before the House of Commons and admitted setting policy for the prison service, yet he denied any involvement in operational matters. Afterwards, many official sources contradicted his denial. In the interview, Paxman referred to an event bearing directly on Howard's claim to have had no operational role in the prison service: the firing of a prison official. Asked whether he had threatened to overrule the Director General of Prisons by instructing him to fire the official, Howard did not answer clearly. Paxman asked the same question twelve times and made it in this way very clear that Howard's prior claim to having been operationally uninvolved was contradicted.

Similar questioning is at issue in the following fragment from a discussion that took place on July 12, 2009 between Jon Sopel and Lord Drayson, Minister of State for Strategic Defence Acquisition Reform. Lord Drayson is asked about the decision to send additional troops to Afghanistan. Sopel wants to know whether General Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff in the British Army, who has asked for more troops, has been turned down or not. Because Lord Drayson is trying to avoid responding to this

⁴⁶As noted by Curtin and Nollkaemper (2005: 11), another prominent case of political accountability is the parliament in which the executive branch is held responsible by parliament for action undertaken in the past.

⁴⁷ This institutional characteristic is justified by the fact that the interviewer has to take into account the expectations of the audience. As the audience expects the interviewer to hold the politician to account, exerting pressure through repetition of the same question is a way of meeting these expectations. The politician resisting the pressure creates an additional burden of justification which, if not met, undermines his credibility in front of the audience. He would have to answer for why he cannot provide an account.

question, Sopel explicitly requests him to answer. Because this request is in fact a repetition of the question that he already asked earlier, whether Richard Dannatt obtained the troop numbers he wanted, Sopel cannot simply be asking for information. He attempts to elicit information that he can use as an argument to defend the standpoint that *Lord Drayson's decision is not adequate*:

Jon Sopel:

Just answer, just address that narrow point. Has Sir Richard Dannatt got what he wants in terms of troop numbers?

The obligation to defend his standpoint holds also for the interviewer once challenged by the politician, though this rarely happens. Clayman and Heritage (2002: 140) suggest that such a challenge may arise in two cases. One such case occurs when the politician disagrees with or denies the statements with which the interviewer prefaces his questions. For instance, this might be the case because the interviewer's remarks offer "contentious statements of opinion rather than merely relevant background information."⁴⁸ Another case in which the politician challenges the interviewer to defend himself occurs when he is questioning the interviewer's conduct or the broadcasting organization which the interviewer represents. For instance, the politician accuses the interviewer of being impolite or attacks the broadcasting company for being biased. Such a situation requires the interviewer "to abandon questioning in order to defend himself" or otherwise the interviewer appears guilty as charged (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 140).

Although both participants to the discussion may provide argumentation, there is conventionally a difference regarding the length of their contributions. Due to strict time constraints and because the interview concentrates on the politician's words and actions, the interviewer needs to argue his case as briefly as possible in order to leave enough time for the politician to offer an extensive account. Heritage and Greatbatch (1991: 102) underline this when they point out that the politician's extended turns are an institutional characteristic of a political interview. The Broadcasting Code emphasizes this characteristic by relating it to a principle of fairness. The Code prescribes that especially when an accusation is made, the politician should be allowed time for a more elaborate response:

if a programme alleges wrongdoing or incompetence or makes other significant allegations, those concerned should normally be given an appropriate and timely opportunity to respond. (*Section 7.11*)

⁴⁸ Bull and Mayer (1993: 664) observe that Margaret Thatcher often attacked the interviewers' statements in an attempt at making them not pursue a certain line of inquiry. In most cases, though, (83% of the questions), the interviewers would typically ask a new question rather than argue for their words.

3.4 Argumentative means

In a political interview, the exchange of argumentation and criticisms is essential in carrying out the accountability procedure for which the activity type concerned has been established. Without advancing criticisms, the interviewer cannot hold the politician properly to account. By definition, demanding an account involves asking critical questions that challenge the interlocutor to respond. Without argumentation, the politician cannot clarify and justify his words and actions as is expected of him when giving an account. As Mulgan points out,

Accountability is seen to be a dialectical activity, requiring officials to answer, explain and justify, while those holding to account engage in questioning, assessing and criticizing. It thus involves open discussion and debate about matters of public interest and so becomes equated with the principles of deliberative democracy. (2000: 569)⁴⁹

Discourse analysts, studying the conversational forms and structures of the political interview, and scholars taking a socio-pragmatic approach to it, have only incidentally observed that argumentation is used by the participants. Notably, Wilson (1990) points out that the interviewer's critical questions, together with the assertions preceding them, convey often a position that gives a negative evaluation of the politician's words and actions. In her examination of political interviews in Great Britain, Fetzer (2007) shows how a politician presents his standpoints as reasonable and those of his opponents as unreasonable. Such appeals to reasonableness function as arguments to convince the audience to vote for the politician.

The explicit and implicit conventions mentioned in the previous section have made clear that the length and shape of the participants' contributions and the possibilities to address arguments and criticisms are rather strictly prescribed. The political interview is thus a regulated institutionalized activity regimenting what can be reconstructed as the argumentation stage of a critical discussion. Conventionally, the content of the

⁴⁹ A similar view is held by Curtin. She remarks that "the provision of information is clearly an element of accountability, although it cannot be regarded, without more, as synonymous with accountability. Yet without the provision of (full and complete) information, it will not be possible to hold actors to account for their actions and inactions. In other words, we can best view the provision of information in general terms as an essential pre-requisite enabling actors to be held to account by accountability forums in various ways" (2007: 532). She adds that "more is needed in the quest for accountability, namely the opportunity of hearing an explanation or justification of the actor's actions or decisions and for such an account giving to be debated and queried" (2007: 534).

participants' argumentation is preconditioned by the topics that trigger the difference of opinion. At all times, the argumentation should concern words or actions for which the politician is held to account publicly. His argumentation is embedded in the answers the politician provides in defense of his words or actions. Because the interviewer often evaluates these words and actions negatively, the politician cannot afford to do less than refuting the interviewer's criticisms. His political role requires him to at least doubt the interviewer's statements, if not reject them altogether. This rejection is at the same time directed against his opponents. He does so, because the audience usually judges the acceptability of his words and actions in comparison with the words and actions of his political rivals. Drawing on this institutional characteristic, Yvette Cooper, a British Labor Party politician, and at the time, Work and Pensions Secretary, defends her party's policies concerning recession in a discussion with Jon Sopel on June 28, 2009 in the following way:

Yvette Cooper:

[..] I think the important thing is that this is about helping people, like those Corus workers, with additional support; we're putting in additional investment, we've got a one billion pound future jobs fund, which is particularly about creating youth jobs that never again go back to a lost generation who don't get their first job, don't get their second job and spend years unemployed because they happen to be unlucky and leave school in the middle of a recession and in the early '80s government turned its back on people; we're determined not to do that. So yes, that is part of this vision for the future, part of building Britain's future. We help those young people, we don't turn our backs on them and that's something the Conservatives have repeatedly said they will not support the investment to do.

Guided by the characterization of the activity type according to which the politician is the protagonist of the standpoint that *My words and/or actions are adequate*, Cooper's argumentation can be reconstructed as follows:⁵⁰

- (1) (Labour's policies during recession are adequate)
- (1).1a We help people with additional support
- (1).1b We do not turn our backs on young people like the Conservatives did in the '80s
- (1).1.b.1 We are making an additional investment of one billion pound for creating jobs

In this fragment, Cooper defends the standpoint that the policies of the Labour Party, which she represents, are adequate during recession. She gives two main arguments in support of her standpoint. According to the first main argument, her party offers additional support to people during recession ((1).1a). According to the second main argument, the

⁵⁰ The notation in the analytic overviews made in this study follows the style in van Eemeren (2010).

Labour party's policy during recession is adequate because the party does not turn its back on people like the Conservatives did in the '80s ((1).1b). By means of the second argument, Cooper does more than responding to the institutional obligation of defending her party's policies as adequate for solving problems during recession. She criticizes at the same time her political rivals, the Conservatives, in an attempt at convincing the audience that her party's opponents cannot offer a good alternative to solving the problems during recession. Anticipating that her second argument ((1).1b) will be rejected, or at least not easily accepted by the interviewer and the audience, Cooper supports it further with a statement in which she points out that her party is making an additional investment of one billion pound for creating jobs ((1).1.b.1). By providing this argument, she lives up to her political role of refuting the potential criticism that *Labour is not doing anything concretely*.

The way in which Cooper combines the two main arguments ((1).1a and (1).1b) to make acceptable the implicit standpoint that Labour's policies are adequate ((1)) responds to the institutional requirement stipulating that a politician's statements must be oriented towards the audience. In fact, it is an intrinsic requirement of a political accountability procedure that the accountable person answers to the public.⁵¹ To respond to this institutional obligation, Cooper connects the two arguments in a coordinative structure. In this way, she argues that Labour's policy is adequate because it takes care of the present and at the same time of the future. It helps the people who are most directly affected now and it also cares about the future of the young people. In the end, caring about the situation for the present and also about the future is what matters most in recession time.

The interviewer's role as the devil's advocate, constantly criticizing the politician in order to force him to render an account before the audience, obliges him to defend his own views, if challenged to do so. The interviewer advances standpoints that are critical of the politician's words or actions and expects his criticism to be rejected, or at least not accepted, by the politician. Especially in cases in which the interviewer asks 'accusatory questions' (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 221), he rarely leaves his position unjustified. The interviewer knows that such strong criticism will be rejected and argues for it, usually in assertions preceding the actual questions (Harris 1986). This progressive presentation of the argumentation signals to the politician that his words and actions are inadequate in one respect or another and need defending.⁵² In this way, it becomes difficult for the politician

⁵¹ I have explained in the previous section that in a political interview there is an accountability relationship between the public and the politician. The interviewer acts as an intermediary that makes this relationship possible by acting as a representative of the public.

⁵² Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992: 45) make a difference between *retrogressive* presentation, in which the argumentation is advanced after the standpoint has been advanced and *progressive* presentation, in which the argumentation precedes the standpoint.

to simply attack the interviewer's charges for being unjustified. He has to argue for his own standpoint and against the interviewer's view.

Another fragment from the discussion between Sopel and Cooper on June 28, 2009 is illustrative of the way in which Sopel advances arguments for an accusation of inconsistency, anticipating that the charge will not be accepted:

Jon Sopel:

We've seen a briefing paper on some of what is being talked about and about the need to create green jobs in the economy and then you take Vestas who build wind turbines on the Isle of Wight, their factory closed in April and the company said it was because of falling demand and bureaucratic red tape and not enough support from government.

The issue at the centre of the discussion between Sopel and Cooper from which this fragment has been selected is the policy of the government to take an environment-friendly approach. With regard to this issue, Cooper adopts a standpoint according to which the government supports green jobs. Cooper's standpoint is met with criticism from Sopel who points out that the government is inconsistent because it is not complying with its announced policy. His argumentation can be reconstructed as follows:

- (1) (The government's words and actions are not adequate)
- ((1).1) (The government is acting inconsistently)
- ((1).1).1 The government is saying that it supports green jobs, yet it did not support Vestas, which offered green jobs

Sopel defends the implicit standpoint that the government's words and actions are not adequate ((1)) by means of an implicit argument pointing out an inconsistency between the government's words and actions (((1).1)). Sopel anticipates that Cooper will not accept his implicit argument that the government is acting inconsistently. Therefore, he presents, as an argument that supports the charge, the case of the company Vestas which offered green jobs, but was not supported by the government (((1).1).1). As is typical of a political interview, the argumentation is presented in assertions preceding the question which Sopel advances in the next turn by means of which he tries to make Cooper account for the alleged inconsistency.⁵³

⁵³ In such sub-disputes, the politician's response to the interviewer's sub-standpoint needs to advance and defend another sub-standpoint that is related to the same issue as addressed in the interviewer's sub-standpoint. A deviation from this institutional requirement counts as an attempt at agenda-shifting that is usually sanctioned by the interviewer with a request for returning to the real issue.

3.5 The possible outcome⁵⁴

The outcome of a discussion representing an activity type is an implementation of the concluding stage of a critical discussion. At this stage, the participants in the discussion establish the result of their attempt at resolving the difference of opinion. The difference of opinion is resolved if the parties agree that the protagonist's standpoint is acceptable and the antagonist's doubt must be retracted (in which case the difference of opinion is resolved in the protagonist's favor), or that the protagonist's standpoint must be retracted (the difference of opinion is then resolved in the antagonist's favor). In a political interview, the outcome of the discussion is not procedurally defined as in a legal trial, in which the institutional requirements impose that it should be made known in whose favor the discussion is resolved. In the activity type at hand, the outcome is preconditioned by the characteristics of a political interview. In any case, it should be clear whether the institutional goal of holding the politician to account has been realized and more generally, whether the institutional point of the deliberation has been attained.⁵⁵

Typical of the political interview is that the interviewer always closes off the discussion. This gives him the advantage that he can comment, but is not in any way institutionally obliged to do so, on the discussion as a whole. Clayman and Heritage observe that his comments have "a cumulative sense or import of what has been said over the course of the discussion" (2002: 78). His comments do not establish whether the discussion has been resolved and in whose favor, but they can give a good indication of whether the institutional goal has been realized. A case in point is Sipel's final comment in the interview with Cooper on June 28, 2009:

Jon Sipel:

Okay, Yvette Cooper, we must leave it there. We will look forward to the detailed announcement. Thanks ever so much being with us. Thank you.

Prior to this final remark, Sipel asked Cooper to give details about what will happen in case public services, such as hospitals and educational institutions, do not respond to people's needs. Sipel wants to know in which way these institutions will be punished in

⁵⁴ The outcome of a political interview is to a certain extent, though not completely, different from the 'closing' of a political interview (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 72). The latter is a structural element that marks the termination of the discussion. For example, a thanking formula from the interviewer or a reminder of the time limits are indicators that the interview is coming to a close. The outcome of a political interview should not be seen in purely structural terms, even though, establishing the result of the discussion may take place in the part usually described as 'closing.'

⁵⁵ As Mulgan remarks, "the public explanation and justification involved in accountability make it an important component of deliberative democracy" (2000: 570).

case they do not offer people the things to which they are entitled. Cooper does not have a clear answer and promises that details will be made known later. After asking a few questions which Cooper cannot really answer, Sopel rounds off the discussion by ironically commenting that people will be looking forward to these details. This remark is a way of pointing out that Cooper did not give the account expected of her as Work and Pensions Secretary.

The interviewer's comments, such as pointing out that an account has not been provided, can help the public to judge the outcome of the discussion. After all, the public is involved in the public accountability process that takes place in a political interview.⁵⁶ Indirectly, through the interviewer, the public requires a justification of the politician's performance and judges it against certain standards (such as democratic standards) and, eventually, imposes sanctions if the accountable actor fails to live up to the public's expectations (such as by not voting for him later).⁵⁷

However, it often happens that the discussion in a political interview does not lead to a resolution in the sense in which a critical discussion is resolved. This is not surprising if one takes into account that a fundamental characteristic of an accountability process in the political domain is the continuous critical testing of the politician's words. Many of the examples presented in this chapter have illustrated that when it comes to matters of major political importance, the politician rarely gives a definitive answer. Therefore, it is not uncommon that a politician is interviewed again on the same matters or that the same issue is discussed with different politicians in other interviews. That this is the case becomes clear, for example, when the interviewer points out an inconsistency between what a politician said in another interview and the present occasion. Sopel, for example, remarks on December 9, 2007, that Alan Duncan, at the time Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, changed his views about the use of nuclear energy:

Jon Sopel:

You were rather more skeptical the last time I spoke to you when you were on this programme – we can just have a listen to what you said last time.

⁵⁶ Grant and Keohane (2005) elaborate on the role of citizens in public accountability processes for the protection of democratic values.

⁵⁷ Curtin and Nollkaemper (2005: 4) explain that in its core sense, accountability involves (a) the justification of an actor's performance to others, (b) the assessment of that performance against certain standards and (c) the possible imposition of consequences if the actor fails to live up to applicable standards. By participating in the accountability process, the public protects democratic values, possibly going as far as limiting abuses of power (Curtin and Nollkaemper 2005: 9). The interview between Paxman and Howard discussed in 3.4 is a good illustration of how a politician's attempt at abuse can be prevented from being put into practice. Howard threatened to overrule the Director General of Prisons. After this interview in which the threat comes to light, Howard was 'sanctioned' by not receiving enough support in his bid for leadership. Sanctions can be imposed not only for actions taken, but also for actions not taken (Mulgan 2000: 561).

‘we think that the nuclear power sector, should be there as a last resort in many respects. We want to explore every conceivable method of generating electricity before we go to nuclear’

Examples such as the one just given illustrate that a return to the initial situation is not excluded in a political interview. Unlike an ordinary conversation in which participants may change roles, in the new discussion in a political interview the politician maintains his role of the protagonist who has to give an account and the interviewer acts as the antagonist who holds him to account. This does not mean that in the activity type of a political interview an outcome is never determined. Determining the outcome usually happens in the long run, for example, when the public has to cast a vote.⁵⁸

3.6 Conclusion

The political interview is a deliberative activity type in which argumentation plays a predominant role. The question-answer exchanges between an interviewer and a politician taking place in a political interview are part of an accountability procedure that is carried out with the help of arguments and criticisms. In this procedure, the interviewer criticizes words, actions, plans, policies or decisions for which the politician can be held publicly responsible, and the politician is expected to argue in defense of his words and actions. Although the interlocutors address each other directly, they are primarily interested in convincing a listening, reading or television-watching audience.

In this activity type, the participants’ argumentation is governed by explicit procedural conventions enforced by institutions with the power to regulate the broadcasting activity and by implicit conventions on which participants agree when they enter the activity type concerned. These conventions precondition in a particular manner the way in which the interviewer and the politician define the difference of opinion, the starting points they adopt, the argumentative means and criticisms they advance and the possible outcome of the discussion. In Figure 3.1 the main characteristics of the activity type of a political interview are outlined:

⁵⁸ Mulgan (2000: 569) points out that in political accounts there is an open-ended dialogue between public servants and the public.

<i>Critical discussion:</i> dialectical stages in the process of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits		<i>Argumentative activity type of a political interview:</i> counterparts of the dialectical stages of a critical discussion in an accountability process	
<i>Confrontation stage</i>	The difference of opinion is clearly defined	<i>Initial situation</i>	Mixed or non-mixed difference of opinion with respect to matters of (major) political importance between an interviewer and a politician; the listening, reading or television-watching audience is the primary addressee
<i>Opening stage</i>	The starting points of the discussion are unambiguously established	<i>Starting points</i>	Question-answer format; the politician is the protagonist who gives an account; the interviewer is the antagonist who holds him to account
<i>Argumentation stage</i>	Arguments and criticisms are advanced	<i>Argumentative means and criticisms</i>	The politician argues in defense of his words and actions; the interviewer puts the politician's words continuously to a critical test
<i>Concluding stage</i>	The result of the discussion is established	<i>Possible outcome</i>	Possible resolution for some members of the audience; possible return to the initial situation

Figure 3.1 Argumentative characterization of the activity type of a political interview

CHAPTER 4

Strategic maneuvering in response to an accusation of inconsistency in a political interview

4.1 Accusations of inconsistency in a political interview

The political interview is an activity type in which an accountability process takes place. As part of this process, the interviewer asks the politician to account for his words, actions, plans or decisions, and the politician should clarify and justify these. In order to fulfill his role as an accounting agent, the interviewer is in essence interested in questioning and criticizing the politician by challenging his interlocutor to respond. In a political interview, it is often the case that the interviewer's criticism takes the form of an accusation of inconsistency: the interviewer points out that the politician has said something and acts contrary to it or adopts a position that is incompatible with a previously held position on the same issue (Heritage and Clayman 2002: 227).⁵⁹ The former is the case in the

⁵⁹ Heritage and Clayman (2002: 221) describe questions in which accusations are launched as "accountability questions." In their view, such questions are very hostile and represent some "unusual cases in which interviewers seem voluntarily to slip outside the boundaries of the permissible and clearly start to take an advocacy role" (2002: 217). This view of accountability questions is not surprising. To recall, many authors, including Heritage and Clayman, are of the opinion that interviewers should be impartial. As shown in

discussion between Jon Sopel and Sir Gus, introduced in Chapter 1. In the exchange, Sopel charges Sir Gus with being inconsistent on the ground that he claims to aim at managing the Civil Service efficiently, yet he does not act efficiently. As an example, Sopel points at the case of two departments, the names of which have been changed several times in a short time. An example of the case in which an accusation points at an inconsistency between views is the discussion between Jon Sopel and Alan Duncan, presented in Chapter 3. In the exchange, Sopel remarks that in a previous interview Duncan did not support the use of nuclear energy, whereas in the current interview he seems to be in favor of nuclear energy.

The examination of the interactional dimension of an accusation of inconsistency in Chapter 2 has led to the conclusion that the addressee confronted with such a charge in an argumentative confrontation has two options to respond: he can maintain his standpoint, or he can retract his standpoint. Even though both options count as responses to the charge raised, the preferred interactional effect of an accusation of inconsistency is giving in to the accuser's criticism. That is so because by raising a charge of inconsistency the accuser wants to obtain at least acceptance of the charge so that he can maintain his criticism and the other party loses the discussion. The retraction of a standpoint is the only option conveying that the accused accepts the charge as correct.

An accusation of inconsistency made in a political interview is a means used by interviewers to satisfy the public interest in clarity: it requires the politician to clarify his views on controversial issues in relation to which he has taken opposite stances. Unlike a discussion between politicians in which indeed it is in the best interest of a party to make the other party retract his standpoint, in a political interview the interviewer's accusation is rather a challenge to clarify views or actions. Admittedly, the charge of inconsistency may eventually lead to the politician retracting his standpoint, in which case a situation is created in which the difference of opinion is eliminated. The politician is then shown not to be able to provide a clear account of his words or actions as expected by the public. An interviewer who repetitively shows that a politician is unable to give an account of his (controversial) words or actions in the long term builds up the reputation of an aggressive journalist. The public perceives him then as an interviewer who questions the politician's words or actions thoroughly by following a critical line of inquiry (Heritage and Clayman 2002: 30).

The goal of this chapter is to analyze the politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency in a political interview as confrontational strategic maneuvers. The analysis will provide insight into the advantages a politician can obtain when he responds to an accusation of inconsistency by advancing the move of retracting one of the inconsistent

Chapter 3, they ignore that impartiality should be understood as part of the expression 'due impartiality,' meaning that the interviewer should not give prominence to one view over another.

standpoints because he cannot remove the criticism. After characterizing the move of retracting a standpoint as an instance of confrontational strategic maneuvering (4.2), I will determine the strategic function of the argumentative move in the context of a political interview (4.3). I will describe how the combined attempt at realizing the dialectical and rhetorical aims of the confrontation stage is carried out by the politician. Further, I will observe how this combined attempt is affected by the institutional constraints on argumentation imposed by the conventions of a political interview. By means of a detailed analysis of cases in which a politician responds to a charge of inconsistency in a political interview by retracting one of the inconsistent standpoints, I will identify some of the advantages he can gain in his strategic maneuvering.

4.2 Retracting a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency

Pragma-dialectics provides a precise account of the role that the retraction of a standpoint by a protagonist plays in an argumentative confrontation. As a dialectical theory, it approaches retraction of a standpoint as a move that is in principle reasonable in the dialectical procedure of a critical discussion.⁶⁰ In the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, the model indicates that retraction of a standpoint is a move that occurs in reaction to an antagonist's criticism (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984: 101).⁶¹ This criticism can be expressed in three different ways in a discussion initiated by a protagonist who advances a positive standpoint. First, it can take the form of mere doubt concerning the protagonist's positive standpoint. Second, the antagonist's criticism can be expressed by making a move in which the opposite standpoint is advanced. Third, it can be expressed by performing a move in which the negative standpoint is maintained. In the latter two cases, the criticism goes beyond mere doubt as it constitutes a refutation of the protagonist's positive standpoint. Drawing on the dialectical profile of the confrontation stage represented in Chapter 2, Figure 4.1 outlines the three possible dialectical routes for the protagonist to retract a standpoint in response to criticism:

⁶⁰ The move of retraction of a standpoint in a critical discussion can have both sound and fallacious instantiations.

⁶¹ The ideal model of critical discussion stipulates also that the move of retracting a standpoint occurs in the concluding stage. The protagonist who could not successfully defend his standpoint in the argumentation stage concludes that he lost the discussion by retracting his standpoint. While the retraction of a standpoint in the confrontation stage precludes the initiation of a discussion, since there is an immediate end to the discussion, in the concluding stage, the retraction of a standpoint resolves the discussion (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984: 101). Krabbe (2001: 148) remarks in a similar vein that the retraction of an initial thesis leads to the resolution of a dispute.

Chapter 4

	<i>Protagonist (P)</i>	<i>Antagonist (A)</i>
<i>Possibility I</i> in the confrontation stage	Advances positive standpoint <i>Retracts positive standpoint</i>	Casts doubt on P's positive standpoint
<i>Possibility II</i> in the confrontation stage	Advances positive standpoint Retracts doubt concerning A's negative standpoint = <i>retracts positive standpoint</i>	Advances negative standpoint
<i>Possibility III</i> in the confrontation stage	Advances positive standpoint Maintains positive standpoint Advances doubt on A's negative standpoint Retracts doubt on A's negative standpoint = <i>retracts positive standpoint</i>	Casts doubt on P's positive standpoint Advances negative standpoint Maintains negative standpoint

Figure 4.1 The protagonist's possibilities for responding to criticism by retracting a standpoint in the confrontation stage

In my characterization of accusations of inconsistency as an illocutionary act in Chapter 2, I have shown by means of invented examples that an accusation of inconsistency that is aimed at making the other party retract his standpoint can instantiate the three critical moves: casting doubt (in a non-mixed discussion), advancing the opposite standpoint (in a mixed discussion), and maintaining the opposite standpoint (in a mixed discussion). In all cases, the accusation of inconsistency is aimed at making the other party retract his standpoint on the ground that a commitment to the current standpoint cannot be held simultaneously with the commitment to another standpoint because they are inconsistent. In a critical discussion, an accusation of inconsistency advanced in the confrontation stage to express criticism counts as the non-acceptance of the other party's standpoint so that there is no need to put the standpoint the antagonist claims to be inconsistent subsequently to critical testing. Putting the standpoint to the test involves an exchange of arguments and criticisms (on the basis of prior agreements in the opening stage) which an arguer would rather avoid.

Even though a criticism of inconsistency can be expressed in the three different ways just mentioned, in a political interview the institutional characteristics oblige the

interviewer (who acts as the antagonist) to advance an accusation of inconsistency as an instantiation of the moves of advancing and maintaining the opposite standpoint. My argumentative characterization of a political interview has shown that the interviewer, acting as an accounting agent, makes an attempt at showing that the politician's standpoint that *My words and/or actions are adequate* is not tenable. When an accusation is launched against the politician's words or actions, it usually comes in support of the implicit opposite standpoint that the politician's words or actions are not adequate. Anticipating that his accusation will be rejected, or at least not accepted by the politician, the interviewer rarely leaves it unjustified. To support his negative evaluation of the politician's performance, the interviewer advances arguments, which turn his accusation into a sub-standpoint. Heritage and Clayman remark that what in pragma-dialectical terms can be reconstructed as a sub-standpoint is the case when they point out that "accusatory questions" take the confrontational form "How can/could you X?:"

When it [the confrontational question format] is used to question the past activities of the interviewee, it implies the unanswerability of the question, and is virtually specialized for the delivery of accusations. Noticeably, this question format is often followed by statements that consolidate the interviewer's accusatory role with hostile remarks directly asserting a position as the interviewer's own (2002: 222).

It often happens that a politician has no other choice to respond to questions pointing at an inconsistency than by retracting one of the inconsistent standpoints. Such is the case in the discussion between Jon Sopel and Alan Duncan presented in Chapter 3. In the exchange, Sopel supports his remark that Duncan is inconsistent on the issue of nuclear energy with a quote from an earlier interview in which Duncan expressed a non-supportive attitude, whereas in the current interview Duncan supports the use of nuclear energy. Confronted with such strong evidence that he is inconsistent, Duncan cannot deny the inconsistency and retracts his original standpoint.

Similar to all other argumentative moves, the politician's retraction of a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency can be seen as an attempt at remaining within the boundaries of reasonableness while steering the discussion towards a favorable outcome. The move seems a reasonable way of responding, as one cannot maintain two mutually inconsistent standpoints about the same issue simultaneously. Confronted with an accusation of inconsistency which is in principle correct, it is reasonable to admit that one of the standpoints is not tenable and needs to be retracted. At the same time, the institutional context of a political interview obliges the politician to providing an account

of his words. After all, he is engaged in an argumentative practice that has been established for the purpose of carrying out an accountability process.

In order to determine the kinds of advantages which the politician may gain in a political interview in fulfilling his role as accountable agent when he retracts one of the inconsistent standpoints, I will combine a pragmatic approach to actual language use (by seeing retraction as a commonly recognized language phenomenon) with a dialectical view on argumentation (by seeing retraction as part of a dialectical procedure). By integrating pragmatic and dialectical concerns, the move of retraction is examined as it manifests itself in reality, while it is not ignored that the retraction is carried out as part of a dialectical procedure. It will thus become possible to study the attempt at being reasonable and at the same time effective as it is carried out in the activity type of a political interview.

As an instance of ordinary language use, retraction⁶² comes after the speaker has said something which he would now like to withdraw. In speech act terms, it is an illocutionary act which involves the illocutionary negation of a previous illocutionary act performed by the speaker. According to Bach and Harnish (1979: 43), it is “a constative speech act by which a speaker expresses his disbelief in what he has previously believed and the intention that the hearer should not believe what the speaker expressed before.”⁶³ Following Searle and Vanderveken (1985), van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 101) point out that by performing the act of retraction, a speaker indicates that he is no longer committed to the propositional content expressed in a previous illocutionary act.⁶⁴ Taking these views as a starting point, I will ‘define’ the illocutionary act of retraction in terms of felicity conditions to indicate what is conventionally required for the correct performance:

- (1) Retraction counts as the withdrawal of a commitment to the propositional content of an earlier illocutionary act by the speaker. (Essential condition)

- (2) The propositional content of a retraction is identical to the propositional content of the earlier illocutionary act. (Propositional content condition)

- (3) The speaker believes that the addressee (a) will be prepared to accept that the speaker is no longer committed to the earlier illocutionary act, and (b) does not already know or

⁶² Krabbe (2001) distinguishes among the retraction of doubt, of a point of view, of reasons and of concessions.

⁶³ Vanderveken (1990: 200) remarks that retraction is a declarative by which “a speaker disavows a previous opinion and in so doing he acknowledges his error.”

⁶⁴ This view coincides with Peetz’ (1979) interpretation of an illocutionary negation as an act of withdrawal. Peetz criticizes Searle (1969) who explains illocutionary negation in terms of an act of refusal and Hare (1970) who interprets it as an act of refraining. In her view, not all acts of illocutionary negation amount to a refusal and there is no illocutionary act of refraining.

believe that the speaker is no longer committed to the earlier illocutionary act. (Preparatory conditions)

(4) The speaker no longer wants to assume responsibility for the earlier illocutionary act. (Sincerity condition)

In this definition of retraction, it becomes clear that a certain set of commitments is obtained which can be further specified with the help of the felicity conditions.⁶⁵ These commitments are obtained at all times when a speaker retracts, irrespective of the context and the kind of illocutionary act that is being withdrawn. In order to distinguish them from commitments incurred in an argumentative context, I will refer to them, adopting a term used by Hamblin (1970b: 263), as *indicative commitments*. The fulfillment of the essential condition (1) entails a commitment on the addressee to no longer holding the speaker to account for the earlier illocutionary act.⁶⁶ The propositional content condition (2) requires that the speaker should withdraw the propositional content of the earlier illocutionary act. The preparatory conditions (3(a) and 3(b)) require that the speaker be committed to assuming that the addressee is ready to accept the speaker's withdrawal of the earlier illocutionary act; otherwise the retraction is pointless. In addition, the preparatory conditions require that the speaker be committed to assuming that the addressee does not already know that he is no longer committed to the earlier illocutionary act; otherwise the retraction is superfluous. The sincerity condition (4) commits the speaker to act in accordance with the consequences of giving up the earlier illocutionary act; otherwise he is guilty of manipulation or deceit.

In an argumentative confrontation in which the move of retraction involves withdrawing a standpoint by a protagonist in response to an antagonist's accusation of inconsistency, the protagonist and the antagonist incur a set of *argumentative commitments*

⁶⁵ I follow the view of authors who are of the opinion that the performance of an illocutionary act of any sort implies assuming a set of commitments (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984, van Eemeren 2010). Austin (1975) refers to commitments only in connection with commissives, which commit the speaker to some future course of action. Searle (1969) is of the opinion that not only commissives, but also assertives create commitments. In the case of commissives, for instance, he specifies that their point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action. Walton and Krabbe (1995) believe that participants can incur two kinds of commitments in the discussion in which they participate. One kind is the light-side commitments, which a speaker incurs when he performs an illocutionary act. The other kind is the dark-side commitments, which can remain hidden to the speaker himself, but can be brought to light as the participants work towards achieving the outcome of the discussion in which they are involved. Following the pragma-dialectical principle of externalization (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984), I specify the so-called light-side commitments that come to light as soon as a speaker advances an illocutionary act. For a detailed discussion of commitments in relation to illocutionary acts, see de Brabanter and Dendale (2008).

⁶⁶ According to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984), a set of commitments can be attributed to the speaker who has performed the illocutionary act of retraction as well as to the addressee who acquires a certain commitment when accepting the speaker's illocutionary act.

that are dictated by the argumentative situation the arguers are in at a specific juncture in the exchange.⁶⁷ Van Eemeren explains that “due to the various types of speech acts the parties have performed in the argumentative discourse preceding that juncture, including their responses to each other’s speech acts, each of the parties has compiled a certain set of commitments” (2010: 178). At the juncture at which an accusation of inconsistency is made and the protagonist retracts a standpoint, the protagonist takes the accusation, as shown in section 2.3, to have been correctly performed. That means that, in line with the essential and the propositional content conditions for retraction, the protagonist becomes committed to giving up one of the inconsistent standpoints, whereas the antagonist can no longer hold him to account for it.⁶⁸ In line with the preparatory conditions for retraction, the protagonist commits himself to assuming that the antagonist is ready to accept his response as an answer to the charge⁶⁹ and the antagonist is committed to accepting the assumption that the protagonist’s response is an answer to the charge. If the antagonist accepts the retraction of a certain standpoint as an answer to the charge, he is committed to accepting that he can no longer ask the protagonist to justify it. The protagonist who has accepted the accusation of inconsistency, without being inconsistent, cannot claim at a later stage of the discussion that the antagonist’s charge is incorrect or that there is no evidence for the charge. In line with the sincerity condition, the protagonist is committed to giving up the earlier standpoint altogether as he no longer wants to assume responsibility for it.

To summarize, Figure 4.2 includes the sets of indicative commitments obtained when an act of retraction is performed and the argumentative commitments obtained when the retraction of a standpoint responds to an accusation of inconsistency:⁷⁰

⁶⁷ An argumentative situation is defined by “the contracted mutual commitments” (van Eemeren 2010: 164). For example, in an argumentative situation at the confrontation stage in which the protagonist’s standpoint has been contradicted by the antagonist, he can hold the antagonist to account for being the protagonist of the opposite standpoint. The antagonist is committed to defend his opposing standpoint if challenged to do so (van Eemeren 2010: 178).

⁶⁸ As a consequence of giving up his standpoint, the protagonist is no longer committed to defend the standpoint.

⁶⁹ The protagonist makes the assumption that the antagonist will accept his response as an answer to the charge, because he admits that the inconsistency is an obstruction to the discussion (by taking preparatory condition (b) for an accusation of inconsistency to be fulfilled).

⁷⁰ The way in which the various commitments are identified does justice to the principle of socialization. This principle is not formulated to indicate that arguers take turns in a discussion, but to indicate that there is an association between the arguers’ commitments (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984: 12).

<i>Indicative commitments</i>	<i>Argumentative commitments</i>
The addressee is committed to no longer holding the speaker to account for the earlier illocutionary act	The antagonist can no longer hold the protagonist to account for the standpoint that is withdrawn
The speaker is committed to withdrawing the propositional content of the earlier illocutionary act	The protagonist becomes committed to giving up one of the inconsistent standpoints
The speaker is committed to assuming that the addressee is ready to accept the speaker's withdrawal of the earlier illocutionary act as well as that the addressee does not already know that the speaker is no longer committed to the earlier illocutionary act	The protagonist commits himself to assuming that the antagonist is ready to accept his response as an answer to the charge
The speaker is committed to act in accordance with the consequences of giving up the earlier illocutionary act	The protagonist is committed to no longer justify the earlier standpoint

Figure 4.2 List of indicative commitments obtained when retraction is carried out and argumentative commitments obtained when the retraction involves the withdrawal of a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency

The set of argumentative commitments⁷¹ just outlined defining the argumentative situation created at the point in the discussion in which a protagonist retracts a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency indicates that the protagonist can no longer justify the standpoint which he withdraws. In a political interview in which the politician, acting as the protagonist, is expected to give an account of his words or actions, simply retracting a standpoint will be avoided. By no longer holding a standpoint in favor of which he can argue, the politician cannot provide the expected account. Therefore, it seems sensible to assume that the politician will often have recourse to “compensating adjustments” (Hamblin 1970b: 264). Hamblin points out that when inconsistencies in one’s positions are pointed out they have to be dealt with by retraction, but “in practical cases there will often need to be compensating adjustments elsewhere.” Unfortunately, these compensating adjustments are not explained further by Hamblin. However, it is suggested that they help a speaker who retracts to remain engaged in the discussion.

⁷¹ It will become clear in the analysis of various cases in this Chapter that there are also contextual commitments that affect “the commitment store” (Hamblin 1970b) of arguers. According to van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2003), participants agree implicitly on a set of contextual commitments which arise from the specific situation in which they are engaged. They are different from the dark-side commitments distinguished by Walton and Krabbe (1995) since participants know them and consider them to function as implicit or partly implicit starting points. They are similar to Gunlogson’s (2008) implicit discourse commitments, which refer to background knowledge, assumptions, entailments, presuppositions and implicatures of explicit commitments.

4.3 Exploiting commitments to win the discussion

In the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, a protagonist has one reasonable option for continuing the discussion after retracting his standpoint in response to criticism.⁷² This option is to reformulate his standpoint in a modified version in such a way that the arguments advanced before can be maintained (van Rees 2006). When the arguments that have been advanced for the original standpoint have not been withdrawn and still serve as a defense of the modified standpoint, “this new discussion can be seen as a continuation of the original discussion” (Snoeck Henkemans 1997: 88, footnote 15). In Figure 4.3 the modified standpoint is included in the basic dialectical profile of the confrontation stage of a single dispute:

⁷² There is a second reasonable option that a protagonist can use after retracting his standpoint, namely to advance a completely new standpoint. But this amounts to initiating a new critical discussion, not to continuing the current discussion.

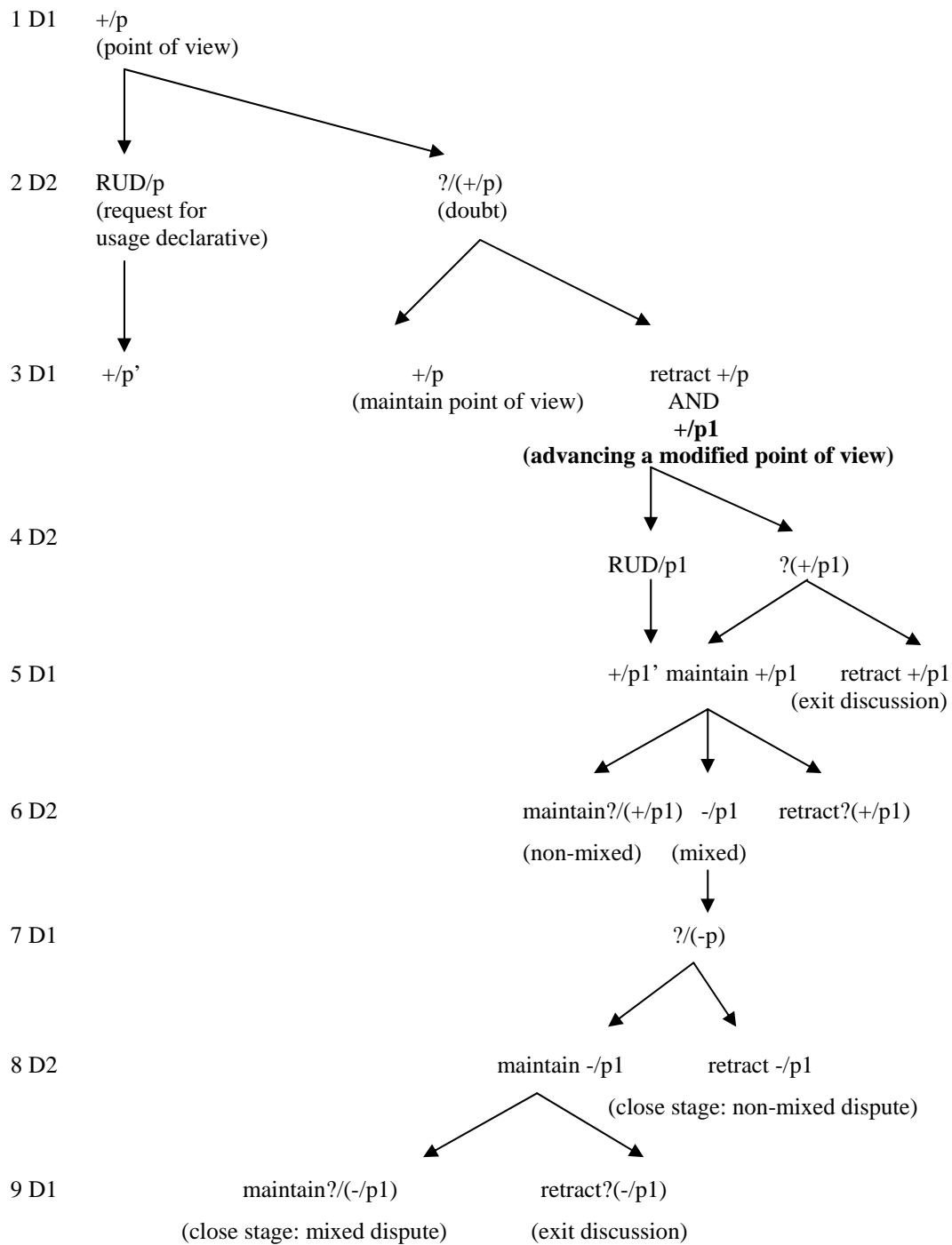


Figure 4.3 Dialectical profile of the confrontation stage in which a modified version of the protagonist's standpoint is included

The profile represented in Figure 4.3 indicates that after the protagonist has advanced a modified version of the original standpoint, the discussion can continue, because the protagonist prevents the disadvantageous ending of the discussion in an incipient phase. The protagonist avoids discussing a standpoint he cannot support, but reformulates this standpoint in the way that he finds it the easiest to defend. The dialectical choice for

presenting a reformulated standpoint is particularly suitable in a political interview, because it allows the politician to define the difference of opinion in his favor while living up to the institutional obligation of giving an account. As an instance of strategic maneuvering, the politician's move is regarded as an attempt at striking a balance between the dialectical aim of defining the difference of opinion clearly and the rhetorical aim of doing so in the way most opportune for winning the discussion. By retracting a standpoint and then reformulating it, the politician tries to realize a favorable definition of the difference of opinion (by remaining engaged in the discussion) without hindering the critical testing procedure (by doing away with the inconsistency).

In principle, a politician who wants to give an account of his words or actions can follow three dialectical routes for achieving an outcome that enables him to win the discussion. One possible route is to maintain his standpoint (+/p1) (turn 5) after being faced with continued doubt from the interviewer (turn 4). This route leads to the interviewer retracting doubt concerning +/p1, which means that the politician maintains the standpoint that *My words and/or actions are adequate*. Taking this route does not lead to a defense in the argumentation stage of his words or actions, because the discussion ends as soon as the interviewer retracts his doubt. Even though he is not living up to the institutional constraint to justify his words or actions, the politician shows at least that he does not accept the interviewer's criticism and that he is still committed to the acceptability of the proposition expressed in +/p1.

In case the interviewer responds to the politician's positive standpoint (+/p1) by advancing the opposite standpoint, a suitable option for the politician is to cast doubt on the opposite standpoint (turn 7) in such a way that the interviewer has to retract his standpoint (turn 8). The discussion then ends with a non-mixed difference of opinion which can continue into the next stages. This outcome, however, as well as the outcome resulting from taking the first option, are not to be expected if an accusation is launched against +/p1. The institutional requirement that the interviewer should be thoroughly critical of the politician's words or actions by at least casting doubt and upholding doubt on them makes it unlikely that the interviewer would retract his doubt so quickly.

A third option for the politician to win the discussion concerns the case in which his reformulated standpoint (+/p1) is confronted with the interviewer's opposite standpoint (-/p1) which is maintained (turn 8). The politician's best choice is then to maintain his doubt concerning the opposite standpoint (turn 9). By maintaining doubt the politician maintains his own positive standpoint *My words and/or actions are adequate* and can proceed to argue for it in the argumentation stage. While taking the first and second route is particularly suitable when the politician cannot argue well for his standpoint, the third route is preferable when he has strong arguments for his case. Indeed, this route is to be expected when an accusation is made in a political interview. Because the interviewer

evaluates his words or actions negatively (by advancing an opposite standpoint), in principle the politician cannot afford to do less than refuting the interviewer's criticism.

The three options for winning the discussion represent the dialectical routes a politician can take when he retracts a standpoint after being faced with an accusation of inconsistency. They are theoretical possibilities for the politician to balance the dialectical goal of defining the difference of opinion with doing so favorably in accordance with the ideal norms of critical reasonableness in the confrontation stage.⁷³ Unlike in a fully externalized and reasonable argumentative confrontation, in actual argumentative practice (such as a political interview) the politician will maneuver strategically with retracting one of the inconsistent standpoints by taking dialectical routes that may be different than those outlined theoretically. He may skip certain sequences of argumentative moves or engage in more elaborate sub-discussions than those outlined. All of this under the constraints imposed by the conventions of the activity type of a political interview.

In the actual argumentative practice of a political interview, the politician will make an attempt at reaching the dialectical aims and the rhetorical aims by coordinating in his move the three inseparable (though analytically distinguishable) aspects of strategic maneuvering: topical choice, audience adaptation and presentational means (van Eemeren 2010: 93-127). Depending on the intended results of the discussion, the routes the politician can follow at a specific juncture, the constraints of the activity type and the commitments defining the argumentative situation, each of the three aspects of strategic maneuvering is dealt with differently.⁷⁴ Starting from the theoretical outline provided in this Chapter and from the insight gained in Chapter 3 about the institutional pre-conditions for strategic maneuvering, I will now analyze in detail several cases in which a politician retracts one of the inconsistent standpoints in response to an accusation of inconsistency.⁷⁵ Thus, it will become possible to determine the strategic function of the move concerned.

Example 1

The first example selected for analysis is a fragment from a discussion on the BBC *Politics Show* which took place on November 12, 2006 between Jon Sopel and William Hague. At

⁷³ As will be shown in Chapter 5, following these routes can be sound, but can also derail into fallacious strategic maneuvering.

⁷⁴ Following van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2007, 2009), van Eemeren (2010: 163-186) elaborates on four factors that should be considered in analyzing strategic maneuvering: (a) the results that can be achieved by making a certain move, (b) the routes that can be taken to achieve the results, (c) the constraints imposed on the discourse by the institutional context, and (d) the commitments of the parties defining the argumentative situation. In an elaborate analysis of an advertorial, van Eemeren illustrates what it means to take the four factors into account.

⁷⁵ The full text of the interviews from which the following three examples have been selected can be found in the Appendix.

the time, Hague, former Conservative Party leader, was the British Shadow Foreign Secretary. The interview from which the exchange has been taken concerns the Conservatives' support to the British government concerning the issue of combating terrorism. One aspect related to this issue is the detention period of suspected terrorists about which the government is proposing an extension from 28 days to 90 days. The Conservatives reject the government's proposal on the ground that the government could not come up with "good arguments" and "effective ideas," as it could not present a single case justifying the necessity of a 90-day detention.⁷⁶

Another aspect related to the issue of combating terrorism which Soper selects for discussion in the fragment below concerns biometric identity cards. Drawing on the institutional convention of discussing political matters for which the politician can be held to account, Soper makes an issue of one of the Conservatives' political stances indicating lack of support for the government's proposal to introduce biometric identity cards. The Conservatives' non-supportive attitude is met with criticism from Soper because, according to him, it is inconsistent with an earlier supportive attitude towards the introduction of biometric identity cards. In response to the charge of inconsistency, Hague retracts one of the two standpoints. The exchange between Soper and Hague on this issue runs as follows:

Jon Soper:

And Labor say the big thing that you could do to help would be to support identity cards. It's fair to say that this is an issue that your party has rather flip flopped on isn't it.

William Hague:

Well it's... I think it's become clearer over time where we should stand on this, let's put it that way, because we've got the government adopting an identity card scheme, but one that is so bureaucratic and involves a vast data base and this is the government of serial catastrophes when it comes to data bases as we all know, costing now, according to the London School of Economics, up to twenty billion pounds and we said that if some of that money was spent instead on an effective border police and strengthened surveillance of terrorist suspects, and strengthening special branch and things like that, we'd actually get a lot further.... (interjection)...having identity cards.

Jon Soper:

Isn't that a detail of the legislation. I mean you supported identity cards back in December 2004, less than two years ago.

William Hague:

We supported, I and Michael Howard supported the principle of those. Subject to how the details were worked out. The details are not impressive and the grasp of detail and the ability to control the costs of the current government is so terrible, that it's not a scheme that we can support.

⁷⁶ By having a non-supportive attitude towards the government's proposal, Hague claims that the Conservatives act consistently. According to him, they voted against the extension before and they maintain their vote. In an interview between Soper and Hague taking place a few months later on July 1, 2007, the issue of support for the extension of the detention period is again discussed. This time, Soper questions the proclaimed consistency of the Conservatives, as Hague explains that the Conservatives would vote in favor of the extension period in case the government has "compelling evidence" that justifies the prolongation.

The argumentative characterization of the activity type of a political interview made clear that the encounter between an interviewer and a politician is part of an accountability process in which the interviewer questions and criticizes a politician and the latter is expected to clarify and justify his words or actions. The question-answer exchange between Sopel and Hague illustrates one way in which the accountability process takes place: Sopel advances an accusation of inconsistency for which Hague should answer: *it's fair to say that this is an issue your party has rather flipped flopped on isn't it*. Knowing that Sopel acts as an accounting agent, his words cannot be interpreted as a request for information whether the Conservatives have flipped flopped on the issue of biometric identity cards. Sopel, who knows very well that Hague's party is inconsistent, is in essence interested in challenging Hague to clarify and justify the Conservatives' stance not to support the government despite the earlier claimed support. His question restricts Hague to confirming the attributed flip flopping (*isn't it*), a confirmation which he can use as an argument in favor of an implicit standpoint that the Conservatives' stance is not adequate. Sopel's role is to secure answers that go beyond purely providing information; his question is, therefore, a way of subjecting Hague's views to critical testing.

The criticism raised by Sopel is not a simple expression of doubt. Sopel does not just question Hague for the Conservatives' inconsistency, but explicitly gives a negative evaluation of his party's stance (*your party has rather flipped flopped*). Sopel anticipates, given the institutional context of a political interview, that Hague will argue for an implicit standpoint that the Conservatives' stance is adequate. In an effort to show that this expected standpoint is not tenable, Sopel gives a negative evaluation that is not a mere expression of doubt, but a refutation of Hague's expected standpoint.⁷⁷ In his second turn in this fragment, Sopel argues explicitly for the inconsistency by pointing at the Conservatives' support for biometric identity cards less than two years earlier, thus turning the accusation, presented at first as an argument for the standpoint that the Conservatives' stance is not adequate, into a sub-standpoint. The reference to the shared background information is aimed at directing Hague to retract his standpoint and thereby retract his implicit standpoint that the Conservatives' stance on biometric identity cards is adequate. If Hague were to retract, the discussion would end with Sopel maintaining his criticism of inconsistency. Sopel's argumentation can be reconstructed as in Figure 4.4:

⁷⁷ Sopel's refutation of the anticipated standpoint that the Conservatives' decision is adequate comes after Hague has repeatedly argued for the adequacy of his views and actions in previous interviews in which he had to answer for being inconsistent. Just prior to the time at which the interview chosen for analysis took place, Sopel questioned Hague on the issue of consistency within the party among party members. On September 30, 2007 the same matter is again discussed.

- (1) (The Conservatives' stance regarding biometric identity cards is not adequate)
- (1).1 The Conservatives have flipped flopped on biometric identity cards
- (1).1.1 The Conservatives have supported biometric identity cards less than two years earlier, whereas now they do not support them

Figure 4.4 Sipel's argumentation in the discussion with Hague

The attributed inconsistency (sub-standpoint (1).1 in Figure 4.4), justified by the factual argument that the Conservatives supported the introduction of biometric identity cards less than two years earlier, whereas now they do not support them, makes it impossible for Hague to deny the inconsistency. His current standpoint according to which the Conservatives do not support the introduction of biometric identity cards is, according to Sipel, obviously inconsistent with Hague's other standpoint (less than two years earlier) indicating support for the introduction of biometric identity cards. But as Hague himself argues in his first reply, there are a lot of reasons for which the Conservatives cannot be supportive of biometric identity cards (as argued in the three main arguments according to which the details are not impressive, the card scheme is bureaucratic, and the costs are terrible).

In this initial situation of the political interview, Hague has only one option: to retract one of the inconsistent standpoints. As an accountable agent who has to justify his performance, retracting a standpoint, though, is certainly not the best option for Hague. It would show to the television-watching audience that he is not able to provide an account. This would have negative consequences for the political party Hague represents, eventually coming to light in the long term. A party which cannot act consistently on such an important matter cannot be expected to be fit for solving the problems of the country and does not have the public's support.

To avoid losing the discussion, Hague 'compensates' for the retraction to which he is obliged: he advances a modified version of the original standpoint indicating support for the introduction of biometric identity cards. Hague modifies his original standpoint by making a dissociation between the principle of introducing biometric identity cards and the practice of introducing biometric identity cards (*I and Michael Howard supported the principle of those. Subject to how the details were worked out*).⁷⁸ As van Rees (2009: 64)

⁷⁸ The retraction of the original standpoint is implicit in the dissociation Hague makes, as a speaker cannot advance a modified standpoint without having retracted the earlier standpoint. The list of allowable illocutionary acts specified in the ideal model of critical discussion (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984: 101) makes it possible to distinguish analytically moves that are left implicit in the discourse (such as the retraction of a standpoint). There are also other ways to identify the retraction of a standpoint. As van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2007a: 62) remark, the word "but" is an indicator that what follows after it is an alternative to a standpoint which is withdrawn. Moreover, the identity conditions that

explains, the use of dissociation allows Hague to give an interpretation of his standpoint according to which the support showed earlier concerned the principle and it was a conditional support that depended on the details of putting the idea of the introduction of biometric identity cards into practice. Since the details have not been worked out satisfactorily, the Conservatives, according to Hague, cannot be supportive of the idea of introducing biometric identity cards. In fact, Hague seems to suggest that his supportive standpoint for the introduction of biometric identity cards always concerned the principle and not the details, which means that his party has never been inconsistent. Guided by the characterization of the activity type of a political interview according to which the politician is the protagonist of the standpoint that *My (party's) words and/or actions are adequate*, Hague's argumentation can be reconstructed as in Figure 4.5:

- (1) (The Conservatives' stance regarding biometric identity cards is adequate)
- ((1).1) (The Conservatives are not inconsistent about biometric identity cards)
- ((1).1).1a Less than two years ago, the Conservatives supported the principle, not the details of introducing biometric identity cards
- ((1).1).1b (There was good reason not to support the details)
- ((1).1).1b).1a The details are not impressive
- ((1).1).1b).1a.1 The details have not been worked out satisfactorily
- ((1).1).1b).1b The card scheme is bureaucratic
- ((1).1).1b).1b. 1 The card scheme involves a vast database
- ((1).1).1b).1c The costs are terrible
- ((1).1).1b).1c.1 The scheme costs two billion pounds
- ((1).1).1b).1d The money should be used instead on an effective border police and strengthened surveillance of terrorist suspects

Figure 4.5 Hague's argumentation

By arguing in the way shown in this reconstruction, Hague lives up to his political role obliging him to refute Sipel's criticism ((1) in Figure 4.4) that the Conservatives' stance is not adequate. At the same time, he accepts the inconsistency of which he is accused, as it would be very strange, when confronted with clear proof ((1).1.1 in Figure 4.4), to deny it as being untrue. Hague finds moreover a way to provide an account by advancing a modified version of the original standpoint and arguing for it (((1).1).1b).1a, (((1).1).1b).1b, and (((1).1).1b).1c in Figure 4.5).

The choice for continuing the discussion by retracting one of the inconsistent standpoints and immediately afterwards advancing a modified standpoint leaves Hague

characterize the illocutionary act of retraction can be used as pointers to the move of retraction of a standpoint.

with two dialectical routes he can follow for winning the discussion. One of the dialectical routes, as shown in the dialectical profile of the confrontation stage in which a modified standpoint is included (4.2), is to try and lead Sopel to immediately retract his criticism. The choice for taking this route seems suitable because Hague would show that Sopel's standpoint that the Conservatives' stance is not adequate is not tenable by maintaining the opposite standpoint. This choice, however, is unsuitable in this political interview. Following this route could be an option in a political interview if Sopel had advanced mere criticism instead of an accusation of inconsistency. Such a charge is too serious and the matter discussed too important for Hague to afford not accounting for his party's decision.

Another option that Hague could take to win the discussion is to lead the sub-discussion into a mixed difference of opinion in which he advances arguments justifying the Conservatives' stance. If Hague is to live up to his institutional obligation to defend the Conservatives' stance, he has to challenge and refute Sopel's arguments in which criticism of their stance is expressed. In this case in which a serious charge is raised, the argumentative sub-confrontation is preconditioned to result in a mixed difference of opinion. What Hague is expected to do is to not accept Sopel's criticism of the Conservatives' decision and also to refute it by arguing for the opposite (sub-)standpoint. If this sequential way of proceeding is accepted, the difference of opinion ends in Hague's favor.

By taking a dialectical route which eventually leads him to argue for his (sub)standpoint, Hague exploits to his advantage the argumentative situation created at the point in the discussion in which Sopel advances an accusation of inconsistency and Hague has to retract his standpoint. In the first place, Hague incurs the commitment of giving up a standpoint, but he turns this constraint into an opportunity for advancing a modified version of the original standpoint for which the earlier advanced arguments are more suitable. Further, Sopel becomes committed to accepting that Hague's response is an answer to the charge of inconsistency (Figure 4.2)⁷⁹ so that he cannot claim later that Hague is avoiding an answer. It is characteristic of a political interview that the politician evading an answer creates an additional burden of justification for evasion. By making Sopel accept that his modified standpoint counts as an answer to the charge of inconsistency, Hague avoids incurring an additional burden of justification.

Obtaining an outcome in which Hague gives an account of the Conservatives' political stance on biometric identity cards is a potentially effective confrontational maneuver in the political interview at hand due to the combined exploitation of the three aspects of strategic

⁷⁹ As will be shown, accepting Hague's response as an answer to the charge of inconsistency is a way of emphasizing that the preparatory conditions of an accusation of inconsistency (Chapter 2) have been fulfilled. Hence, Hague adapts to his interlocutor (van Eemeren 2010: 112).

maneuvering. First, Hague makes a choice from the available *topical potential* by selecting from the range of options outlined in the dialectical profile of the confrontation stage. This choice amounts to retracting one of the inconsistent standpoints which is subsequently modified. This choice is vital to Hague in this political interview: just as Sipel chooses to hold him to account by pursuing the most critical line of inquiry, Hague should find a way to give an account of the Conservatives' stance on biometric identity cards that is most effective in taking away Sipel's criticism.

In order to define clearly the difference of opinion with Sipel, Hague can choose from a number of options (Figure 4.3). His preference is for responding to the criticism by advancing a modified version of the original standpoint that the Conservatives support the introduction of biometric identity cards. In the modified version, Hague presents the support as conditional upon the way in which the details are worked out. Given that the details have not been worked out well, Hague can use this fact as a reason for the Conservatives to have changed their mind.

By defining the confrontation in accordance with his preference for a conditional support for biometric identity cards, Hague chooses a middle ground that does not fully accept the accusation of inconsistency, but does not reject it either. Sipel's charge is directed at making Hague accept the accusation as correct. This involves accepting that there is an inconsistency, that the presence of an inconsistency is an obstruction to the argumentative exchange in which Hague and Sipel are engaged and that a response that answers the charge should be given (as specified in the preparatory conditions of an accusation of inconsistency). In the political domain in which the discussion takes place, accepting the charge of inconsistency in this way by simply retracting his standpoint would raise a question about Hague's credibility before the audience. What is the audience to believe of a politician who is confronted with a significant allegation but does not take the opportunity to respond (or cannot respond) by accounting for his words? At the same time, it is almost impossible for Hague to reject the accusation: he is presented with clear evidence that less than two years earlier the Conservatives have taken the opposite stance regarding biometric identity cards. Making a choice for a conditional support and arguing for it in the circumstances perhaps the most effective topical selection.

Second, Hague responds to *audience demand* in his strategic maneuvering.⁸⁰ At all times, the discussion takes place between Hague and Sipel, but as in most activity types making use of deliberation, the audience at home is the primary addressee. Just as Hague's words are scrutinized by Sipel in order to be in agreement with the audience's presumed interest in Hague's political stance, as a holder of political authority Hague is primarily

⁸⁰ According to van Eemeren (2010: 108), two issues are crucial in adapting to audience demand: identifying the audience and identifying their relevant views and preferences.

interested in making a favorable impression on the public. Having to address both Soper and the television-watching audience, Hague has to take into account the commitments and preferences of the immediate interlocutor and those of the general public.

The task of adapting himself to Soper is fulfilled by Hague by taking into account that in the political interview Soper's role is to thoroughly criticize his interlocutor. To respond as effectively as possible to such criticism, Hague tries to give a response that has the highest chances of being accepted as an answer to the charge. To make his response acceptable, one of the best policies, as remarked by van Eemeren (2010: 112), is to act as if the preparatory conditions of the accusation of inconsistency have been fulfilled. These conditions indicate which requirements regarding the addressee must be fulfilled for a correct performance of the illocutionary act. That is to say, a potentially suitable maneuvering for Hague is to accept that he has committed an inconsistency, which is obstructing the discussion in which participants are involved. However, simply accepting that an inconsistency is at issue by retracting a standpoint is not the most favorable choice. Consequently, Hague finds a way to make his response more acceptable by advancing a modified version of his standpoint that is justified in the way shown in Figure 4.5.

The task of identifying the views and preferences of the audience at home is a more difficult enterprise for Hague. The audience of political interviews is both multiple (the members of the audience have different positions regarding the issue under discussion) and mixed (they have different starting points).⁸¹ Despite this diversity in audience, the institutional context is such that certain preferences can be expected. Because the audience usually judges the acceptability of a politician's words or actions in comparison with the words or actions of his political rivals, Hague draws on this institutional characteristic by directing his response not only against Soper's statement, but also against his political opponents. In the reformulated standpoint (*I and Michael Howard supported the principle of those. Subject to how the details were worked out*), *subject to how the details were worked out* suggests that the details have not been worked well by the government. That Hague's words criticize the government for the lack of quality of the details of how the idea of introducing biometric identity cards has been put into practice is confirmed when arguments are given for why there is good reason for the Conservatives not to support the details. In this way, the constraint of responding to criticism is turned into an opportunity to portray the Conservatives as offering a better alternative to combating terrorism: instead of using the money on biometric identity cards, it should be used on an effective border police and strengthened surveillance of terrorist suspects. By providing this argument (((1).1).1b).1d in Figure 4.5) for the implicit standpoint that the Conservatives' stance is

⁸¹ Van Eemeren (2010: 110) distinguishes in the case of a heterogeneous audience between a multiple and a mixed audience.

adequate ((1) in Figure 4.5) Hague lives up to his political role of refuting the potential criticism that the Conservatives are not making a concrete proposal for combating terrorism.⁸²

Hague's retraction of his original standpoint and his advancing a modified version of it is most likely well adapted to the audience if one takes into account that it allows him to show that the Conservatives have never been inconsistent. By reformulating his standpoint implying that it has always concerned the principle and not the details of putting the idea of biometric identity cards into practice, Hague claims that no change of position has occurred. Creating this impression gives Hague the advantage that the public may judge his words as acceptable. The audience applies a standard of consistency that is common to all activity types in the political domain. A politician who cannot be at least consistent cannot be expected to solve the country's problems.

Finally, Hague makes a potentially effective *presentational choice* for his strategic maneuvering. Soper's accusation of inconsistency is formulated as a polar question (*it's fair to say that this is an issue your party has rather flipped flopped isn't it*), aimed at limiting Hague's options for a response to either an explicit acceptance or a rejection. Hague has to design his response in such a way that neither of the two possibilities is chosen, because they are both disadvantageous for him. Accepting the charge is not a good option because it makes it look as if Hague is a politician who cannot be trusted because he does not meet a standard of consistency. Rejecting the accusation is impossible, because the accusation is well justified by a factual argument ((1).1.1 in Figure 4.4). The use of a dissociation to distinguish between the principle and the practice of introducing biometric identity cards is perhaps most suitable in a case in which an inconsistency is pointed out (van Rees 2009: 63). Hague backs out from the commitment to the original standpoint (indicating a supportive attitude towards the introduction of biometric identity cards), but at the same time he maintains a certain interpretation of this standpoint (the Conservatives support the principle of introducing biometric identity cards). He claims moreover that the original standpoint always indicated support for the principle of introducing biometric identity cards. If this perspective is accepted, it looks as if the Conservatives have not been inconsistent at all.⁸³

⁸² The audience is also taken into account in argument ((1).1).1b).1c (The costs are terrible) supported in turn by ((1).1).1b).1c.1 (The scheme costs two billion pounds). These two arguments suggest that some of the money the audience pays is wasted.

⁸³ Van Rees (2009: 120-121) discusses three reasons for which the use of a dissociation can gain the audience's acceptance: (a) it inherently acknowledges the audience's views (in the case at hand, Hague acknowledges to some extent that Soper's accusation is correct); (b) it obviates the need to argue for one's position by offering an alternative interpretation (enough to convince the audience that the original interpretation does not hold), and (c) it is authoritatively posed (in this case, the distinction between the principle and the practice is presented as self-evident, presupposing that the distinction introduced is

Example 2

Another example selected for analyzing the politician's strategic maneuvering in a political interview comes from a discussion between Jon Sopel and Yvette Cooper on July 15, 2007. At the time of the interview, Cooper was the Housing Minister of Great Britain. As can be expected, Cooper is interviewed on an issue for which she is in the first place responsible: housing in Great Britain. In relation to this issue, Sopel questions Cooper in a way that is clearly part of the game of playing the devil's advocate. He asks questions with regard to the building of new housing, the role of the local councils and the type of new housing (social housing, private housing and shared ownership), which are not so much aimed at obtaining information from Cooper on these matters as at challenging her to endorse positions she would rather not take and clarify problems to which Cooper should have a solution in case they would arise. The following fragment is an illustration from the beginning of the interview in which Sopel presses Cooper to respond to critical questions:

Jon Sopel:

Well the minister responsible for housing is Yvette Cooper and it was a sign of Gordon Brown's intent on this issue that she's one of the new faces round the Cabinet table. I spoke to her just before we came on air and asked her if Britain should follow Germany's example and build on more green field sites.

Yvette Cooper:

Well, we do need to build more homes because we need to help first time buyers and also people who are on council waiting lists and who need homes for the future, but we do think the priority should be around brown field land. We've already seen a big increase in the proportion of homes being built on brown field land, over the last ten years and we think that's important but ultimately, local councils need to decide what the best location is in their area.

Jon Sopel:

But you've had a review on this, the Barker Review, that looked at what the availability would be of brown field sites, came up with a figure of just under being able to create a million new homes, your estimate is that you need three and a half million new homes.

Yvette Cooper:

That's right. And the thing about brown field land is that it comes, it becomes available all the time because you have you know, maybe a factory that closes or maybe use that changes in a particular area, so brown field land does develop and change. But ultimately, it is for local councils to decide what is the best location in their area, and they have to look at all the areas you know, around the town, the town centre, in their communities, because they'll know best where these homes should best be built to meet their local needs.

Jon Sopel:

You keep saying brown field sites, but brown field sites are also our playing fields our parks, our gardens.

accepted; the use of the definite article *the* in *I and Michael Howard supported the principle of those. Subject to how the details were worked out* is an indicator of this self-evidence).

Yvette Cooper:

No. That's not right. Parks and playing fields have special protection and we have also given local councils greater powers to differentiate between different kinds of brown field land, so that they can introduce much stronger protections on perhaps garden land in an area, where they've got alternative sites available.

But the bottom line is, that people do need to identify where the homes should go. It's no good just saying, here's all the areas we're going to protect and oh, there's nothing left, you know, we're not going to build any homes anywhere. We need to build the homes but of course, we've got to protect the urban green spaces and make sure, that you know, those are the parks and the play areas for the children to play in as they grow.

Jon Sopel:

Because one of the things we saw in that film there, in Germany was that people that person saying, look, you can't just worry about fossilizing the countryside and keeping that beautiful and then just cramming everybody tight in to cities and towns. They've got to have quality of life too.

Yvette Cooper:

Well you've got to improve both the towns and cities but also rural areas. We've been working for example with the affordable rural housing commission on the need to build more affordable housing in rural areas because sometimes you get small villages and areas where they are in danger of becoming fossilized if they don't have small numbers of affordable homes and other homes being built in those communities too. So this is about you know, recognising the different character of different communities but every single community recognising that more homes do need to be built.

As can be seen in this fragment, in his first question Sopel asks Cooper to express a view with regard to building on green field sites following a German example. Cooper advances a view according to which more houses need to be built, but the priority should be around brown field sites. In the same answer, Cooper emphasizes that local councils will eventually decide on the best location. In response to this, Sopel remarks that the Barker Review indicates that there is a very great need for houses: no less than approximately three and a half million homes need to be built to meet the current needs. This remark is obviously not a piece of information which Sopel gives to Cooper. As Housing Minister, she is informed about such statistical data. The question is a challenge to make Cooper justify her view expressed in answer to Sopel's first question. She supports her view that the priority should be around brown fields by pointing at the large number of factories which are often closed down and on the land of which new houses can be built. Once again, Cooper underlines that it is eventually for the local councils to take the decisions. Sopel puts more pressure on Cooper to come up with arguments for supporting brown field sites: he points out that brown field sites include parks and gardens. By making this remark, Sopel would like Cooper to explain how she will put into practice the plan to build so many houses. Mentioning the parks and gardens is a way of challenging her to endorse a position according to which this land could be used for meeting housing needs. After Cooper explains that there are different kinds of brown fields, some of which such as parks and gardens are protected and will not be built on, she emphasizes that a solution needs to

be found to solve the housing problem. Sopel keeps on raising new doubts: if the green space is so much protected, the plan of building so many new houses will end up with cramming everyone into towns and cities and fossilizing the countryside. Sopel tries to make Cooper concede that this solution is not good because the quality of life will be lowered.⁸⁴

Returning to the power of the local councils to take decisions on the issue of housing, Sopel criticizes Cooper because, as he puts it, she said in the beginning of the interview that local councils are free to take decisions about housing, whereas later in the same interview she said that local councils are not in fact free to do so. Like in Hague's response in example 1, Cooper replies to the charge of inconsistency by retracting one of the two standpoints. The exchange between Sopel and Cooper in which the accusation of inconsistency is made is reproduced below:

Jon Sopel:

You keep stressing that it's up to local councils, local councils to decide what is the best thing to do. What do you do with the local council who say, well frankly, we don't think we want to build that much.

Yvette Cooper:

Well we do have a serious problem with Conservative local councils in particular across the south east region in particular, but not just there, who are opposing increases in housing...the south east Regional Assembly indeed has been arguing for cuts in the level of house building over the next few years, which I just think it's bonkers, given the needs we have. But I think it's, you know, it's not on really for councils to simply turn their backs and say, well we don't want any new houses round here, build them somewhere else. Build them in another community, build them in another town.

Every town, every city, every community has first time buyers who can't get on the ladder, has sons and daughters who are still stuck living at home with their mum and dad because they just can't afford anywhere to live, that is not fair and every community needs to recognize its responsibility to do something about that.

Jon Sopel:

But you just said at the start, it's up to councils to decide. Councils could decide they don't want to build extra houses, then what are you going to do about it.

Yvette Cooper:

No, we're clear that the way that the regional planning process works and the way that local councils have to wait together, they will all have to accept their responsibility to deliver more homes. Where they have the flexibilities around where within their community the homes should be built, you know, what the best location is, whether they've got good brown fields available and what kinds of homes.

You know, they may need more family homes in their area to look at those sorts of issues as well. What they can't do is turn their backs on their responsibility to deliver more homes and interestingly, we had forty towns and cities came forward over the last twelve months to say, well we want to increase the level of homes in our area.

⁸⁴ This example is a good illustration of the way in which retrospective accountability (accounting for what the politician has said and done) as well as prospective accountability (accounting for what the politician plans to do) are at work.

Sopel's first question in the fragment just mentioned is meant to put more pressure on Cooper to give a justification of her plans. She is asked to imagine a situation in which local councils, making use of the power they have to make decisions, would say that they do not want to build more (*You keep stressing that it's up to local councils, local councils to decide what is the best thing to do. What do you do with the local council who say, well frankly, we don't think we want to build that much*). After Cooper has emphasized that a decision to build is not up to the local councils, Sopel accuses Cooper of holding inconsistent standpoints. According to him, she said in the beginning of the interview that it is up to councils to decide about the construction of new houses, but now she seems to advocate this no longer (*But you just said at the start, it's up to councils to decide*). Knowing that in this interview Sopel plays the devil's advocate who claims that *The politician's words and/or actions are not adequate*, his criticism can be reconstructed in the argumentation structure of the justification of the accusation in Figure 4.6:

- (1) (Cooper's view with regard to the construction of new houses is not adequate)
- ((1).1) (Cooper's view with regard to the decisional power of the local councils on the construction of new houses is inconsistent)
- ((1).1).1 Cooper says that local councils cannot take decisions with regard to the construction of new houses
- ((((1).1).1)') (Local councils not being allowed to take decisions with regard to the construction of new houses is the opposite of Cooper's saying in the beginning of the interview that local councils can take such decisions)

Figure 4.6 Sopel's argumentation in the discussion with Cooper

This reconstruction shows that Sopel's accusation of inconsistency is not a simple criticism. It is a way of justifying that Cooper's view on the decisional power of the local councils is not adequate in order to challenge her once more to clarify and justify her views. However, the attribution of two inconsistent commitments about the power of the local councils to build new houses (((1).1).1 in Figure 4.6) is not justified. In the beginning of the interview, Cooper does not simply say that *it's up to councils to decide*, as Sopel claims, but she says that *it's up to councils to decide what the best location is in their area*.⁸⁵ In this formulation, it is ambiguous whether the local councils can decide whether to build on brown fields or not or whether they can decide what the best location is on these brown fields. Taking advantage of this ambiguity, Sopel interprets the advocated power of the local councils as referring to full power to take decisions. Because this power

⁸⁵ Sopel seems guilty in this case of a straw man fallacy, because he attributes to Cooper more than what she actually says.

is later in the interview restricted to power where to build and what type of houses to build, Sopel accuses Cooper of being inconsistent.

In the context of a political interview, Sopel's accusation of inconsistency is a challenge to respond to the charge (as specified in the essential condition of an accusation of inconsistency) and, at the same time, a request for clarification is embedded in the charge (*what are you going to do about it*). Cooper draws on this institutional characteristic by interpreting Sopel's charge as a request for clarifying how the responsibilities of the local councils are precisely divided. However, in view of her role as a politician, she does more than simply clarify things. She rejects any suggestion that her view with regard to the decisional power of the local councils is not adequate ((1) in Figure 4.7) by implicitly arguing that her view with regard to the decisional power of the local councils is not inconsistent (((1).1) in Figure 4.8). The argument that she is not inconsistent is further supported by Cooper when she argues that local councils do have decisional power, but not the power to decide whether to build nor not (*No, we're clear that the way that the regional planning process works and the way that local councils have to wait together, they will all have to accept their responsibility to deliver more homes. Where they have the flexibilities around where within their community the homes should be built, you know, what the best location is, whether they've got good brown fields available and what kinds of homes*). The full reconstruction of Cooper's argumentation can be represented as follows:

- (1) (My view with regard to the decisional power of the local councils concerning the construction of new houses is adequate)
- ((1).1) (My view with regard to the decisional power of the local councils is not inconsistent, nor does it amount to taking away too much decisional power from the local councils)
- ((1).1).1a Local councils do have decisional power, but not power whether to build or not
- ((1).1).1b) (There is good reason for the local councils not to have the power to decide whether to build or not)
- ((1).1).1b).1 There is a great need for housing
- ((1).1).1b).1.1 There are a lot of first time buyers who do not have a house

Figure 4.7 Cooper's argumentation

By embedding a clarification in her answer, Cooper accepts that what she said in the beginning of the interview has been unclear. In addition to making clear what kind of power local councils have, she also argues why local councils do not have the power to decide whether to build or not (((1).1).1b), ((1).1).1b).1, and ((1).1).1b).1.1 in Figure 4.7). In her answer, addressing directly Sopel's accusation of inconsistency (((1).1).1a in Figure 4.7), she admits that her original (unclear) standpoint about the power of the local

councils is tenable only if a more limited interpretation is given: local councils have the power to decide about the location, the brown fields and the kinds of homes. Cooper restricts the decisional power of the local councils originally advocated by retracting her standpoint and reformulating it in terms of responsibilities (*they will all have to accept their responsibility to deliver more homes*). In this way, she leaves the impression that there is no inconsistency and clarifies what might have been unclear.

Cooper's solution to solve the problem of inconsistency is probably the most suitable strategic choice from the available *topical potential*. At this stage of the discussion, she could have maintained exactly what she said in the beginning. But because of the unclear earlier formulation, by maintaining it, she would have given the impression that local councils have full power to take decisions. This topical choice would have made her look inconsistent: if local councils have the power to decide, as she said in the beginning, then this is inconsistent with the what she says later in the interview when she circumscribes the power of the local councils to deciding about where to build and what kind of houses to build. Another option for Cooper could be to retract what she said in the beginning. But if she retracts the original standpoint, again because of the unclear formulation, it would have looked as if local councils do not have the power to take decisions. This is obviously an option she would rather avoid: local councils are executive bodies and taking away their decisional power would be an abuse. Given that neither of the options just outlined is advantageous, Cooper goes for a middle choice: she retracts to some extent what she said in the beginning, reformulates that in terms of responsibilities, and clarifies how these responsibilities are divided. In this way, she is no longer committed to the standpoint she originally advanced, but exploits this by advancing a reformulated standpoint that makes her no longer seem inconsistent. Equally important, Soper becomes committed to accepting Cooper's answer as a response to the charge of inconsistency and cannot claim otherwise at a later stage of the discussion. That is to say, Soper has to retract his criticism of inconsistency.

Cooper's maneuvering with the topical potential is potentially effective if only because in this way the power of the local councils is on the one hand acknowledged, as the local councils would like, but on the other hand restricted, as she would like. Her maneuvering may moreover be effective because it is designed in such a way that *audience demands* are perfectly met. In the interview, Cooper has to address not just Soper as the direct interlocutor, but also the general public watching the interview and the local councils. In order to respond to Soper's views and commitments, Cooper is obliged to address the issue of inconsistency or she cannot clear herself from the accusation. In the context of a political interview, Cooper cannot straightaway deny the charge, despite her knowing that she has not been inconsistent as Soper claims. Even the perception of an inconsistency can be extremely damaging, because it might suggest that Cooper is

indecisive. She has to achieve her aim of making Sopel retract any criticism in a less direct manner. She implicitly acknowledges that the way she talked in the beginning is at least unclear by providing a clarification of what she said before. Her clarification is well adapted to the local councils: they not only know now exactly what their responsibilities are, but also that they have power to take certain decisions. Their power is limited, but on objective grounds: there are many people in need of housing (as indicated in the statistics, according to which at least forty cities and towns are in need of housing). Pointing at people's needs will in all probability also go down well with the public, as among them there are certainly also those in need of housing. These people will easily accept that whether to build or not should not be a matter of choice for the local councils, but a responsibility they have to assume.

The characterization of a political interview has shown that in an accountability process taking place in a deliberative context, imposing sanctions is part of the game. Cooper avoids being sanctioned by the public by showing a close interest in the people's needs. She emphasizes their need for housing and imposes the construction of new houses as a responsibility that has to be assumed and is not a matter of choice.

The clarity with which Cooper specifies which responsibilities and which flexibilities local councils have seems a good choice in terms of *presentational means*. Although it may seem at first sight as if no special presentational devices are employed, the precision with which things are presented is an excellent means for making Cooper's move more easily acceptable. After all, it is exactly a lack of clarity which Sopel exploits in his accusation of inconsistency. By readjusting this problematic aspect, Cooper has better chances of making herself understood (thus obtaining the desired communicative effect) and eventually have her move accepted (thus obtaining the desired interactional effect).

Example 3

A final example in which I analyze a politician's strategic maneuvering comes from an interview between Jon Sopel and Alan Duncan on December 9, 2007. At the time of the interview, Duncan was Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. The example has been mentioned briefly in the introductory chapter to illustrate the case in which an accusation is made to point at an inconsistency between words. Sopel criticizes the Conservatives, represented here by Duncan, for being in favor of the use of nuclear energy, because this favorable attitude is inconsistent with a previously expressed non-supportive attitude towards the use of nuclear energy. In response to the charge, Duncan retracts one of the inconsistent standpoints in order to no longer seem inconsistent. The exchange between Sopel and Duncan is reproduced as follows:

Jon Sopel:

And on nuclear, the government says that obviously has to be part of the mix. Are you on that page as well.

Alan Duncan:

Our policy is absolutely clear and it's again, very similar, we want approval for sites and designs. We want a proper carbon price, we want honesty about costs, with no subsidy. Get on with the decision to do something with the waste, again, David Cameron said that this week, and I think the government has been a bit slow on working out what to do with nuclear waste. So then people can invest and I think probably they will.

Jon Sopel:

You were rather more skeptical the last time I spoke to you when you were on this programme – we can just have a listen to what you said last time.

'we think that the nuclear power sector, should be there as a last resort in many respects. We want to explore every conceivable method of generating electricity before we go to nuclear'

Alan Duncan:

so fluent.

Jon Sopel:

Yes. But you were completely different, you were very skeptical there. It has to be the last option, now you're saying, we're on the same page as the government and yes, let's get on with it.

Alan Duncan:

I think what's important with nuclear is to explain the policy. I think it's unhelpful to get hooked on two words and I think the policy as it has always been is exactly as I've just explained.

Jon Sopel:

So you are fine about nuclear.

In this fragment, Sopel asks Duncan to express a view with regard to the use of nuclear energy (*And on nuclear, the government says that obviously has to be part of the mix. Are you on that page as well*). Taking into account what Sopel says in his next reply (*You were rather more skeptical the last time I spoke to you when you were on this programme – we can just have a listen to what you said last time*), Sopel's first question cannot really be meant to gain information from Duncan. Sopel knows very well from a previous interview what the Conservatives' view on the use of nuclear energy is, and he also knows that they have changed their view. As Duncan himself mentions, David Cameron, the Leader of the Conservatives, made their (supportive) view known earlier in the same week in which the interview was held (*Get on with the decision to do something with the waste, again, David Cameron said that this week*). Therefore, Sopel's first question is preparatory for the accusation of inconsistency launched in his next reply, which he later maintains (*But you were completely different, you were very skeptical there. It has to be the last option, now*

you're saying, we're on the same page as the government and yes, let's get on with it). Because a discussion on the issue of nuclear energy has taken place before, Sipel opens a new discussion on the same issue precisely to challenge Duncan to account for the Conservatives' change of position. Knowing that Sipel argues for the standpoint that *The Conservatives' views with regard to the use of nuclear energy are not adequate*, his argumentation can be reconstructed in the following way:

- (1) (The Conservatives' views with regard to the use of nuclear energy are not adequate)
- ((1).1) (The Conservatives' views with regard to the use of nuclear energy are inconsistent)
- ((1).1).1 Duncan said in a previous interview that the Conservatives do not support the use of nuclear energy, whereas now they support the use of nuclear energy

Figure 4.8 Sipel's argumentation in the discussion with Duncan

Just like in examples 1 and 2 in which the politicians were challenged to respond to a charge of inconsistency, Sipel's accusation criticizes the Conservatives in an attempt at obtaining from Duncan an account that justifies the change of position. To make his accusation acceptable, Sipel justifies it by quoting Duncan's earlier statement indicating, according to Sipel, lack of support for the use of nuclear energy. The word-by-word quote leaves Duncan only one option to respond: he has to retract what he said earlier. He is obliged to maintain the support just claimed, if only because otherwise he would claim the opposite of what the Leader of the Conservatives said earlier that week. But simply retracting what he said earlier means conceding that Sipel's criticism is correct. For the public the Conservatives are then people who cannot be trusted, because they easily change their mind without a good reason for doing so. Realizing that a potentially negative image about his party could be created for the audience at home, Duncan tries to find a way out. Although not explicitly, he makes a dissociation between the nuclear energy policy and the nuclear energy practice. As far as the policy is concerned, Duncan says, the Conservatives have always been in support of the use of nuclear energy. The current standpoint regards this policy of using nuclear energy, which has never changed, while the previous statement quoted by Sipel concerned something else (the practice of using nuclear energy). The dissociation enables Duncan to give a particular interpretation of his earlier standpoint – presented as the less important one (concerning the practice) – in which he gives up this standpoint, while maintaining another interpretation of the standpoint (concerning the policy) presented as the most important interpretation. Duncan's argumentation can be represented in the following argumentation structure:

- (1) (The Conservatives' views with regard to the use of nuclear energy are adequate)
- ((1).1) (The Conservatives' views with regard to the use of nuclear energy are not inconsistent)
- ((1).1).1 The Conservatives have never opposed the policy of using nuclear energy, but the practice of using nuclear energy

Figure 4.9 Duncan's argumentation

Because Sopel justifies the accusation of inconsistency with a word-by-word quote Duncan cannot simply deny what he has said earlier. The only option from the *topical potential* is to retract the originally advanced standpoint. This move is disadvantageous to him because he gives up something he said himself and for which he was supposed to have good arguments. Instead, Duncan claims support for the policy of using nuclear energy without giving any further argumentation. The dissociation between the policy of using nuclear energy and the practice of using nuclear energy is a *presentational means* with which Duncan exploits the constraint of having to retract his original standpoint to his advantage. He backs out from a commitment to a standpoint but makes it look like this is not really the case: his original standpoint concerned something else (the practice of using nuclear energy) that he presents as not very important. According to Duncan, the crucial aspect is the policy of using nuclear energy (*what's important with nuclear is to explain the policy*). The constraint of having to retract his original standpoint is moreover exploited for reasons of *audience adaptation*. By retracting his standpoint, Duncan grants Sopel a concession that his accusation is correct and needs to be dealt with by a retraction. But the concession Duncan makes concerns an interpretation that is presented as marginal (about the practice of using nuclear energy), while he takes a position on an interpretation that suits him better (about the policy of using nuclear energy). In the way the policy is introduced, the audience will find it almost impossible to reject Duncan's reformulated standpoint. His words (we want a *proper* carbon price, we want *honesty* about costs, so then *people* can invest) are potentially well suited to elicit a positive attitude. Duncan does not precize further what a proper price exactly is or what honesty about costs means. Without further precization, people associate with these words the values that they subscribe to.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ This example is very similar to the one provided and discussed by Naess (1966: 92-93) in which a politician's way of expression concerning democracy suggests furthering the interests of the people. According to Naess, a wording without further precization makes it almost impossible not to be accepted.

4.4 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have characterized a politician's responses to an interviewer's accusation of inconsistency that are realized by retracting one of the inconsistent standpoints. In a political interview, the interviewer's charge of inconsistency is a criticism of the politician's words or actions that functions as an implicit argument in support of the standpoint that the politician's words or actions are not adequate. Anticipating that such a charge will not be easily accepted, the interviewer justifies his accusation, thus turning the argument into a sub-standpoint. In the context of a political interview, the politician has to respond to such criticism by going beyond merely questioning its acceptability. He has to argue against the interviewer's charge of inconsistency and in favor of a standpoint according to which his words or actions are adequate. In order to give the defense expected of him in a political interview, the politician who has to retract a standpoint also needs to find a compensating adjustment. To remain within the boundaries of reasonableness, this adjustment is a reformulated standpoint that allows him to continue the discussion and argue for the adequacy of his words or actions.

A detailed analysis of three argumentative exchanges in which politicians are accused of being inconsistent has illustrated what kind of advantages a politician can gain when he retracts one of the inconsistent standpoints and afterwards reformulates it. The analysis has brought to light three patterns of confrontational strategic maneuvering which a politician resorts to when he is confronted with an accusation of inconsistency. The first pattern, as illustrated by the Sopel-Hague exchange, amounts to reformulating the original standpoint in such a way that in the reformulated standpoint the politician's support is dependent upon certain conditions being fulfilled. The second pattern, as can be seen in the Sopel-Cooper exchange, consists in the politician reformulating the original standpoint by portraying the interviewer's interpretation that there is an inconsistency as a misunderstanding that needs clarification. The third pattern, as can be seen in the Sopel-Duncan exchange, amounts to reformulating the original standpoint in such a way that the politician can claim that the original standpoint concerned something different than what the current standpoint pertains to.

The three patterns that can be expected in a political interview in response to an accusation of inconsistency have certain features in common. First, the politician lives up to the institutional requirement of giving an account of his words or actions. Second, the politician takes away the inconsistency with which he is charged. Finally, the politician repairs the potentially damaging image suggested by the accusation of inconsistency. Being inconsistent could be seen as a sign of indecisiveness which might suggest to some that the politician cannot be trusted on his word. By means of one of the three patterns of

Strategic maneuvering in response to an accusation of inconsistency

maneuvering, the politician is likely to create a better image of himself for the audience at home.

CHAPTER 5

The reasonableness of responses to an accusation of inconsistency in a political interview

5.1 The reasonableness of confrontational strategic maneuvering

In Chapter 4, I have given an analysis of politicians' strategic maneuvering in their responses to an interviewer's accusation that their standpoint is inconsistent with another standpoint advanced before. I have shown that a politician who has to retract one of the inconsistent standpoints more often than not reformulates the standpoint advanced earlier in order to remain engaged in the discussion. If this attempt is successful, then the politician lives up to the institutional requirement of providing an account of his words or actions.

In my analytic account of the politician's maneuvering, I have analyzed the responses concerned as attempts at balancing the dialectical goal of defining the difference of opinion clearly with the rhetorical goal of doing so in his favor. These two goals are inherent in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion in which the politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency are situated. The pursued balance between satisfying the dialectical goal and at the same time pursuing the rhetorical goal, however, is not in all cases obtained. Sometimes, the desire to be rhetorically effective may override the concern to remain dialectically reasonable. In such cases, the politician's strategic

maneuvering can be said to derail (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2005, 2009, van Eemeren 2010) as it transgresses the bounds of reasonableness and becomes fallacious.

The goal of this chapter is to carry out an evaluation of the politician's strategic maneuvering by establishing under which conditions his retraction of one of the inconsistent standpoints and the subsequent reformulation of this standpoint can be considered dialectically sound.⁸⁷ To enable an evaluation of a politician's strategic maneuvering with this type of move, I will first formulate the relevant soundness conditions (5.2). In a pragma-dialectical vein, I will do so by combining dialectical insights with pragmatic insights. Dialectically, the strategic maneuvering can be considered part of a critical testing procedure to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits. Pragmatically, the strategic maneuvering can be viewed as an illocutionary act that comes in response to the illocutionary act of accusation of inconsistency.

The critical testing procedure is constituted by the rules for critical discussion. In the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentative discourse, a move that violates one of the discussion rules is considered fallacious. However, to decide when a rule for critical discussion has been violated, criteria are necessary for judging whether the norms stipulated in the rules for critical discussion have been violated. It is precisely these criteria which my set of soundness conditions will provide for assessing the reasonableness of a politician's strategic maneuvering.

After having specified the soundness conditions, I will apply them to the three cases analyzed in Chapter 4 for their strategic function: the Soper-Hague exchange, the Soper-Cooper exchange and the Soper-Duncan exchange. Thus, my application of the soundness conditions will take place in the context of a political interview from which the examples have been selected.

Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2009: 14) formulated three general soundness conditions for strategic maneuvering. These conditions make clear what the general requirements are for a move not to violate the rules for critical discussion. Each discussion stage, however, has its specific strategic maneuvers which need to be evaluated differently depending on the outcome pursued at the stage concerned.⁸⁸ Therefore, it is first necessary

⁸⁷ Retracting a standpoint is not by definition dialectically unsound. The move is a dialectical requirement for the protagonist of a standpoint to deal with an inconsistency pointed out by the antagonist (Hamblin 1970b, van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992a), which can be perfectly reasonable. I am not concerned with the cases described by Krabbe (2001: 142) as "wanton and irregular retractions" with "detrimental effects on an ordered and efficient course of dialogue." Such behavior makes it impossible to resolve a difference of opinion, because the antagonist cannot continue a discussion with a protagonist that constantly changes his commitments. This is true of most communicative activity types varying from those that are formally institutionalized, such as court proceedings, to those that are not formally institutionalized, such as a chat.

⁸⁸ Van Eemeren (2010: 46) distinguishes four broad categories of strategic maneuvering in close connection with the four stages of a critical discussion: confrontational strategic maneuvering, maneuvering that can be reconstructed as part of the opening stage, argumentational strategic maneuvering and concluding strategic maneuvering.

to establish the soundness conditions in accordance with which confrontational strategic maneuvering to which the politician's maneuvering concerned belongs can be evaluated. At this stage, the participants can be seen as pursuing a clear definition of the difference of opinion.

The first condition every strategic maneuver should meet to be considered reasonable pertains to the topical choice (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2009). It requires that every move must be chosen in such a way that “it *enables an analytically relevant continuation* at the juncture concerned in the dialectical route that is taken and can *lead to one of the outcomes* of the discussion stage concerned” (2009: 14, my italics). Taking this condition into account, confrontational strategic maneuvering should further the achievement of any of the possible outcomes of the confrontation stage: creating a non-mixed difference of opinion, creating a mixed difference of opinion or ending the discussion. Although these outcomes are not all favorable to an arguer, a participant who maneuvers strategically should allow for any of them to be reached and should not prevent the other participant from taking a dialectical route that may lead to a different outcome than the favored one.⁸⁹ For example, the outcome favored by an antagonist who advances an accusation of inconsistency in the confrontation stage is to bring the process of defining the difference of opinion to an end. This outcome can be achieved by making the protagonist retract his standpoint in response to the accusation. In order for an accusation of inconsistency to be a sound move, however, it should leave open the protagonist's option to maintain his standpoint. Maintaining a standpoint could lead to a non-mixed or a mixed difference of opinion, outcomes which are both unfavorable to an antagonist who is making an accusation of inconsistency (Mohammed 2009).

The second condition which strategic maneuvering should satisfy to be considered sound relates to audience adaptation. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser specify that each move “*needs to respond to the preceding move* in the dialectical route that is taken” (2009: 14, my italics). This condition requires that an arguer should ensure that his move is relevant to the move of the other party in the discussion. For instance, in the confrontation stage, a request for clarification should be responded to by means of a usage declarative that provides the expected clarification (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984).

⁸⁹ The idea that strategic maneuvering should allow for both favorable and unfavorable outcomes to come about is already prescribed in the definition of strategic maneuvering. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2009) make clear that every move is by definition an attempt to steer the discussion towards a *favorable* outcome without overruling the commitment to having a reasonable exchange. Having a reasonable exchange of moves involves, among other things, that the parties should not prevent each other from freely expressing (reasonable) moves that might be unfavorable to the other party, such as criticisms. Inspired by this view, Mohammed (2009) discusses what she terms the *freedom requirement* for accusations of inconsistency to refer to the freedom of the antagonist to take preferred as well as non-preferred dialectical routes.

The third soundness condition formulated by van Eemeren and Houtlosser, pertaining to the presentational choice, requires every strategic maneuver to be “*formulated* in such a way that it can be *interpreted* as enabling a relevant continuation and being responsive to the preceding move” (2009: 14, my italics). Starting from this condition, every confrontational move should be performed so clearly that the other party understands that it is relevant to the previous move as well as that it aims to obtain a particular interactional effect. This condition is meant to eliminate any hindrance to achieving one of the possible outcomes of the discussion caused by the use of unclear language. For example, an accusation of inconsistency needs to be performed so clearly that the accused understands that the accuser attributes to him two inconsistent commitments and demands him to retract one of them (Mohammed 2009).

Each argumentative move that is an instantiation of confrontational strategic maneuvering should meet the soundness conditions just outlined. Although each move should meet these conditions, specific soundness conditions need to be developed. Such conditions will provide the specific criteria for deciding when a rule for critical discussion is violated in each particular case. For example, every form of criticism in the confrontation stage needs to meet the three general soundness conditions in order not to hinder the critical testing procedure. However, an accusation of inconsistency (as a form of criticism) needs to be evaluated by taking into account the following: (a) whether the accuser is justified in attributing the two inconsistent commitments (the second soundness condition), (b) whether the move is clear enough for the accused to understand what he should do in response to such a charge (the third soundness condition), and (c) whether the move precludes the accused from accepting or not accepting the accusation (the first soundness condition) (Mohammed 2009).

The evaluation of a politician’s strategic maneuvering by means of retracting a standpoint and advancing a modified standpoint should take into account that this maneuvering is an attempt at responding to a charge of inconsistency by which the accused tries to continue the discussion in which he is engaged. As will become clear from the next section, the politician’s maneuvering should be such that the interviewer can raise new criticism if he wants to (5.2.1), the politician’s moves should resolve the inconsistency with which the protagonist is charged (5.2.2), and they should be formulated as clearly as required for a proper understanding (5.2.3).

5.2 Soundness conditions

The analysis of the three cases in which Soper accuses various British politicians of being inconsistent revealed that the politicians who respond by retracting a standpoint acknowledge that there is an inconsistency but try to turn the discussion in their favor by reformulating the original standpoint. In the political domain, the politician's role obliges him to avoid simply conceding that he was wrong. Reformulating the original standpoint is an effective way to live up to the institutional expectations while accepting that there is an inconsistency which cannot be maintained.

By reformulating his standpoint, a politician attempts to define the difference of opinion in such a way that the interviewer retracts his doubt concerning the standpoint and ideally he will not make another accusation of inconsistency. After all, a politician who constantly gives room to doubts about the consistency of his words or actions is perceived at least as unclear, indecisive and lacking well-founded principles. The politician's rhetorical attempt to define the difference of opinion in his favor has to be balanced by the dialectical attempt to remain within the boundaries of reasonableness. In order to judge whether the pursued balance is indeed realized I will formulate soundness conditions for the strategic maneuvering concerned.

5.2.1 Soundness condition of openness

The first soundness condition for confrontational strategic maneuvering stipulates that favorable as well as unfavorable outcomes resulting from defining the difference of opinion may both be reached after the move has been made. For the maneuvering that involves retracting a standpoint and reformulating it, this implies that the protagonist should not hinder the antagonist in taking dialectical routes that lead to one of the three possible outcomes of the confrontation stage. In my characterization of the strategic maneuvering concerned I have shown that the favorable outcomes at the juncture at which an accusation of inconsistency is made are: leading the antagonist to retract his doubt (in a non-mixed discussion), and leading the antagonist to retract the opposite standpoint (in a mixed discussion). An unfavorable outcome of the strategic maneuvering concerned is reached when the antagonist maintains his criticism expressed by means of mere doubt or by advancing and/or upholding the opposite standpoint.

The requirement that favorable and unfavorable outcomes should not be precluded means that the protagonist's maneuvering should leave open two options for the

antagonist: (a) accepting the protagonist's strategic maneuvering by retracting his criticism and no longer advancing new criticism, and (b) not accepting the protagonist's strategic maneuvering by upholding the current criticism and/or advancing new criticism.⁹⁰ In order for the protagonist's confrontational maneuvering to leave open these two options, the following *condition of openness* needs to be fulfilled:

- (a) Confrontational strategic maneuvering that involves retracting a standpoint and reformulating it in response to an accusation of inconsistency should leave open all the other party's available options to continue the current discussion, including the option of advancing a new accusation of inconsistency.

The evaluation of the strategic maneuvering takes place in light of the ideal model of a critical discussion by determining whether or not the realization of the move in the confrontation stage contributes to the reasonable resolution of the difference of opinion. The standard used to judge whether a move makes such a contribution is constituted by the procedural rules for critical discussion. The condition mentioned above under (a) provides a criterion for judging whether the norm for critical discussion specified in the *Freedom Rule* has been violated. The Freedom Rule stipulates that "discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from calling standpoints into discussion" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 190). The condition of openness is not fulfilled in the case in which the antagonist's freedom to advance moves that realize illocutionary acts consisting of the illocutionary negation of the commissive *accepting* is obstructed. Just as the protagonist has the right to replace his original standpoint by advancing a modified standpoint, the antagonist should also enjoy the right to advance new criticism against the same protagonist. The freedom of advancing new criticism includes advancing another accusation of inconsistency.

The violation of the condition of openness by a protagonist who maneuvers strategically by retracting a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency and advancing a modified standpoint blocks the revision and flux of opinions, because the antagonist is prevented from exercising his rights in the discussion. This blocking may obstruct the process of resolving a difference of opinion in several ways. Two prominent cases of possible violations of the condition of openness are putting pressure on the antagonist by threatening him with sanctions and by attacking him personally. A

⁹⁰ Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 102) explain that casting doubt can be defined as the refusal to accept, i.e. as the illocutionary negation of acceptance, and hence as non-acceptance. Upholding doubt is the repetition of the illocutionary negation of acceptance, i.e. non-acceptance.

protagonist who resorts to threats violates the antagonist's freedom by means of an *argumentum ad baculum* aimed at eliminating the antagonist from the discussion. A protagonist launching a personal attack becomes guilty of an *ad hominem* fallacy aimed at silencing the opponent.⁹¹

In the activity type of a political interview, it seems sensible to assume that politicians will often find subtle ways of violating the condition of openness. This assumption stems from the institutional characteristic that politicians try to give an account of their words or actions while striving at the same time to create a positive image of themselves for the audience at home. The politicians' aspirations to appear as political representatives whose words and actions are up to standard motivate them to design their strategic maneuvering in such a way that the interviewer is prevented from advancing and maintaining impending criticism. Since obviously, by virtue of his role, the interviewer has to criticize the politicians so that they answer for their words and actions, the politicians can as a rule only hope to soften the harshness with which they are questioned.

The politician's attempt at minimizing the critique with which he is confronted in a political interview can sometimes go as far as trying to preclude the interviewer from continuing to pursue a critical line of inquiry. Using very subtle means of attacking the interviewer, the politician tries to prevent his interlocutor from putting forward criticism, especially such fierce criticism as an accusation of inconsistency.

As shown in the analysis of the three exchanges between Soper and various British politicians in Chapter 4, a charge of inconsistency is often supported by strong evidence, which makes it very hard for the politician to argue that the accusation is not correct. In order to respond for being inconsistent, as he is expected to do in a political interview, the politician will most of the time try to find a way out which is unlikely to involve a direct attack in this context. Should the politician resort to such an attack, this could have devastating consequences for the politician's image going far beyond the discussion in which the participants are involved. One example in which the interviewer is prevented from maintaining his criticism of inconsistency and advancing such impending criticism again is the discussion between Jon Soper and Alan Duncan. The fragment from the discussion between them is included again below:

⁹¹ Two variants of the *ad hominem* fallacy may be committed by the protagonist: the abusive variant (the protagonist unjustifiably doubts the other party's expertise, intelligence, good faith) and the circumstantial variant (the protagonist unjustifiably casts suspicion on the other party's motives) (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992a). A third variant of the *ad hominem* fallacy is the *tu quoque* variant in which the other party's statements are wrongly criticized because they are inconsistent. Strictly speaking, since only the antagonist is in a position to cast doubt upon the protagonist's statements, he is the only one who can become guilty of a *tu quoque* attack. In a mixed discussion, both parties can commit all three kinds of *ad hominem* attacks.

Chapter 5

Jon Sopel:

And on nuclear, the government says that obviously has to be part of the mix. Are you on that page as well.

Alan Duncan:

Our policy is absolutely clear and it's again, very similar, we want approval for sites and designs. We want a proper carbon price, we want honesty about costs, with no subsidy. Get on with the decision to do something with the waste, again, David Cameron said that this week, and I think the government has been a bit slow on working out what to do with nuclear waste. So then people can invest and I think probably they will.

Jon Sopel:

You were rather more skeptical the last time I spoke to you when you were on this programme – we can just have a listen to what you said last time.

‘we think that the nuclear power sector, should be there as a last resort in many respects. We want to explore every conceivable method of generating electricity before we go to nuclear’

Alan Duncan:

so fluent.

Jon Sopel:

Yes. But you were completely different, you were very skeptical there. It has to be the last option, now you're saying, we're on the same page as the government and yes, let's get on with it.

Alan Duncan:

I think what's important with nuclear is to explain the policy. I think it's unhelpful to get hooked on two words and I think the policy as it has always been is exactly as I've just explained.

Jon Sopel:

So you are fine about nuclear.

The reconstruction of this fragment (Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9) showed that Sopel charges Duncan with being inconsistent on the ground that in this interview he favors the use of nuclear energy, whereas in a previous interview he had taken a negative stance on the use of nuclear energy. In response to the charge of inconsistency, Duncan retracts the standpoint he advanced originally because all other options for responding are closed off. He cannot retract the current standpoint, because it would expose him to another inconsistency. The leader of his party has announced earlier the same week that the Conservatives favor the use of nuclear energy; therefore Duncan cannot hold the opposite. Although retracting his earlier words, for which he was supposed to have good arguments, is perhaps not the most advantageous choice he could make, retracting the current standpoint could expose a problem with the consistency within the party to which Duncan belongs. Internal party inconsistency could have far more negative consequences for his public image.

In order to avoid losing the discussion by simply retracting the original standpoint, Duncan does more than just accepting that there is an inconsistency. As shown in the

analysis, he reformulates the original standpoint in terms of a claim that the original standpoint concerned a different aspect than the current standpoint pertains to. The original standpoint, Duncan seems to suggest, concerned the practice of using nuclear energy, which was problematic, and therefore the Conservatives did not support it. The current standpoint concerns the policy of using nuclear energy, with which, apparently, there is nothing wrong and which therefore can be supported. By arguing in this way, Duncan makes it look as if there is no inconsistency between the two standpoints.

An evaluation of Duncan's response to the accusation of inconsistency reveals that his potentially effective way of maneuvering transgresses the bounds of reasonableness. The way in which his strategic maneuvering is formulated is an attempt at precluding Soper from maintaining his criticism. Duncan's remark that *it's unhelpful to get hooked on two words* is an indirect attack on Soper conveying two things: (a) that it is of no use to discuss the issue of being inconsistent (*it's unhelpful*), and (b) that Soper is obsessed with minor aspects (*it's unhelpful to get hooked on two words* contains the presupposition that Soper "got hooked on two words").⁹²

By means of this double attack, Duncan tries to put an end to the discussion about the Conservatives' view on the use of nuclear energy. In the first place, his attempt could prevent Soper from maintaining his criticism because it highlights that his constant questioning on the matter is simply unhelpful: according to Duncan, the Conservatives' position at the moment is obviously related to the policy, which is a different matter than the previous position which had to do with the practice of using nuclear energy. Further discussion on this, Duncan seems to suggest, is not useful because things are clear now. Presenting Soper's questioning as unhelpful can prevent him from going on with his line of inquiry. Because the interview is directed at an audience, which judges the performance of the politician as well as that of the interviewer, if Soper were to continue in the same way, it would look as if he was nitpicking. This is obviously an image which Soper would rather avoid in a political interview. Had the same remark been used in a conversation between friends, the other party would have had more freedom to continue the discussion by maintaining criticism. There would be no concern for an audience that could prevent him from persisting in criticizing his interlocutor. In this context, this possibility is precluded.

The second part of Duncan's attack is equally harsh as the first part in which he highlights the uselessness of the discussion. He points out that Soper is obsessed with Duncan's words about nuclear energy, which after all, are just "two words." Apart from

⁹² Duncan's maneuvering is moreover an attempt at shifting the focus of the discussion from his inconsistency to Soper's obsession with his words. Duncan's attack on Soper is thus combined with an attempt to evade the burden of proof. In a political interview, it is the politician who should justify his words and actions if challenged. In this context, Soper's accusation of inconsistency is a challenge for justification, which Duncan tries to evade by putting the burden on Soper to justify his obsessive concern for the use of words. The unreasonableness of Duncan's maneuvering is the result of this combination.

the strong negative qualification that Sopel is hooked, the reference to “two words” is an endeavor to present the disagreement at issue as just a matter of verbal disagreement.⁹³ Duncan wants to suggest that Sopel is overprecise about his use of words with regard to the use of nuclear energy. In fact, Sopel remarks that Duncan’s statements in another interview indicate a change of position with regard to the use of nuclear energy, which needs to be clarified and justified. Sopel’s criticism, fully pertinent in a political interview, is presented by Duncan as concentrating on a matter that is irrelevant. He seems to leave the impression that instead of discussing matters of interest and importance for the public, Sopel concentrates in the exchange on a minor issue of language use.

That Duncan’s attack on Sopel is an attempt aimed at preventing Sopel from criticizing him on the issue of nuclear energy is supported by Duncan’s responses on the same matter in an earlier interview. On July 2, 2006 Sopel questioned Duncan, at the time of the interview Shadow Secretary of State for Trade, Industry and Energy, by asking him repeatedly for his view on nuclear power. Duncan’s responses are aggressive attempts at making Sopel stop the questioning. The fragment below is an extract from the earlier interview:

Jon Sopel:

What I want to ask you is are you for or against nuclear power.

Alan Duncan:

The, the government is not looking at that. Tony Blair's saying he is, but if you look at the terms and conditions of the Energy Review, there's no money on offer. Now we've never before seen a nuclear power station built in Britain by the private sector alone.

So the question is what are the terms and conditions and what is the investment climate which we agree with Dieter Helm, should be a long one, in which this might happen and could happen fairly and it would need a number of things. It would need a proper solution to the handling of nuclear waste.

It would need honest economics on the part of any nuclear investing company so they can't just build, generate the income and dump us with future bills and it may also need a price for carbon, so that it can give, so that it can be given a fair crack against all the other competing ways of making electricity - cos by the way, this is not an energy review, at the moment it's just an electricity review.

Jon Sopel:

Okay, but I want to concentrate on what your policies are. I want to know whether you are for or against nuclear power.

Alan Duncan:

I think there is bound to be an element of nuclear power generation in, in the mix. But neither side of the political divide at the moment is saying here's a pot of money, go and do it. The question therefore is how do you design the climate in which a company can fairly invest and might do so.

⁹³ The notion of verbal disagreement is introduced by Naess (1966: 83-84) to distinguish it from agreement ‘in substance.’

Jon Sopel:

Do you believe our energy needs can be met without keeping nuclear power at roughly 20%, which is what it is at the moment.

Alan Duncan:

Yes, and I think this is the key point; I think that is quite possible, and we'd like to explore every conceivable alternative to do that and to fill the gap and to generate electricity on an industrial scale before we look at nuclear power. For instance, if you look at decentralised energy, where you can have combined heat and power, all sorts of different, smaller, more local ways of making electricity, it's quite possible we can do that in a more efficient, less carbon emitting way, before one needs to turn to nuclear power.

Jon Sopel:

But that's exactly what the government would say that they're seeking to do. They're seeking to maximise all the potential of renewables, of local generation, but they still come - say - the Tories have got to come back to this central question of how much power do you think should be generated by nuclear and you don't quite answer that question when I put it to you of are you for or against nuclear power.

Alan Duncan:

I don't answer it because I think it should be at the back of the queue because the government isn't answering it either. And so you're coming from a false premise. The fact is what is ... (interjection) ...

Jon Sopel:

But we will put these questions to the government as well, I'm just trying to put these questions, trying to get a straight answer from you on where you stand on nuclear power.

Alan Duncan:

Well you, in a way you've had one and you'll get it again. We think that the nuclear power sector should be there as a last resort in many respects. We want to explore every conceivable method of generating electricity, before we go to nuclear because we think that so much of this is on the edge of a scientific generation which can change the pattern and nature of our electricity generation.

This fragment attests that Sopel had to ask Duncan several times about his position on the use of nuclear energy before he gave an answer. After the question has been put twice and Duncan evades an answer, Sopel persists in his questioning by pointing at the evasion (*you don't quite answer that question*). Pressured so many times to respond, Duncan says explicitly that he does not want to answer Sopel's question while at the same time subtly attacking him: *I don't answer it because I think it should be at the back of the queue because the government isn't answering it either. And so you're coming from a false premise*. This attack is countered by Sopel with a repetition of the same question about his view on nuclear energy: *But we will put these questions to the government as well, I'm just trying to put these questions, trying to get a straight answer from you on where you stand on nuclear power.*⁹⁴ In response to this, Duncan is making an attempt at precluding Sopel

⁹⁴ Duncan's remark that *the government isn't answering it (the question) either* and Sopel's reply that *we will put these questions to the government as well* are an excellent illustration of 'due impartiality.' Duncan claims that he does not answer the question because he is apparently the only one asked about the sensitive issue of nuclear energy about which the government should also express a view. Sopel defends the implicit

from asking a sensitive question. Duncan claims that he has given an answer and pretends just to repeat that answer, leaving the impression that Sopel is nitpicking on the matter of nuclear energy: *Well you, in a way you've had one and you'll get it again. We think that the nuclear power sector should be there as a last resort in many respects. We want to explore every conceivable method of generating electricity, before we go to nuclear because we think that so much of this is on the edge of a scientific generation which can change the pattern and nature of our electricity generation.* It is precisely Duncan's last reply that Sopel points at on December 9, 2007 in order to hold Duncan to account for an inconsistency. Duncan's response to the inconsistency, evaluated as a fallacious attack on Sopel, is just another attempt at preventing Sopel from criticizing him before the television-watching audience.

5.2.2 Soundness condition of relevance

The second soundness condition for confrontational strategic maneuvering requires that a move be responsive to the move that precedes it. This means that the politician's strategic maneuvering should be a relevant reaction to the expression of criticism advanced by the interviewer in his accusation of inconsistency. When is the politician's retraction of a standpoint and coming up with a reformulation of it a relevant reaction to an interviewer's accusation of inconsistency? To answer this question, I start from the concept of relevance as defined by van Eemeren and Grootendorst: "an element of discourse is relevant to another element of discourse if an interactional relation can be envisaged between these elements that is functional in the light of a certain objective" (1992b: 141).

Starting from this definition, van Eemeren and Grootendorst distinguish three perspectives from which an element of discourse can be considered relevant or irrelevant: an *interpretative* perspective, an *analytic* perspective and an *evaluative* perspective. In an interpretative perspective, language users themselves consider something relevant or irrelevant. In an analytic perspective, the analyst considers an element of discourse relevant or irrelevant depending on the goal for which he analyses a text. In an evaluative perspective, it is judged whether an element of discourse is relevant or irrelevant in light of the norms that the evaluator applies. The question concerning the relevance of the politician's maneuvering can be specified as: when is the maneuvering that involves the retraction of a standpoint and the advancement of a reformulated standpoint from an evaluative perspective a relevant reaction to an accusation of inconsistency?

attack that he is not impartial by making it explicitly clear that the government will also be asked about their view on nuclear energy.

Whether a move can be considered relevant depends on the goals with which this move is put forward. Since every move constitutes an illocutionary act, it is by definition put forward with a communicative and an interactional goal. The communicative goal concerns obtaining *understanding* of the illocutionary act and the interactional goal concerns obtaining *acceptance* of the illocutionary act (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984). As a reaction to an accusation of inconsistency, the maneuvering at hand is considered relevant when it puts into effect the communicative and the interactional goals associated with an accusation of inconsistency. More precisely, it is relevant when (a) it shows understanding of the accusation of inconsistency, and (b) it indicates acceptance of the accusation of inconsistency.⁹⁵ Acceptance implies, among other things, that the protagonist understood the accusation and takes the accusation to be correctly performed. Understanding the accusation means knowing the propositional content and the communicative goal of the accusation of inconsistency. Taking the accusation to be correctly performed means assuming that the speaker has the intentions and preferences specified in the correctness conditions for an accusation of inconsistency. In order to ‘fully’ accept the antagonist’s accusation of inconsistency, the protagonist should not only recognize that the antagonist has certain intentions and preferences – as specified in the correctness conditions for an accusation – but he must also share these intentions and preferences or be ready to share them (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1982).⁹⁶

The protagonist who retracts a standpoint and reformulates it – i.e. accepts the accusation – takes the following correctness conditions for an accusation of inconsistency, formulated in Chapter 2, to be fulfilled and is ready to share the intentions and preferences specified in these conditions:

Preparatory conditions:

- (a) The speaker believes that the addressee who is inconsistent will accept that an inconsistency is indeed at issue;
- (b) The speaker believes that the addressee will acknowledge that the presence of an inconsistency obstructs the argumentative exchange he and his interlocutor are engaged in;
- (c) The speaker believes that the addressee will take on the obligation to provide a response that answers the charge of inconsistency.

⁹⁵ The other relevant reaction to an accusation of inconsistency is the maintenance of the standpoint. In such a case, the politician shows that he understood the accusation but does not accept it.

⁹⁶ Recognizing the interviewer’s preferences and being ready to share them means that the politician assumes the commitments imposed on him by the advancement of an accusation of inconsistency.

Sincerity conditions:

- (a) The speaker believes that the addressee is inconsistent;
- (b) The speaker believes that the presence of an inconsistency constitutes an obstruction to the exchange he and his interlocutor are engaged in;
- (c) The speaker wants the addressee to respond in such a way that he answers the charge.

In line with the preparatory conditions, a politician who accepts an accusation of inconsistency must assume that the interviewer believes that the politician will accept that he has been inconsistent, that the politician will acknowledge that his inconsistency is an obstruction to the exchange and that the politician will take on the obligation to respond to the charge of inconsistency. In line with the sincerity conditions the politician must assume that the interviewer believes that there has been an inconsistency, that the presence of the inconsistency is an obstruction to the exchange and that a response should be provided. Another requirement of the sincerity condition is that it should be the case that the politician shares or is ready to share the interviewer's intentions and preferences. This means that he agrees that there has been an inconsistency, that the inconsistency is an obstruction to the discussion and that a response that answers the charge is necessary.

Taking into account what a relevant response to an accusation of inconsistency amounts to, the politician who in his response accepts the accusation of inconsistency implicitly agrees that the inconsistency should be resolved so that the discussion is no longer obstructed. His strategic maneuvering should at least convey that a commitment to the current standpoint cannot be held simultaneously with a commitment to another standpoint on the same issue. Unless the maneuvering resolves the inconsistency, it cannot be a relevant response to the accusation to which it reacts. In pragma-dialectical terms, the politician's strategic maneuvering by means of retracting a standpoint and reformulating it is evaluatively relevant to the accusation of inconsistency when an interactional relation is envisaged between the two elements (the politician's maneuvering and the accusation of inconsistency). This relation is functional in light of the goal of defining the difference of opinion clearly (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992a, 1992b).⁹⁷ Pragma-dialectically,

⁹⁷ This idea is based on van Eemeren and Grootendorst's view that "relevance (or lack of relevance) does not refer primarily to a formal relation between discourse elements, but to their functionality in view of the interactional intentions that can be ascribed to the speakers or writers." In a discussion viewed as a critical discussion, the ascribed purpose is the resolution of the difference of opinion in which the discussants are involved. (1992b: 142)

defining the difference of opinion that is free of inconsistencies is part of this contribution (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992a).⁹⁸

That the politician's response should resolve the inconsistency of which he is accused does not make it possible to judge fully the evaluative relevance of the maneuvering. It is specific of the move of retraction, as shown in the characterization made in Chapter 4 (4.2), that it involves the illocutionary negation of an earlier illocutionary act. That is to say, a protagonist who retracts a standpoint makes it understood that he is no longer committed to the propositional content of the earlier standpoint (as derived from the essential condition of retraction). For the maneuvering that involves retracting a standpoint and reformulating it to be relevant, it needs to count both as a relevant reaction of acceptance of the accusation of inconsistency and as a relevant reaction of non-acceptance of a previous standpoint (i.e. the retraction should concern the standpoint advanced earlier which is no longer found acceptable).⁹⁹ In order for the strategic maneuvering to be evaluatively relevant in these two senses, the following *condition of relevance* needs to be fulfilled:

- (b) In confrontational strategic maneuvering that involves retracting a standpoint and reformulating it in response to an accusation of inconsistency, the protagonist should give up one of the inconsistent standpoints altogether, thus resolving the inconsistency.

A difficulty with applying the soundness condition of relevance is to decide when an inconsistency is resolved. According to Krabbe (2001: 144) who follows Hamblin (1970b: 265), when an inconsistency is pointed out, the addressee has to retract one of the two inconsistent statements in order to resolve the inconsistency. Of course, this way of responding is expected when the accused believes that the inconsistency attributed to him is justified. The strict view that an inconsistency has to be dealt with by retraction seems to square well with the pragma-dialectical view of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. According to this view, a difference of opinion is resolved when either the

⁹⁸ In van Eemeren and Grootendorst's view, "in evaluating the various arguments that are put forward in the discourse, it must first be determined whether the argumentative discourse contains any inconsistencies. If something can be both one way and another at the same time, what are we to believe? Logical contradictions, pragmatic and other kinds of inconsistencies weaken the strength of the argumentative discourse more or less seriously." (1992a: 95)

⁹⁹ This kind of relevance corresponds to what Sbisà calls locutionary (or propositional) appropriateness (relevance) of a response. Locutionary relevance is a term she uses to indicate that the propositional content of a response to a previous illocutionary act is appropriate to "the (asserted) content of the previous utterance." (1992: 105)

antagonist retracts his doubt or the protagonist retracts his standpoint. However, adopting this view of resolving an inconsistency between standpoints by retracting a standpoint is only a theoretical solution. In actual argumentative practice, the protagonist of a standpoint that is accused of holding inconsistent standpoints will rather “remedy” the inconsistency (Hamblin 1970b: 264). The politicians’ responses analyzed in Chapter 4, which amount to partly retracting a previous standpoint, are good illustrations of such remedies. Without the analyst being unrealistic, they cannot be declared as intrinsically fallacious for not being retractions in the strict sense.¹⁰⁰

The maneuvering that involves retracting a standpoint and reformulating it is a violation of the soundness condition of relevance when the protagonist gives the impression that the original standpoint has been retracted, but in fact maintains some interpretation that is exploited afterwards to defend a standpoint that is easier to justify. This way of maneuvering is fallacious because it prevents the original standpoint from being criticized by conveying the false impression that the original standpoint is given up. The antagonist will no longer challenge the protagonist for the original standpoint because he is led to believe that the protagonist is not committed to it any longer. This view is supported by Kauffeld’s observation that commitments are undertaken by speakers in order to generate presumptions which provide addressees with reason to act in ways desired by the speaker (2003). A speaker who retracts a standpoint undertakes a commitment generating the presumption that he can no longer be held committed to the acceptability of an earlier standpoint. That means that an antagonist can no longer challenge the protagonist with respect to the standpoint he gives up.

This immunization strategy may constitute the violation of two pragma-dialectical rules. The derailed maneuvering is a violation of the *Freedom Rule* (mentioned in 5.2.1), because the antagonist is prevented from calling the original standpoint into question. The fallacious maneuvering can also be a violation of the *Obligation-to-defend Rule*, because the protagonist may abusively exploit that he is (supposedly) no longer committed to the original standpoint by refusing to defend the original standpoint if challenged to do so. The *Obligation-to-defend Rule* stipulates that “discussants who advance a standpoint may not refuse to defend this standpoint when requested to do so” (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 191).

In his discussion with Sopel on November 12, 2006, Hague immunizes his original standpoint against criticism by giving the impression that he retracts his original position about the introduction of biometric identity cards, while in fact retracting only a certain

¹⁰⁰ Harman (1989: 11-16) mentions that when one is confronted with an inconsistency there are practical limits obliging to “a reasoned change in view.” This change may involve giving up something previously accepted, but, depending on the circumstances, maintaining some inconsistency while trying to avoid inferences that exploit it.

interpretation of it and exploiting another interpretation of the same standpoint in his favor. The discussion between Soper and Hague is reproduced below from Chapter 4:

Jon Soper:

And Labor say the big thing that you could do to help would be to support identity cards. It's fair to say that this is an issue that your party has rather flip flopped on isn't it.

William Hague:

Well it's... I think it's become clearer over time where we should stand on this, let's put it that way, because we've got the government adopting an identity card scheme, but one that is so bureaucratic and involves a vast data base and this is the government of serial catastrophes when it comes to data bases as we all know, costing now, according to the London School of Economics, up to twenty billion pounds and we said that if some of that money was spent instead on an effective border police and strengthened surveillance of terrorist suspects, and strengthening special branch and things like that, we'd actually get a lot further.... (interjection)....having identity cards.

Jon Soper:

Isn't that a detail of the legislation. I mean you supported identity cards back in December 2004, less than two years ago.

William Hague:

We supported, I and Michael Howard supported the principle of those. Subject to how the details were worked out. The details are not impressive and the grasp of detail and the ability to control the costs of the current government is so terrible, that it's not a scheme that we can support.

In this fragment, Soper accuses the Conservatives, represented in the interview by Hague, of holding inconsistent positions with regard to the introduction of biometric identity cards. To support his accusation, Soper remarks that less than two years before the Conservatives supported the introduction of biometric identity cards, whereas they no longer support them now. In order to counter this charge in his favor, Hague acknowledges that attributing an inconsistency to him is correct. But he argues subsequently that the original standpoint (indicating a supportive attitude) concerned the principle of introducing biometric identity cards, whereas the current standpoint (indicating a non-supportive attitude) concerns the practice of introducing biometric identity cards. By responding like this, Duncan justifies his words, as he is institutionally obliged to do, and can give the impression that the inconsistency has been repaired.

In my analysis of the way in which the three aspects of strategic maneuvering are exploited, I showed that Duncan's response is potentially to his advantage. But here the aiming for rhetorical advantages seems to override the concern for reasonableness. Despite accepting that a commitment to the current standpoint cannot be held simultaneously with a commitment to an earlier standpoint on the same issue because the standpoints are inconsistent, Duncan retracts only 'part' of the original proposition of the standpoint he advanced earlier (concerning the principle of introducing biometric identity cards). In itself, there is nothing wrong with this maneuvering. After all, making a dissociation,

which involves retracting an interpretation while maintaining another, is not by definition fallacious. On the contrary, as van Rees (2009) shows, it can be an excellent way of making a clarification.

What derails in Hague's maneuvering is that he makes it seem as if Sipel can no longer call the original standpoint into question. Duncan claims that the original standpoint concerned the principle of introducing biometric identity cards. However, the original standpoint, as can be inferred from the accusation of inconsistency, concerned the unitary concept of support for the introduction of biometric identity cards. Otherwise, there would not have been an accusation of inconsistency, or the inconsistency could have been easily denied because it is unjustified. This maneuvering of maintaining a certain interpretation of the standpoint and retracting only one interpretation of the original standpoint is a way of immunizing against further criticism the original standpoint that the Conservatives support the introduction of biometric identity cards.¹⁰¹ In a political interview, claiming that the original standpoint had a different interpretation is easy to get away with. The record of the original interview is not immediately available, which makes it very hard for Sipel to refute Duncan's claim. Because Sipel cannot easily find evidence that would reject Hague's claim (especially since the earlier interview took place around two years before), he cannot uphold a demand for justification.

5.2.3 Soundness condition of clarity

The third soundness condition for confrontational strategic maneuvering requires that a move be formulated in such a way that the antagonist can interpret it as a relevant response to the previous move and that all possible continuations of the discussion (leading to the creation of a non-mixed discussion, the creation of a mixed discussion, or the end of the discussion) are allowed. The first two soundness conditions for strategic maneuvering by means of retracting a standpoint and advancing a reformulated standpoint (5.2.1 and 5.2.2) stipulate that (a) the antagonist should not be prevented from maintaining his criticism or advancing new criticism, and (b) the inconsistency should be resolved. If the antagonist does not accept the politician's maneuvering, he should be allowed to maintain his

¹⁰¹ Hague's retraction of an inconsistency by means of dissociation violates the Starting Point Rule. In accordance with the procedural requirements which dissociation should fulfill in order to be dialectically sound as established by van Rees (2009: 99-102), Hague should have put up for discussion the dissociation he makes. From a pragma-dialectical perspective, the fact that a distinction is created within a unitary concept means that one of the starting points is changed and this change should be put for discussion. Instead, Hague introduces the distinction between the practice and the details of introducing biometric identity cards as a matter of fact (the use of the definite article to refer to the principle is an indicator of this) that does not need to be put up for discussion.

criticism or advance new criticism if he finds this necessary. He may express his non-acceptance of the protagonist's maneuvering by denying that it answers the charge of inconsistency, as required by the essential condition of an accusation of inconsistency.

In order for the first two soundness conditions to be fulfilled, the strategic maneuvers should be adequately formulated. That means that the protagonist should be so clear that the antagonist understands what his options are for continuing the discussion and that the protagonist's response resolves the inconsistency as required by the accusation of inconsistency. Otherwise, the antagonist may not understand that the protagonist's maneuvering is an attempt at eliminating the inconsistency. The strategic maneuvering concerned should fulfill the following soundness *condition of clarity*:

- (c) The moves in confrontational strategic maneuvering that involve retracting a standpoint and reformulating it in response to an accusation of inconsistency should be formulated as clearly as required for a proper understanding.

Failure to fulfill soundness condition (c) constitutes a violation of the *Language Use Rule* of a critical discussion. This rule requires that "discussants may not use formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 195).¹⁰² A formulation that is not clear enough for the purpose of the communicative exchange may amount to the fallacy of misuse of unclearness.¹⁰³ An example of fallacious maneuvering that violates the soundness condition of clarity is an obscure wording that gives the false impression of resolving the inconsistency.

In order to show how the soundness condition of clarity can be applied, I will evaluate Cooper's maneuvering in the discussion with Sopel on July 15, 2007 on the issue of housing in Britain. The fragment from the discussion between Sopel and Cooper reads as follows:

Jon Sopel:

You keep stressing that it's up to local councils, local councils to decide what is the best thing to do. What do you do with the local council who say, well frankly, we don't think we want to build that much.

¹⁰² The *Language Use Rule* does not impose an obligation on the protagonist to formulate his move explicitly, since it is often perfectly possible for the antagonist, using sentence meaning and contextual information, to recognize what is intended with the move even if it is implicit.

¹⁰³ A closely related fallacy amounts to the misuse of ambiguity, as in those cases in which the speaker is lexically ambiguous in such a way that the other party does not understand what to make of his words.

Yvette Cooper:

Well we do have a serious problem with Conservative local councils in particular across the south east region in particular, but not just there, who are opposing increases in housing...the south east Regional Assembly indeed has been arguing for cuts in the level of house building over the next few years, which I just think it's bonkers, given the needs we have. But I think it's, you know, it's not on really for councils to simply turn their backs and say, well we don't want any new houses round here, build them somewhere else. Build them in another community, build them in another town.

Every town, every city, every community has first time buyers who can't get on the ladder, has sons and daughters who are still stuck living at home with their mum and dad because they just can't afford anywhere to live, that is not fair and every community needs to recognize its responsibility to do something about that.

Jon Sopel:

But you just said at the start, it's up to councils to decide. Councils could decide they don't want to build extra houses, then what are you going to do about it.

Yvette Cooper:

No, we're clear that the way that the regional planning process works and the way that local councils have to wait together, they will all have to accept their responsibility to deliver more homes. Where they have the flexibilities around where within their community the homes should be built, you know, what the best location is, whether they've got good brown fields available and what kinds of homes.

You know, they may need more family homes in their area to look at those sorts of issues as well. What they can't do is turn their backs on their responsibility to deliver more homes and interestingly, we had forty towns and cities come forward over the last twelve months to say, well we want to increase the level of homes in our area.

In the exchange, Sopel focuses upon Cooper's view that local councils can decide on the location of houses to be built within their community and on what kinds of houses they will build. According to Sopel, this view is seemingly inconsistent with another view Cooper advanced at the beginning of the interview that local councils have the freedom to make (any) decisions, including the decision whether to build or not. In response to this serious charge, Cooper does not maintain what she said originally, but she does not simply retract it either. As I showed in the analysis of her response in Chapter 4 (4.2.1.2), she goes for a middle solution: she retracts what she said in the beginning, reformulates that in terms of responsibilities and clarifies how these responsibilities are divided. More concretely, Cooper clears herself from an apparent inconsistency by retracting her standpoint advanced in the beginning of the interview that local councils have the freedom to decide what the best location is. Following this retraction, she emphasizes that whether to build or not is not a matter of decision for the local councils. Finally, she outlines what kinds of decisions local councils can take, namely decisions with regard to the location of houses and the kinds of houses that are to be built.

Cooper's strategic maneuvering is a good example of how the soundness condition of clarity is fulfilled. Her response is clear enough for the purpose of the exchange in which she and Sopel are involved. In virtue of her role in a political interview, she clarifies

her view with regard to the matter on which she is interviewed and subsequently justifies it to give the account expected of her. The clarification is sufficiently precise for Soper, the audience at home and the local councils to understand how responsibilities are divided and where the flexibilities lie. In this way, Soper is not in any way prevented from continuing the discussion asking for more clarification or justification if he wants to.

5.3 Conclusion

In pragma-dialectics fallacies have traditionally been defined as breaches of the rules for critical discussion constituting the ideal dialectical procedure aimed solely at a resolution of the difference of opinion on the merits. The rules apply to the performance of moves in an argumentative discussion; any violation of these rules amounts to a fallacious argumentative move. The concept of strategic maneuvering has made it possible to explain why in practice sound and fallacious argumentative moves are sometimes hard to distinguish and has provided additional tools for distinguishing them. By regarding every move as an attempt at arguing reasonably and at the same time effectively, a violation of the dialectical rules for critical discussion is said to be committed by an arguer with a view to obtaining rhetorical success. From this perspective, fallacies are cases of ‘derailed strategic maneuvering’ in which the rhetorical concerns override the dialectical concerns, while fallacies are still seen as rule violations. It is thus taken into account that in argumentative practice arguers are interested in being not only dialectically reasonable but also rhetorically effective. Identifying whether a derailment of strategic maneuvering has indeed occurred requires workable criteria that make it possible to decide whether a certain norm specified in the rules for critical discussion has been violated or not.

In this Chapter, a politician’s strategic maneuvering involving the retraction of a standpoint and reformulating it in response to an accusation of inconsistency has been evaluated by applying criteria that relate to the norms of critical discussion. I have derived these criteria from a set of three soundness conditions that I have established in order to assess the reasonableness of the maneuvering at hand. The starting point for formulating the soundness conditions has been that an instance of fallacious strategic maneuvering occurs when a move or a sequence of moves inhibit the realization of the dialectical goal of the stage concerned. In the particular cases evaluated in this study, the dialectical goal of the confrontation stage of defining clearly the difference of opinion has been taken into account.

The first soundness condition (condition of openness) ensures that a protagonist whose standpoint is declared inconsistent with another standpoint he advanced previously

and who responds by retracting a standpoint and reformulating it, leaves open all dialectically possible continuations of the discussion. That is to say that the antagonist should not be prevented from maintaining his criticism and/or advancing new criticism. The violation of this condition gives rise to fallacies in which the antagonist is attacked with the aim of excluding him from the discussion. The second soundness condition (condition of relevance) requires that the protagonist resolve the inconsistency with which he is charged by retracting one of the criticized standpoints altogether. This condition is not fulfilled when the protagonist maintains some interpretation of the original standpoint that is exploited afterwards to defend a standpoint that is easier to justify. Doing so conveys the false impression that the original standpoint is given up so that the antagonist no longer raises criticism about this standpoint. The condition of relevance is also violated when the protagonist abusively exploits that he is supposedly no longer committed to the original standpoint by refusing to defend it if challenged to do so. The third soundness condition (condition of clarity) requires a formulation of the strategic maneuvering concerned that is as clear as necessary for a proper understanding. The violation of this condition takes place when the lack of clarity is exploited in such a way that the other party does not understand what his options are for continuing the discussion and to cover for the inconsistency not being resolved.

In order to illustrate how the three soundness conditions can be applied in cases in which an inconsistency is pointed out between standpoints causing the protagonist to retract one of the standpoints and to reformulate it, I have given an evaluative account of the responses of three politicians interviewed on the BBC. Basically, the cases of derailed strategic maneuvering that I have identified (5.2.1 and 5.2.2) provide proof that fallacies are rhetorically motivated abuses of the dialectical norms for reasonable argumentation. In the context of a political interview, they are designed to be potentially persuasive for the interviewer and especially for the audience at home which is the ultimate judge of a politician's maneuvering. In the activity type of a political interview, a politician is not solely interested in giving the account expected of him, but also wants to appear competent and trustworthy on his views and actions. To avoid being perceived otherwise, a politician strives to be confronted with as little harsh criticism as possible. To achieve this purpose, he will often find subtle ways of preventing the interviewer from advancing and maintaining criticism and he will avoid formulating his maneuvering as clearly as required for a proper understanding. Therefore, the derailment of his strategic maneuvering may easily pass unnoticed. A careful reconstruction of the politician's moves that duly takes into account the verbal and institutional context in which the moves are advanced has provided useful indications that the norms for critical discussion have been violated.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

6.1 Main findings

The goal of this study has been to carry out an analysis and evaluation of the way in which politicians maneuver strategically in response to an interviewer's accusation in a political interview that their position is inconsistent with another position they have advanced before. To attain this goal, I have first determined what kinds of responses a politician can provide when he is confronted with a criticism of inconsistency. Next, I have identified the most important preconditions imposed on the argumentative discourse by the requirements of a political interview in which the politician's responses are situated. My analysis has concentrated on what kinds of advantages a politician can gain in a political interview when responding to an accusation of inconsistency by retracting a standpoint that has been advanced earlier and subsequently reformulating this standpoint. In order to be able to evaluate these responses, I have formulated a set of soundness conditions which I applied to a number of concrete cases in judging whether the responses concerned were reasonable.

In order to determine what kinds of responses a politician can give to an accusation of inconsistency, I have examined the communicative and the interactional dimension of these accusations. The communicative purpose of an accusation of inconsistency is to make the addressee understand that he is criticized for allegedly having said something that

is the opposite of what he has said before about the same issue (there is an inconsistency between words) or for having said something that is incompatible with the way in which the addressee has acted (there is an inconsistency between words and actions). The interactional purpose of this form of criticism is to elicit a response that addresses the charge of inconsistency. In an argumentative confrontation in which the protagonist of a standpoint is accused by an antagonist of an inconsistency, the criticism casts doubt on the acceptability of the protagonist's current standpoint. The antagonist points out that the standpoint cannot be maintained because the protagonist has acted in such a way that the opposite standpoint can be ascribed to him.

Because the accusation of inconsistency is a form of criticism that can either be accepted or not, the protagonist of a standpoint can respond to it in two ways: he can maintain his standpoint and defend it, or he can give in to the antagonist's criticism by retracting his standpoint. If he is to give the preferred response, however, the protagonist has only one option: he should accept the charge and thereby admit that the accusation is correct. The accusation of inconsistency is aimed at getting the interlocutor's acceptance that the criticism of inconsistency is justified.

In order to achieve the main goal of this study of making possible a realistic analysis and evaluation of the politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency, I have taken account of how the macro-context of a political interview affects the participants' argumentative moves. I have characterized the political interview as a predominantly argumentative activity type implementing the genre of deliberation in the political domain, the institutional point of which is to preserve a democratic political culture. I have shown that intrinsically linked to the institutional point of this activity type is a process of accountability in which the interviewer holds a politician to account for his words and actions and the politician attempts to give the required account. That is to say that within a democratic political system politicians are held to account by representatives of the media before a listening, reading or television-watching audience.

An accountability process involves by definition that the interviewer asks critical questions and the politician provides justification and clarification by responding. These basic characteristics make clear that a disagreement is assumed to exist between an antagonist (the interviewer) who is specifically oriented towards putting forward objections and criticisms and a protagonist (the politician) who has to deal with these criticisms in his response. The disagreement at the heart of a political interview concerns matters of importance to the public which are associated with, though not limited to, policy making, procedural correctness, ethical standards, the use of public money and the observance of legal rules. Essentially, the disagreement is about whether or not the politician's words and actions with regard to these matters are adequate.

In my characterization of the activity type of a political interview, I identified several important preconditions for argumentation. Due to his role as holder of public office who has to be able to account for his words and actions, the politician has to argue for his standpoint. In practice, this means that he defends himself and the party he represents. Therefore, his answers convey a commitment to a standpoint by means of which he claims that his words and actions are adequate. Whatever the politician says, irrespective of whether it is presented as a clarification or explanation, is in fact a defense of his words and actions and an attempt at not having to admit defeat. In virtue of his role as spokesman for the public, the interviewer questions the politician's words and actions and goes, if he thinks this to be in the public interest, beyond mere doubt by advancing the opposite of the politician's standpoint. He makes a sustained demand for further justification by continuously raising doubts that put the tenability of the politician's standpoint to the test. While the main difference of opinion can be viewed as an attempt at resolving a difference of opinion about the adequacy of the politician's words and actions, sub-discussions may take place when the interviewer does not accept the politician's standpoint. For example, when the politician's standpoint is inconsistent with another standpoint, the interviewer initiates a sub-discussion about the politician's change of position, which he should clarify and justify for the audience at home.

Usually, the outcome of a political interview does not become clear immediately. After all, it is the public as the primary addressee that determines the outcome of the discussion. Eventually, they do so by deciding in the voting box whether or not a politician's words and actions are up to the desired standard of adequacy. The interviewer sometimes re-opens a discussion on an issue that has been discussed already to scrutinize the politician's words and actions to the highest possible degree.

An accusation of inconsistency, whether it points at an inconsistency that is clear to everyone or simply alleged without being accurate, can have damaging consequences for the politician. In the cases in which the accusation is clearly justified, the politician can only respond to the charge by accepting the accusation as correct and retracting one of the inconsistent standpoints. However, by simply retracting his standpoint the politician shows that he cannot provide the account for his performance expected of him as a holder of public office. In order to defend himself, and the political party which he represents, a politician often tries to find a potentially effective compensating adjustment. My analysis of interviews with British politicians has revealed that a suitable adjustment enabling the politician to continue the discussion is to reformulate one of the standpoints at issue. This way of responding is an attempt at maneuvering strategically by defining the difference of opinion clearly but doing so in such a way that the chances of winning the discussion increase. The politician's maneuvering is constrained by the institutional preconditions for argumentation in a political interview.

After analyzing in detail three argumentative exchanges in which a politician is accused of being inconsistent, I distinguished three patterns in the confrontational strategic maneuvering a politician resorts to when he has no other choice than to accept a charge of inconsistency. The first pattern amounts to reformulating the original standpoint in conditional terms: in the reformulated standpoint the politician's support is dependent on certain conditions being fulfilled. The second pattern of strategic maneuvering consists in the politician reformulating the original standpoint by portraying the interviewer's interpretation that there is an inconsistency as a misunderstanding that requires clarification. The third pattern amounts to reformulating the original standpoint in such a way that the politician can claim that the original standpoint concerned something different than what the current standpoint pertains to. By making use of one of these three patterns of strategic maneuvering, a politician lives up to the institutional requirement of giving an account of his words and actions, takes away the inconsistency of which he is accused and repairs the potentially damaging image of being someone who cannot be trusted.

In my analysis of the politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency, I have shown that these moves are part of a dialectical procedure. In carrying out this procedure, the politician is viewed as being interested in balancing the dialectical goal of defining the difference of opinion clearly with the rhetorical goal of doing so in his own favor. However, the balance between satisfying the dialectical goal and at the same time pursuing the rhetorical goal is not in all cases obtained. The desire to be rhetorically effective may override the concern to remain dialectically reasonable. In that case, the maneuvering can be said to have derailed into fallaciousness.

In order to gain insight into the reasonableness of the politician's maneuvering, I have carried out an evaluation that concentrated on judging the dialectical soundness of the politician's strategic maneuvering. I have assessed whether the sequence of moves made in retracting a standpoint and afterwards reformulating this standpoint contributes to a reasonable resolution of the difference of opinion that is at stake in a political interview. To this end, I have formulated and applied three soundness conditions that should be fulfilled if a politician is to reasonably retract a standpoint that is afterwards reformulated.

The first soundness condition (condition of openness) ensures that a protagonist whose standpoint is declared inconsistent with another standpoint that he has advanced and who responds by retracting a standpoint and reformulating this standpoint, leaves open all dialectically possible continuations of the discussion. That is to say that the antagonist should not be prevented from maintaining his criticism or raising new criticism if he wants to do so. Violating this condition gives rise to fallacies involving attacks on the antagonist aimed at excluding him from the discussion (such as *ad hominem* attacks and *ad baculum* attacks).

The second soundness condition (condition of relevance) requires that the protagonist resolve the inconsistency with which he is charged by retracting a standpoint altogether. This condition has been formulated to ensure that the politician's response is a relevant reaction of acceptance of the accusation of inconsistency. In addition, the retraction of the standpoint advanced previously which is no longer found acceptable should concern indeed the standpoint that is claimed to be retracted. This condition is not fulfilled when the protagonist does not retract the earlier standpoint altogether, thus making it harder to be questioned with regard to it. Another possible violation of the condition of relevance occurs when a protagonist who has not retracted his standpoint altogether refuses to respond to criticism regarding his original standpoint on the ground that he is no longer committed to the standpoint for which he is challenged.

The third soundness condition (condition of clarity) requires the phrasing of strategic maneuvering concerned to be as clear as is required for a proper understanding. The protagonist should make it understood that the inconsistency has been resolved and that the antagonist may continue the discussion in any possible way. Violating this condition amounts to not ensuring the required clarity. This is usually done to camouflage that other soundness conditions have not been fulfilled.

Evaluating the politician's strategic maneuvering in the context of a political interview by applying the three soundness conditions has shown that more often than not the politician resorts to subtle rhetorically motivated abuses in order to persuade the interviewer and the audience at home of the acceptability of his words and actions. In a political interview, a politician is by definition criticized for his words and actions and cannot avoid responding to such criticism. But the politician is not interested only in giving an account, he will also want to build a positive image of himself as someone who can be trusted by the audience at home. Therefore, the politician often resorts to subtle means of preventing the interviewer from continuing a harsh line of inquiry, especially in cases in which his opinions are claimed to be inconsistent. I have argued that judging the (un)reasonableness of moves should be based on an assessment of each case on its own merits.

6.2 Implications for further research

In this study, I have dealt in detail with a politician's retracting a standpoint and reformulating this standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency in a political interview. The responses are reactions to a common form of criticism in which an interviewer points out that the politician cannot maintain a standpoint because it is

inconsistent with a standpoint advanced earlier. My account of the politician's responses has concentrated on identifying their potentially strategic function and evaluating whether the moves concerned are reasonable or not.

For the purpose of analyzing and evaluating a politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency, I have used and further developed pragma-dialectical tools which enabled me to go beyond merely describing the responses at issue. I have identified certain typical patterns of the politician's responses and explained when the responses can be seen as reasonable or unreasonable in a political interview. Achieving this has been made possible by using the concepts of strategic maneuvering and argumentative activity types. The concept of strategic maneuvering has been particularly useful to understand that a politician's moves are always attempts made in a dialectical procedure at balancing dialectical concerns for remaining reasonable with rhetorical concerns for winning the discussion. A politician's moves have been analyzed as potentially effective by taking into account that he makes particular topical choices, adapts himself to the audience in a certain way and presents his moves in such a way that he reaches a favorable dialectical outcome of the discussion. In the confrontation stage in which the responses at issue are situated, defining the difference of opinion in such a way as to remain engaged in the discussion is the favored outcome.

The concept of argumentative activity types has been helpful to identify the preconditions which the requirements of a political interview impose on the politician's responses. By recognizing that argumentation is central to a political interview, I was able to analyze the moves concerned by doing justice to the institutional aim of a political interview of carrying out an accountability procedure. A politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency have been examined as an attempt at giving an account of his words or actions with a view to convincing the interviewer and ultimately the public at home that he is up to standard. The concept of activity types has also been helpful to evaluate the moves concerned from a perspective which did justice to the institutional concerns of the arguers in a political interview.

My research complements previous studies of politicians' responses in a political interview. Scholars taking a discourse analytic perspective in particular have described the form, structure and function of the responses politicians give in a political interview when they are asked confrontational questions. But the traditional textual analysis has not yet developed a systematic methodology for analyzing questions and answers in a political interview and has not shown interest in evaluating their quality. This can be partly explained by the fact that discourse analysis scholars have ignored almost completely the argumentative nature of the exchanges taking place in a political interview. In the rare cases in which argumentation has been recognized (Wilson 1990, Fetzer 2007), the authors have merely pointed at the presence of argumentation. Some discourse analysts have

stressed the role of reasonable argumentation in a political interview, all the same they have not described, analyzed and evaluated the argumentative discourse that takes place in light of a theoretically motivated standard. Nor have they explained why questions in which accusations are launched are preferred by the interviewers, although they have been recognized as a common argumentative technique (Clayman and Heritage 2002), and why responding is so difficult for the politicians.

By a combination of a dialectical and a pragmatic approach, I have in the first place succeeded in identifying a finite number of responses a politician can give to an interviewer's accusation of inconsistency in an argumentative confrontation. Dialectically, I have characterized accusations pointing at an inconsistency between standpoints as expressions of critical doubt that occur in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion. Pragmatically, I have defined such accusations of inconsistency as illocutionary acts that are performed to bring about perlocutionary effects that consist in answering the charge. Of the two possible answers to the charge, accepting or not accepting the criticism, getting the accusation accepted by retracting one of the inconsistent standpoints is the preferred response.

However, accusations of inconsistency are not exclusively made to point at an inconsistency between standpoints in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion. Such accusations can also be a way of indicating that a presumably shared starting point that has been agreed upon in the opening stage is inconsistent with another starting point in the discussion (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2008, van Eemeren 2010). The accusation might also be an attempt at making the protagonist of a standpoint retract one of the arguments (or sub-standpoints) advanced in the argumentation stage because of its alleged inconsistency with a standpoint accepted in the opening stage. Further research could be carried out to investigate accusations of inconsistency and responses to these charges in other stages of the critical testing procedure. The core dialectical profiles (van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans 2007a) can constitute the starting points for representing all possible argumentative moves and deciding which kinds of critical moves the accusations and their responses could realize. This approach can make clear in which way this form of criticism is realized in the different stages of a critical discussion, for what purpose, and what kinds of responses it elicits. Eventually, this enterprise could lead to a complete typology of the kinds of moves an accusation of inconsistency can instantiate and the possibilities these moves offer for maneuvering in response to them. If such an endeavor proves feasible, all strategic functions an accusation of inconsistency may have and all responses to it could be established for all discussion stages. In this way, the various forms of strategic maneuvering with this type of move would be fully investigated and could be taken as examples for researching other forms of criticism and responses to them.

My characterization of the macro-context of a political interview as an argumentative activity type has emphasized that central to this activity type is an accountability process in which the interviewer holds the politician to account and the politician is expected to give an account. Following on from this characteristic, my analysis of the politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency has been carried out by taking into account that each argumentative move is advanced with a view to satisfying the concern for accountability. Every move of the interviewer has been examined as a request for clarifying and justifying the politician's words and actions. The politician's responses have been reconstructed in all cases as arguments in support of a positive evaluation of his words and actions.

One can argue, however, that viewing political interviews as an activity type in which only asking for and giving an account are central is insufficient for a proper understanding of the strategic maneuvering that goes on. After all, an accountability procedure includes clearly also an informational dimension (Curtin 2007). Recognizing and providing information are certainly essential preconditions for carrying out an accountability process. But it is only by studying the strategic maneuvering in a political interview that this other goal of informing is recognized as another factor that has significant influence on the shape of the participants' contributions. I suggested in my analyses that an interviewer's accusation of inconsistency often also involves a request for clarifying information and that the politician's response sometimes provides such a clarification.

The politician could exploit the informative and the argumentative aspects of the communicative activity type of a political interview by giving the appearance of being engaged in fulfilling the vital need to give an account while he limits himself in fact strategically to just offering an explanation or providing information in order to escape from having to give a justification. Or the politician may make it seem as if the account he gives requires no further justification by presenting it as information so that a weak defense does not come to light. This study could be extended by methodically investigating how the interest in satisfying the informational requirement is exploited for purposes of winning the discussion. Unlike previous studies taking a discourse analytic perspective, in which information-giving has been considered to be the main aim pursued in a political interview, providing information by the politician should be analyzed as part of an argumentative discussion in which giving an account is the main institutional concern of the participants. In this way, an analysis can be given that does justice both to the informational dimension and the accountability dimension of a political interview.

I have identified three patterns of strategic maneuvering as typical of a politician retracting a standpoint and reformulating it to remain engaged in the discussion. In all these patterns, the inconsistency is to a certain extent acknowledged and afterwards

removed, and the politician will potentially convince the audience of the acceptability of his words and actions. Yet, it seems necessary to carry out further empirical research in which more concrete cases should be analyzed to provide more support to the general account of the strategic function of the responses at issue. Research could be conducted to investigate whether other patterns of strategic maneuvering can be distinguished or whether indeed the identified patterns are typical of all responses to an accusation of inconsistency that cannot be easily refuted.

In my study I propose that the reasonableness of the politician's responses to an accusation of inconsistency by retracting a standpoint and afterwards reformulating this standpoint be evaluated by applying three soundness conditions. Making use of these three conditions enabled me to judge the soundness of the politician's sequence of moves by assessing whether the critical dialectical procedure is hindered or not. I checked whether the politician prevents the interviewer from maintaining his criticism or advancing new criticism, whether the inconsistency is indeed resolved and whether the moves made are clear enough for the purpose of the exchange. I have shown that in all cases in which any of these conditions has not been fulfilled, the rhetorical concerns for winning the discussion have taken the upper hand over the dialectical concerns for remaining reasonable. A line for further research is to investigate whether the moves deemed (un)reasonable by applying the soundness conditions I formulated are perceived in the same way by ordinary arguers. In order to ensure that the conditions for evaluating the dialectical soundness of the responses at issue are intersubjectively valid, further experimental research is to be carried out to investigate whether the standards for judging the soundness of the politician's responses of ordinary arguers echo the pragma-dialectical standards.

Appendix

Example 1 (Jon Sopel – William Hague interview, November 12, 2006)

Jon Sopel:

Well I'm joined now by William Hague, the Shadow Foreign Secretary. Mr Hague, welcome to the Politics Show. Are you going to be backing the government this time round on a ninety day detention period for suspected terrorists.

William Hague:

Well, that would depend on the arguments that they bring forward. We voted against that before but that was because they couldn't actually site a single case in which a ninety day period was required, so Conservatives want to see strong laws against terrorism, that help us combat terrorism, but we don't want to see ineffective authoritarianism. There has to be a good argument for anything the government does.

Jon Sopel:

Aren't the arguments this time being made not by government ministers but by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, the Head of the Anti Terrorist Squad, Eliza Manningham Buller, the Head of MI5.

William Hague:

Well we should listen to all of their arguments, but simple assertions aren't sufficient for parliament and John Prescott was saying that there that it's because of Conservatives and Liberals that this proposal was defeated before, actually, it wouldn't have been defeated had they been able to persuade members of their own party that this was the right thing to do.

So there are a lot of things that need doing to combat terrorism. A proper border police force in this country, proper surveillance of terrorist suspects, a Minister in the Cabinet who pulls together the whole anti terrorism effort, there are a lot of things that need doing, but they all have to be justified.

Jon Sopel:

Do you think that something changed though this summer, over the alleged airline, terror bomb plot, whatever shorthand you want to do. I mean you know, Peter Clark gave that very interesting news conference afterwards where he said, we've found more than four hundred computers, two hundred mobile telephones and eight thousand items of removable storage media, such as memory sticks, CDs and DVDs.

So far from the computers alone, we have removed some six thousand giga bytes of data. It is an incredibly complex operation now, investigating somebody... and you know, they were really pushed against it over twenty eight days.

William Hague:

It's a huge operation and I think we do have to take heed of what Eliza Manningham Buller has said, there is clearly a major threat to the security of this country. But that's not the same as saying, let's just adopt every single idea that anybody has ever had for dealing with this. We have to adopt the most effective ideas. And so that's where you come back to the argument about the twenty eight day detention.

If people can show, if it can be shown, that it is necessary to extend that, then the Conservative Party will listen to that, but we do need better arguments than the Government were able to come up with last time and in the meantime they need to get on with the things that I've just been mentioning and that David Cameron was proposing in his article in the Sunday papers this morning.

Jon Sopel:

Sure. But it sounded almost like, you know better than Sir Ian Blair and Eliza Manningham Buller.

William Hague:

Well I don't think parliament can ever just take the orders as it were, take the instructions of people in the security services. You do have to weight that up but parliament in the end has to make the decision.

So as I say, if the government comes up with an argument that gives instances and cases in which a longer period of detention has been necessary, that would make a big difference to have Conservatives think about this, but we're not just going to give a blank cheque for the government to do anything it wants.

Jon Sopel:

And Labor say the big thing that you could do to help would be to support identity cards. It's fair to say that this is an issue that your party has rather flip flopped on isn't it.

William Hague:

Well it's... I think it's become clearer over time where we should stand on this, let's put it that way, because we've got the government adopting an identity card scheme, but one that is so bureaucratic and involves a vast data base and this is the government of serial

catastrophes when it comes to data bases as we all know, costing now, according to the London School of Economics, up to twenty billion pounds and we said that if some of that money was spent instead on an effective border police and strengthened surveillance of terrorist suspects, and strengthening special branch and things like that, we'd actually get a lot further.... (interjection)....having identity cards.

Jon Sopel:

Isn't that a detail of the legislation. I mean you supported identity cards back in December 2004, less than two years ago.

William Hague:

We supported, I and Michael Howard supported the principle of those. Subject to how the details were worked out. The details are not impressive and the grasp of detail and the ability to control the costs of the current government is so terrible, that it's not a scheme that we can support.

Jon Sopel:

Can we turn now from the war on terror to the war on Iraq and your area of responsibility. Should the policy change now towards Iraq?

William Hague:

It's, certainly there should be a reassessment going on because clearly Iraq at the moment, which could still tip either way, is tipping in the wrong direction. I think we have to concede that over the last few weeks and months. It's very important there is heavy British involvement in that reassessment, that it's not just an American process and certainly there are things that need doing better such as the tackling of corruption in Iraq, of the reconstruction in Iraq and of course we have to look at whether we can bring other countries in to help dealing with it.

Jon Sopel:

Yes, that's what I wanted to ask. Do you believe that it's time now to bring Syria and Iran in as part of the process to try and bring a stable peace to the region.

William Hague:

I think we have to make the most of our friendships and build on our friendships with the moderate Arab nations of the Middle East and remember that it's not just the Iraqs, we mustn't take our eye off the situation in Lebanon, situation in Gaza, they need to really push forward the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

We need those friendships with the moderate Arab nations. Syria and Iran are a more difficult proposition and of course it would be excellent if they could be involved at some stage in the future, in guaranteeing what happens in Iraq. It may be naïve to think that that could happen in the coming weeks and months.

Jon Sopel:

You talk about reassessment. What are the policy options, clearly up for, it's all up for debate in the United States following the mid-term elections.

William Hague:

And it should be all up for debate here. We mustn't be afraid of debating that.

Jon Sopel:

All options.

William Hague:

And I think, look well, the situation in Iraq should be up for debate here. People tend to see the choices on Iraq as do we pull the troops out quickly or do we pull them out slowly and actually, that is not the main issue. I mean we all want to see the troops come home when they can come home but we don't want to see a totally collapsing Iraq left behind. So what can be done internally to strengthen the security and the progress made in Iraq is very very important and all the options to help buttress that need to be debated openly, in the debates on this Queen's Speech.

Jon Sopel:

And a final question. The Register of Members Interests was published this week. It showed that your income has been slashed since returning to the front bench, from something like of, I don't know, the best part of a million quid the previous year to a paltry quarter of a million. I just wondered whether it's been worth it.

William Hague:

Money isn't everything, is it? We have to try and give this country an alternative government at the next election and I'm delighted to be part of the effort to try to do that.

Jon Sopel:

Okay, William Hague, thank you very much for being with us.

William Hague:

Thank you.

Example 2 (Jon Sopel – Yvette Cooper interview, July 15, 2007)

Jon Sopel:

Well the minister responsible for housing is Yvette Cooper and it was a sign of Gordon Brown's intent on this issue that she's one of the new faces round the Cabinet table. I spoke to her just before we came on air and asked her if Britain should follow Germany's example and build on more green field sites.

Yvette Cooper:

Well, we do need to build more homes because we need to help first time buyers and also people who are on council waiting lists and who need homes for the future, but we do think the priority should be around brown field land. We've already seen a big increase in the proportion of homes being built on brown field land, over the last ten years and we think that's important but ultimately, local councils need to decide what the best location is in their area.

Jon Sopel:

But you've had a review on this, the Barker Review, that looked at what the availability would be of brown field sites, came up with a figure of just under being able to create a million new homes, your estimate is that you need three and a half million new homes.

Yvette Cooper:

That's right. And the thing about brown field land is that it comes, it becomes available all the time because you have you know, maybe a factory that closes or maybe use that changes in a particular area, so brown field land does develop and change. But ultimately, it is for local councils to decide what is the best location in their area, and they have to look at all the areas you know, around the town, the town centre, in their communities, because they'll know best where these homes should best be built to meet their local needs.

Jon Sopel:

You keep saying brown field sites, but brown field sites are also our playing fields our parks, our gardens.

Yvette Cooper:

No. That's not right. Parks and playing fields have special protection and we have also given local councils greater powers to differentiate between different kinds of brown field land, so that they can introduce much stronger protections on perhaps garden land in an area, where they've got alternative sites available.

But the bottom line is, that people do need to identify where the homes should go. It's no good just saying, here's all the areas we're going to protect and oh, there's nothing left, you know, we're not going to build any homes anywhere. We need to build the homes but of course, we've got to protect the urban green spaces and make sure, that you know, those are the parks and the play areas for the children to play in as they grow.

Jon Sopel:

Because one of the things we saw in that film there, in Germany was that people that person saying, look, you can't just worry about fossilizing the countryside and keeping that beautiful and then just cramming everybody tight in to cities and towns. They've got to have quality of life too.

Yvette Cooper:

Well you've got to improve both the towns and cities but also rural areas. We've been working for example with the affordable rural housing commission on the need to build more affordable housing in rural areas because sometimes you get small villages and areas where they are in danger of becoming fossilized if they don't have small numbers of affordable homes and other homes being built in those communities too. So this is about you know, recognising the different character of different communities but every single community recognising that more homes do need to be built.

Jon Sopel:

You keep stressing that it's up to local councils, local councils to decide what is the best thing to do. What do you do with the local council who say, well frankly, we don't think we want to build that much.

Yvette Cooper:

Well we do have a serious problem with Conservative local councils in particular across the south east region in particular, but not just there, who are opposing increases in housing...the south east Regional Assembly indeed has been arguing for cuts in the level of house building over the next few years, which I just think it's bonkers, given the needs we have. But I think it's, you know, it's not on really for councils to simply turn their backs and say, well we don't want any new houses round here, build them somewhere else. Build them in another community, build them in another town.

Every town, every city, every community has first time buyers who can't get on the ladder, has sons and daughters who are still stuck living at home with their mum and dad because they just can't afford anywhere to live, that is not fair and every community needs to recognize its responsibility to do something about that.

Jon Sopel:

But you just said at the start, it's up to councils to decide. Councils could decide they don't want to build extra houses, then what are you going to do about it.

Yvette Cooper:

No, we're clear that the way that the regional planning process works and the way that local councils have to wait together, they will all have to accept their responsibility to deliver more homes. Where they have the flexibilities around where within their community the homes should be built, you know, what the best location is, whether they've got good brown fields available and what kinds of homes.

You know, they may need more family homes in their area to look at those sorts of issues as well. What they can't do is turn their backs on their responsibility to deliver more homes and interestingly, we had forty towns and cities come forward over the last twelve months to say, well we want to increase the level of homes in our area.

We want to do so very substantially and we want to work with the government to do so. We believe more towns and cities will come forward, you know with ideas like eco towns so you really improve the environmental standards of the new housing as well.

Jon Sopel:

You singled out Tory councils but I would suspect there are Liberal Democrat councils and maybe Labour councils as well, very mindful of the number of new houses...

Both together...

Yvette Cooper:

...There are certainly a few Lib Dem councils who are doing the same thing.

Jon Sopel:

Yeah, but what do the Tories say? it's actually not a question of it's not in my back yard it's a question of that if we're going to do this, we need to provide extra hospitals, extra schools, extra GP surgeries, space for building supermarkets so that you've got the whole infrastructure and government needs to help us with that.

Yvette Cooper:

Well we agree, we do need infrastructure, we are putting more investment in to infrastructure and we are looking at other ways to raise more from planning... I think it's a bit disingenuous for the Tories to say that when they're actually talking about cutting public investment, so they're really just calling for additional resources, simply as an excuse not to build the homes because across the board nationally, they want to both cut taxes and cut that spending as well.

Jon Sopel:

Now could I ask you about something which I'm sure is of huge interest to a lot of Labour councils. Gordon Brown spoke about the role of councils in supplying the additional housing and he said, to give a bigger role for local authorities than they've had before. What does that mean?

Yvette Cooper:

Well we think that there's a lot more that local councils could be doing to support more affordable housing in their areas, particularly using local council land both to support shared ownership housing and to support social housing, that does include council housing, it also includes working in partnership with Housing Associations, with private developers, we want mixed communities in these areas so you have different kinds of housing all along the same street, but we do think local councils have a stronger role to play.

Jon Sopel:

A lot more council housing.

Yvette Cooper:

Well, this is not about a return to the old sort of 50s council estates. I don't think that's the right approach and I don't think anybody would support that, where you have, you know, the council estate on one side of town, the executive estate on the other. This is about developing mixed communities and that means a lot more working in partnership, you know, with other organisations, be they housing associations or developers or others.

Jon Sopel:

You say that's not what people want. That's exactly what a lot of local Labour councillors would love to see. The ability to build...

Yvette Cooper:

No, I don't think that's right. What they want to see is mixed communities.

Jon Sopel:

So there's no desire, what happened during the Deputy Leadership campaign, when we had candidate after candidate talking about the need for more council housing.

Yvette Cooper:

Well of course, we need more social housing, we need more shared ownership housing and we need more private housing. We're completely clear about that. We need more of all of those three and we need councils to be playing a much stronger role than they are at the moment.

But what I don't think anybody is calling for is a return for the old traditional estates where you had a particular kind of housing, all of one kind of housing in area, and complete segregation between those different sort of estates. I don't think that is a good thing for local communities, I don't think it's what any town and city wants. What people want is for the housing to be mixed.

The housing to be you know, different kinds of homes along side each other, so you can't tell what kind of housing it is, when you walk along the street. That's why you need greater partnership working, but as part of that process, we do think that councils have a much stronger play, role to play, particularly using their land in the process.

Jon Sopel:

Sure, but you could have a block of flats that was built by a housing association and next to it maybe a big block of flats that's a council bloke.

Yvette Cooper:

Well you don't really want a single block of flats, a big block of flats that's only got one type of housing in it. What you want is within every block, within every development, along every street, to have a mix of different kinds of housing and that means working in partnership, so it does mean, you know, councils doing more but it means working with other organisations as well.

Jon Sopel:

And has, I've seen it reported that you're going to let councils borrow from the private sector so that they can build more. Is that right.

Yvette Cooper:

Well councils can already use their borrowing in order to do all sorts of investment in their area. There are certain difficulties around the way that the housing revenue account works and the way that technical rules work and we are looking at greater flexibility for councils. Of course it's got to be within proper responsible public borrowing frameworks, but we do want councils to play a stronger role.

Jon Sopel:

And in this vision, you say councils play a bigger role, I'm just trying to get the simple answer to the question, will there be a lot more council housing.

Yvette Cooper:

We do think councils should be able to build council housing, we also think that they should be able to work with housing associations, with private sector organisations, in partnership because that's what you really need. We want greater flexibility, but we want that partnership development.

Jon Sopel:

Yvette Cooper thank you very much indeed.

Example 3 (Jon Sopel – Alan Duncan interview, December 9, 2007)

Jon Sopel:

Well the opposition have had an energy policy of their own to unveil this week and I'm joined by Mr Hutton's Conservative opposite number, Alan Duncan. Alan Duncan, welcome to you and thank you for joining us on the Politics Show. I just want to pick up with - not where we left off on party funding, that's too big an issue. Let's just go on to the energy issue here. Do you support what John Hutton has said about the development of off-shore wind farms?

Alan Duncan:

I think broadly, I can agree with much if not most of what John Hutton has just said. We're an island nation, there's a lot of wind around, we should use that off-shore capacity for generating electricity which is clean and secure. So yes, I think it's inevitable and a good thing that there will be more off-shore wind.

Jon Sopel:

So this is a bi-partisan approach then.

Alan Duncan:

A lot of the energy policy actually is and I don't think it does anyone any good to pretend that there's a great ding-dong battle here. I mean there's a lot of over-lap and a lot of stuff. I mean I, I think David Cameron as we saw this week has been pioneering a lot of it. Certainly we've been emphasizing the renewable side of energy generation, earlier, and I would say more assertively than the Labour government, but there's a massive overlap which is good and I think in as much as people can invest, knowing that things are going to continue when I would say, there's a change in government, then that's the better.

Jon Sopel:

We heard Mr Hutton conceding that there was going - inevitably it was going to mean that electricity prices were going to go up a bit. You're happy to go to the electorate and say, vote Tory, for higher electricity prices.

Alan Duncan:

Well I think that some of the renewable options at the moment, certainly at the front end, are quite expensive but then they're there for a very long time and who knows what's going to happen to global energy markets. We've got nearly a hundred dollar oil and when we have a carbon price of course, what really matters is the differential between those generating methods, which are carbon free or very low carbon, and those that are not. So if we have a, in the future a more sophisticated and effective regime for penalizing carbon, that's good and one thing I am critical of the government of, is at the moment they penalize nuclear as if it produced carbon, which of course it doesn't.

Jon Sopel:

Just - is there a difference in energy policy. I mean I know you said that there's a lot, that there's no great big ding dong, but I mean we had David Cameron this week talking about micro-generation; people putting a little turbine on their own property and it seemed to be sort of a very bottom up sort of approach to energy policy, left to individuals, here we have the government saying well, actually, we've got a rather different approach, we want to build this huge infrastructure.

Alan Duncan:

Well I think we've got to do both and we really have to push for every conceivable renewable option that exists and what David was saying this week in our decentralized energy paper was you know, if we can change all of human behavior, by making people think about not only what they use but what they can create and stick in to the system, then we can change the whole nature of electricity generation. So you know little things like photovoltaics, a hospital perhaps having a turbine, bore holes which can perhaps do half of our houses energy needs, you know, things like that are really going to make a difference.

Jon Sopel:

And on nuclear, the government says that obviously has to be part of the mix. Are you on that page as well.

Alan Duncan:

Our policy is absolutely clear and it's again, very similar, we want approval for sites and designs. We want a proper carbon price, we want honesty about costs, with no subsidy. Get on with the decision to

do something with the waste, again, David Cameron said that this week, and I think the government has been a bit slow on working out what to do with nuclear waste. So then people can invest and I think probably they will.

Jon Sopel:

You were rather more skeptical the last time I spoke to you when you were on this programme – we can just have a listen to what you said last time.

‘we think that the nuclear power sector, should be there as a last resort in many respects. We want to explore every conceivable method of generating electricity before we go to nuclear’

Alan Duncan:

so fluent.

Jon Sopel:

Yes. But you were completely different, you were very skeptical there. It has to be the last option, now you’re saying, we’re on the same page as the government and yes, let’s get on with it.

Alan Duncan:

I think what’s important with nuclear is to explain the policy. I think it’s unhelpful to get hooked on two words and I think the policy as it has always been is exactly as I’ve just explained.

Jon Sopel:

So you are fine about nuclear. The other thing that John Hutton said which was quite interesting, was we can't be at the mercy, energy security was vital, we can't be at the mercy of another country that might cut off our supplies. Haven't you been off meeting the head of Gazprom recently.

Alan Duncan:

Er, ah. Er, yes. Since you ask, I, yes I went to Moscow a couple of weeks ago, a personal initiative really, I used to be in the energy sector myself. For one very good reason, which is that when there is a company in the world which is likely to provide a massive percentage of the world's gas, on which we are likely to become increasingly dependent, I think it's important that politicians at a senior level, know the people and can look them in the eye and can actually understand what they're trying to do with their company.

Jon Sopel:

And do you trust what he's doing. Trust what Gazprom are doing.

Alan Duncan:

They are very entangled with the Kremlin, so the structure is not a sort of private structure in the way that all of us I think would prefer, but I think it's important to understand that Gazprom does need to export gas in order to earn the currency to subsidize all the prices in the domestic economy of Russia, so there is a, there's a mutual interest there, for their exporting and selling outside Russia.

Jon Sopel:

Okay, Alan Duncan thank you very much for being with us.

Samenvatting

Deze studie beoogt een argumentatieve verklaring te geven voor de manier waarop politici in een politiek interview reageren op de beschuldiging dat hun standpunt inconsistent is met een ander standpunt dat ze eerder hebben ingenomen. De studie onderzoekt verschillende antwoorden van door de BBC geïnterviewde politici met het doel hun strategische functie te bepalen en te beoordelen in hoeverre de antwoorden redelijk zijn. In de bestaande tekstuele analyses van politieke interviews is geen systematische methodologie ontwikkeld om de antwoorden van politici vanuit een argumentatief perspectief te behandelen. Ook is er geen aandacht besteed aan de kwaliteit van deze antwoorden. Door inzicht te verschaffen in de argumentatieve confrontaties die in een politiek interview plaatsvinden vormt dit proefschrift een aanvulling vanuit pragma-dialectisch perspectief op eerdere studies. Vanuit een dialectisch perspectief kunnen de antwoorden van politici op een beschuldiging van inconsistentie gekarakteriseerd worden als reacties op kritiek die erop gericht is een rechtvaardiging van de inconsistentie te krijgen. Pragmatisch gezien zijn de antwoorden die de politici geven op de kritiek van inconsistentie taalhandelingen door middel waarvan een poging wordt ondernomen om de beschuldiging van de interviewer te weerleggen. De pragma-dialectische argumentatietheorie is als theoretisch kader gekozen omdat deze benadering goed ontwikkelde instrumenten biedt voor de analyse en evaluatie van gecontextualiseerd argumentatief taalgebruik.

Om het hoofddoel van deze studie – een analyse en evaluatie te geven van de antwoorden van politici op een beschuldiging van inconsistentie – te bereiken, wordt eerst nagegaan welke typen antwoorden een politicus kan geven op een dergelijke beschuldiging (*Hoofdstuk 2*). Een karakterisering van de communicatieve en interactionele aspecten van een beschuldiging van inconsistentie toont aan dat de politicus twee mogelijkheden heeft om op deze vorm van kritiek te reageren: hij kan het bekritiseerde standpunt handhaven en vervolgens rechtvaardigen, of zijn standpunt laten varen door het in te trekken. Als de politicus echter het geprefereerde antwoord wil geven, heeft hij maar een optie: hij moet de beschuldiging aanvaarden en daarmee toegeven dat deze correct is. De beschuldiging van

inconsistentie kan namelijk gezien worden als een poging om de tegenstander zover te krijgen dat hij de kritiek aanvaardt.

De manier waarop politici reageren op een beschuldiging van inconsistentie wordt in hoge mate bepaald door de eigenschappen van de institutionele context van het politieke interview waarin de zinnen naar voren worden gebracht. In lijn met de pragma-dialectische benadering worden politieke interviews in deze studie gekarakteriseerd als communicatieve actietypen waarin argumentatie een cruciale rol speelt (*Hoofdstuk 3*). Op basis van empirische bestudering daarvan wordt vastgesteld welke institutionele factoren invloed uitoefenen op de argumentatieve zinnen van de discussianten. Een politiek interview is een deliberatieve praktijk die behoort tot het domein van de politieke communicatie en gericht is op het handhaven van een democratische politieke cultuur. In een intrinsieke relatie met dit institutionele doel vindt een proces van verantwoording plaats waarin de interviewer de politicus ter verantwoording roept voor zijn woorden en daden en waarin de politicus verantwoording probeert af te leggen. Kenmerkend voor een democratisch politiek systeem is dat politici ter verantwoording kunnen worden geroepen door vertegenwoordigers van de media voor een luisterend, lezend, of tv-kijkend auditorium.

Er zijn een aantal belangrijke voorwaarden die te maken hebben met de verantwoordingingsprocedure die invloed uitoefenen op de argumentatie in het actietype politiek interview. Vanwege zijn rol als bekleeder van een openbare functie wordt de politicus geacht verantwoording af te leggen voor zijn woorden en daden. In de praktijk betekent dit dat de politicus zichzelf en ook de partij die hij vertegenwoordigt moet verdedigen. Zijn antwoorden dienen ter verdediging van het standpunt dat zijn woorden en daden adequaat zijn. Alles wat hij zegt, ongeacht of dat gepresenteerd wordt als een verklaring of als uitleg, is in feite een verdediging van zijn woorden en daden en een poging om niet toe te geven dat de kritiek hierop terecht is. Vanwege zijn rol als woordvoerder van het publiek, is het de taak van de interviewer om twijfel te uiten ten opzichte van de woorden en de daden van de politicus. Wanneer de interviewer denkt dat dit in het belang van het publiek is, gaat de interviewer een stap verder door niet alleen twijfel maar ook een tegenstandpunt naar voren te brengen. Hij eist steeds een nadere rechtvaardiging door de houdbaarheid van het standpunt van de politicus in twijfel te blijven trekken. Naast de hoofddiscussie over de vraag of de woorden en daden van de politicus adequaat zijn, kunnen er ook subdiscussies plaatsvinden wanneer de interviewer de argumenten van de politicus voor zijn standpunt niet aanvaardt. Wanneer het standpunt van de politicus bijvoorbeeld inconsistent is met een ander standpunt, begint de interviewer een subdiscussie over de verandering van positie en moet de politicus deze verandering verhelderen en rechtvaardigen voor het publiek.

De institutionele kenmerken van een politiek interview dienen in deze studie als uitgangspunt voor de analyse van de strategische functie van de antwoorden van politici op een beschuldiging van inconsistentie. (*Hoofdstuk 4*). De analyse concentreert zich op die gevallen waarin de politicus geen andere keuze heeft dan te aanvaarden dat de beschuldiging van inconsistentie correct is. Vanuit een dialectisch oogpunt gezien, heeft het zomaar aanvaarden van de kritiek van inconsistentie als consequentie dat de politicus zijn standpunt moet intrekken. Daarmee zou de politicus echter hebben toegeven dat hij niet in staat is om een verantwoording van zijn handelen te geven. Om zichzelf, en de politieke partij die hij vertegenwoordigt, te verdedigen tracht een politicus zijn antwoorden zo in te kleden dat zijn eventuele tekortkomingen gecompenseerd worden. De analyse van interviews met Britse politici laat zien dat een effectieve compensatie die het mogelijk maakt voor de politicus de discussie voort te zetten bestaat uit het herformuleren van een van zijn standpunten. Een dergelijke manier van beantwoorden geldt in pragma-dialectische termen als een strategische manoeuvre die inhoudt dat het verschil van mening duidelijk gedefinieerd wordt terwijl tegelijkertijd de kansen van de politicus om te discussie te winnen worden vergroot.

De analyse van de argumentatieve gedachtenwisselingen waarin een politicus zijn standpunt intrekt en daarna herformuleert maakt duidelijk dat er drie patronen van strategisch manoeuvreren zijn te onderscheiden. Het eerste patroon komt neer op een herformulering van het originele standpunt in conditionele termen: in het geherformuleerde standpunt stelt de politicus een aantal voorwaarden. Het tweede patroon van strategisch manoeuvreren bestaat uit een herformulering van het originele standpunt die laat zien dat de interpretatie van de interviewer dat er een inconsistentie bestaat op een misverstand berust dat opgehelderd kan worden. In het derde patroon herformuleert de politicus zijn standpunt op zo'n manier dat hij kan beweren dat het oorspronkelijke standpunt op iets anders betrekking had dan het huidige standpunt. Door middel van een van deze patronen voldoet de politicus aan de institutionele voorwaarde om verantwoording van zijn woorden en daden af te leggen. Bovendien neemt hij zo de inconsistentie weg en verbetert hij het potentieel vernietigende beeld dat hij iemand is die niet te vertrouwen is.

Om inzicht te krijgen in de redelijkheid van het strategisch manoeuvreren van politici is er een evaluatie uitgevoerd die zich concentreert op de dialectische deugdelijkheid van de argumentatieve zinnen van de politici (*Hoofdstuk 5*). Deze beoordeling was erop gericht vast te stellen of het standpunt intrekken en daarna herformuleren een bijdrage levert aan de redelijke oplossing van het verschil van mening dat in een politiek interview bestaat. Om dit te kunnen nagaan, zijn drie deugdelijkheidsvoorwaarden geformuleerd en vervolgens toegepast. Bij de eerste deugdelijkheidsvoorwaarde (voorwaarde van openheid) gaat het erom of de politicus voor de interviewer alle mogelijkheden om de discussie voort te zetten open houdt, inclusief de

mogelijkheid om een nieuwe beschuldiging van inconsistentie naar voren te brengen. Op grond van de tweede deugdelijkheidsvoorwaarde (voorwaarde van relevantie) is de politicus ertoe verplicht de inconsistentie weg te nemen. De derde deugdelijkheidsvoorwaarde (voorwaarde van duidelijkheid) is bedoeld om te garanderen dat de politicus zijn antwoord zo duidelijk formuleert als nodig is voor een juist begrip.

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List of figures

2.1	Basic dialectical profile of the confrontation stage of a single dispute	25
2.2	The first four turns of a dialectical profile of the confrontation stage of a single non-mixed dispute in which the opposite standpoint is reduced to doubt	28
2.3	The first four turns of a dialectical profile of the confrontation stage of a single mixed dispute	28
3.1	Argumentative characterization of the activity type of a political interview	56
4.1	The protagonist's possibilities for responding to criticism by retracting a standpoint in the confrontation stage	60
4.2	List of indicative commitments obtained when retraction is carried out and argumentative commitments obtained when the retraction involves the withdrawal of a standpoint in response to an accusation of inconsistency	65
4.3	Dialectical profile of the confrontation stage in which a modified version of the protagonist's standpoint is included	67
4.4	Sopel's argumentation in the discussion with Hague	72
4.5	Hague's argumentation	73
4.6	Sopel's argumentation in the discussion with Cooper	81
4.7	Cooper's argumentation	82
4.8	Sopel's argumentation in the discussion with Duncan	86
4.9	Duncan's argumentation	87

Index of subjects and names

- accusation of inconsistency, 3, 5-23, 26, 27, 29-33, 52, 58-61, 64, 65, 69, 71, 74-77, 80-82, 84, 87, 88, 91, 99, 102-105, 108, 109, 111, 113-121
- Agreement, 44
- Alston, W. P., 18
- Andone, C., 18, 20, 40, 45
- activity type, 10-12, 33-38, 43, 45, 49, 50, 53, 55, 56, 57, 62, 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, 92
- argumentative means, 13, 35, 49, 55, 56
- audience, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 34, 38, 39, 43, 45, 49, 50, 51, 55, 56, 69, 72, 75-77, 83, 86, 87, 89, 93, 97, 99, 102, 111, 112, 114, 115, 117, 118, 121
- Austin, J., 22, 63
- Blum-Kulka, S., 35
- Broadcasting Code, 37, 38, 40, 43, 44, 48
- Bull, P., 35, 48
- burden of proof, 17, 46, 47, 99
- charge, 3, 5, 13, 15-23, 26, 29, 31, 32, 52, 58, 59, 64, 65, 70, 74-77, 80, 82-84, 86, 88, 94, 97, 98, 103, 104, 107, 109, 110, 114-116
- Clayman, S.E., 12, 34-37, 40, 48, 51, 53, 57, 58, 61, 119
- Cohen, L. J., 22, 31
- commitment, 5, 6, 10, 17, 19-22, 27, 31, 39, 45, 60, 62-66, 69, 74, 76, 77, 81, 83, 87, 92-94, 103, 104, 106, 107, 115
- convention, 11-13, 33-37, 39, 43, 45, 49, 55, 59, 69, 70
- Curtin, D., 46, 47, 49, 54, 120
- deliberation, 34, 36, 38, 53, 75, 114
- dialectical profile, 24-29, 59, 66, 67, 74, 75, 119
- Drew, P., 19, 23
- Eemeren, F. H. van, 7, 9, 10, 16-24, 26, 27, 33-36, 38, 50, 51, 62-65, 69, 72, 74-76, 92-94, 96, 102-106, 109, 119
- Emmertsen, S., 12
- essential condition, 18, 19, 21, 22, 62, 63, 82, 105, 109
- Fetzer, A., 12, 35, 49, 118
- Fillmore, Ch. J., 16
- Greatbatch, D., 35, 45, 48
- Grootendorst, R., 7, 9, 16-24, 51, 59, 62-64, 72, 92, 96, 97, 102-106, 109
- Hamblin, C. L., 22, 31, 63, 65, 92, 105, 106
- Hare, R. M., 62
- Harman, G., 106
- Harris, S., 35, 40, 51
- Heritage, J. C., 12, 34-37, 40, 45, 48, 51, 53, 57, 61, 119
- Houtlosser, P., 7, 9, 10, 24, 26, 27, 33, 34, 36, 65, 69, 72, 92-94, 119
- initial situation, 13, 35-37, 55, 56, 72
- interviewer, 3, 5, 6-9, 11, 12, 26, 34, 36, 37-41, 44-58, 61, 68, 69, 71, 88, 94, 95, 97, 99, 102-104, 112-115, 117-121

Johansson, M., 12, 35
 Jucker, A. H., 12, 35

 Kauffeld, F. J., 16, 17, 19, 23, 106
 Krabbe, E. C. W., 59, 62, 63, 65, 92, 105

 Lauerbach, G., 35

 Mohammed, D. A. M., 12, 24, 25, 34, 93
 Mulgan, R., 37, 49, 53, 55

 Naess, A., 87, 100
 Nollkaemper, A., 46, 47, 54

 outcome, 7, 8, 10, 13, 26, 35, 36, 53-56,
 61, 68, 74, 92-95, 115, 118

 Peetz, V., 62
 Perelman, C. L., 31
 political interview, 3, 4, 8-14, 33-41, 43-
 46, 48, 49, 52-62, 65, 68, 69, 71-78,
 82-84, 88, 91, 92, 97, 99, 100, 108, 110,
 112-120
 politician, 3, 5-15, 35, 37-50, 53-59, 61,
 62, 65, 68, 69-71, 73-78, 81, 82, 84, 86,
 88, 89, 91-95, 97, 99, 102, 104, 105,
 106, 108, 111-121
 preparatory condition, 20-22, 63, 64, 74-
 76, 103, 104
 presentational devices, 12, 26, 84
 propositional content condition, 18-20,
 62-64

 Rees, M. A. van, 66, 72, 77, 108
 relevance, 102, 104-106, 112, 117
 retraction, 12-14, 31, 58, 59, 61-65, 72,
 73, 77, 87, 92, 102, 105, 106, 108, 110,
 111, 117
 Rogers, A., 22
 Royal Charter, 44, 45

 Scannell, P., 35
 Schedler, A., 46
 Searle, J., 16, 18, 19, 62, 63
 sincerity condition, 18, 20-22, 63, 64, 104
 Snoeck Henkemans, A. F., 9, 24, 26, 27,
 66, 72, 119
 soundness conditions, 14, 92, 94, 95, 102,
 105, 106, 108-113, 116, 117, 121
 starting points, 8, 9, 13, 35, 36, 43, 55, 56,
 65, 108, 119
 strategic maneuvering, 10-15, 34, 57, 59,
 68, 69, 75, 77, 78, 84, 88, 91-97, 99,
 102, 104, 105, 107-112, 116-121

 topical potential, 75, 83, 87

 Vanderveken, D., 16, 62

 Walton, D.N., 63, 65
 Weizman, E., 12, 35
 Wilson, J. 49, 118