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Structure of persuasive communication and elaboration likelihood model

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ABSTRACT: The aim of the paper is to propose a framework for the structure of persuasive communication based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Petty and Cacioppo, the Inference Anchoring Theory (IAT) by Budzynska and Reed and the Interpersonal (IP-) Argumentation Model by Budzynska. The ELM suggests that there are two routes to persuasion: central and peripheral. IAT assumes that communication acts generate their contents and inferences by means of illocutionary connections. The model of IP-argumentation provides the general representation of arguments in which the proponent refers to communication acts of some participant of communication. The paper discusses where exactly means of the central and peripheral routes operate in the structure of persuasive communication and argumentation.

KEYWORDS: central route, Elaboration Likelihood Model, ethotic arguments, illocutionary acts, Inference Anchoring Theory, peripheral route, persuasion

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to propose a model which explains how persuasion operates within communication structures (including argumentation structures). The proposal builds upon the elements of the Inference Anchoring Theory (IAT) by Budzynska and Reed (2011) and the Interpersonal (IP-) Argumentation Model by Budzynska (2010a), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) introduced by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). IAT allows the representation of interactions between communication acts and inferences they generate. The model of IP-argumentation proposes the general representation of arguments in which the proponent refers to communication acts of some participant of communication. The ELM assumes that there are two routes to persuasion and two types of means: central and peripheral. The central route to persuasion is related to content-based arguments, while the peripheral route is related to extra-logical kinds of impact, such as credibility, attractiveness of the source of information, or influence on emotions of the receivers (audience). This suggests that the schemes of source indicators reasoning (Walton 1998) or ethotic argumentation (Brinton 1986) as well as the schemes of pathotic arguments (Brinton 1988) should be considered within the scope of impact of the peripheral route.

In the paper, I consider where exactly means of the central and peripheral routes operate within the structure of persuasive communication. Some of them seem to be used within the process of argumentation; however, some of them seem to be specific to the performance of speech acts in a dialogue. For example, using the credibility of a proponent as a cue to accept a statement may simply involve the constitutive rules of performing the assertive speech act (Searle 1969) regardless of argumentation that the proponent presented.

2. BACKGROUND: ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL

The ELM assumes that there are two routes to persuasion and two types of means of influence characteristic for each of them: central and peripheral. The central route to persuasion is related to content-based arguments, while the peripheral route is related to extra-logical kind of impact such as credibility of the source of information.

In the central route, the outcome of persuasive effort is the result of the hearer's thoughtful consideration of issue-relevant content of the message. When the central route processes are activated, the quality (strength) of arguments' content is likely to influence persuasive success. On the other hand, in the peripheral route the outcome of persuasion is the result of less thoughtful processes, such as some shortcuts. The persuasive success is influenced by cues other than an argument's content, e.g., the receiver might reach a conclusion based on the communicator's credibility or attractiveness or likeability.

The likelihood that a receiver will engage in elaboration (issue-relevant thinking) depends on the elaboration ability (such as e.g. prior background knowledge or the presence of distraction in the communication setting) and the elaboration motivation (such as e.g. the receiver involvement, i.e., the personal relevance of the issue). For example, when an issue is not involving and there is some distraction present, the receiver may rely on peripheral cues such as the communicator's expertise. In such a case, high-credibility communicators will be more successful than low-credibility speakers. On the other hand, when the issue is personally relevant, the quality of argument content becomes more important.

The paper considers an idealized communication situation assuming purely central or purely peripheral processing of messages. The aim of this idealization is to clearly demonstrate the difference between those two types of elaboration of communication. Yet, in the real-life practice people often use both of those routes simultaneously, since they are not mutually-exclusive, but rather the prototypical forms representing the extremes of an elaboration continuum.

3. ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL AND
THE MODEL OF INTERPERSONAL ARGUMENTATION

In this section, I discuss how the main properties of persuasion assumed by the ELM are related to the structure of argumentation, in particular – to the structure of interpersonal (IP-) argumentation. IP-argumentation is the type of communication which is directly addressing participants of communication, i.e., it contains a statement which is the report of an agent's communicative act such as e.g. "The expert asserts that global warming is a myth", "The witness testified that the suspect was guilty". Argumentation theory recognizes several arguments from the IP-level, e.g., appeal to expert opinion, appeal to witness testimony or *ad hominem* arguments.

On the other hand, arguments such as argument from sign or analogy are content-based arguments and operate within the ideational level (see Halliday 1985 for the model of interpersonal and ideational levels of communication). Observe that such a notion of IP-arguments differs from the concept of interpersonal reasoning introduced in (Walton and Krabbe (1995). Walton and Krabbe examined the reasoning in the context of dialogue and, as a result, proposed a taxonomy of different arguments (e.g. persuasion or

negotiation dialogue). The relation between the IP-arguments and the types of dialogues remains outside the scope of this paper.
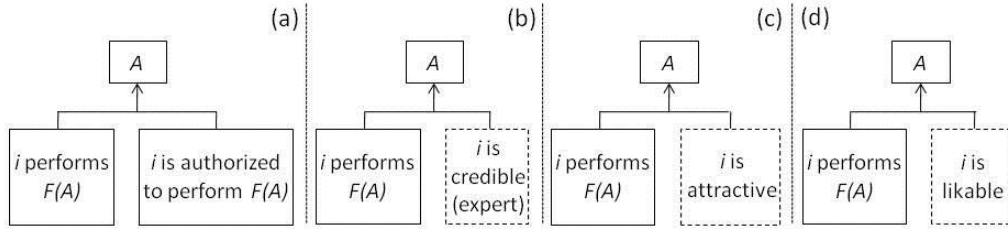

Fig. 1. Basic IP-structure (a) in a generic form, and with the peripheral cues of the message source: (b) credibility (expertise), (c) attractiveness and (d) likability.

In Budzynska (2010a), a new model of IP-argumentation is proposed as a response to some weakness of standard accounts. In particular, the new account allows the description of references to various speech acts and not only to simple assertives (such as "i asserts A" in standard scheme for argument from position to know). A real-life argument may refer e.g. to promise "John will come back, because he promised he would come back". Moreover, the new model allows the explicit representation of counter-argumentative structure of generic *ad hominem*, i.e. the attack present in this type of *ad hominem* is represented at the structural level as a relation denoted by an arrow in the diagram.

The new model allows a very general representation of IP-arguments, since it introduces a component of authorization warranting inferential transition between premises and conclusion. Specifically, given that an IP-argument refers to an agent's communicative act $F(A)$ (e.g. an assertion or promise about A, Fig. 1), the component of authorization expresses that the agent is authorized to perform $F(A)$. The component of authorization also "explains" what constitutes a target of attack in generic *ad hominem* allowing the explicit representation of its counter-argumentative structure.

3.1 ELM-based account of authorization component

The generic component of authorization can be specified according to different theories, i.e. different theories can deliver the conditions expressing when an agent is authorized to perform a given communicative act. In Budzynska (2010a), the theory of speech acts, in particular, the concept of constitutive rules Searle (1969) was adopted for such a specification. In this paper, the alternative specification is proposed using the concept of peripheral cues in the ELM.
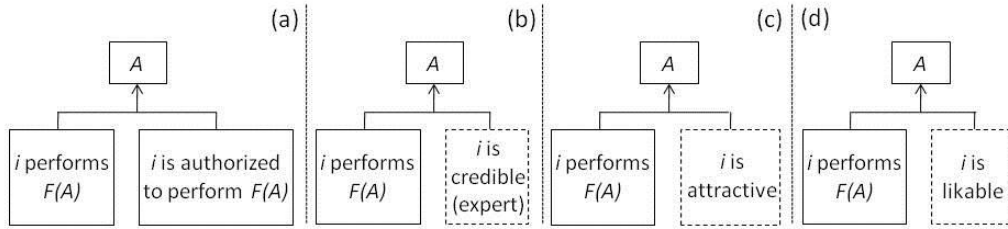
Fig. 2. Basic IP-structure (a) in a generic form, and with the peripheral cues of the message source: (b) credibility (expertise), (c) attractiveness and (d) likability

The ELM identifies three most important peripheral cues related to the message source: credibility (expertise), attractiveness and likeability (Petty and Cacioppo 1986: 142-146, 204-211). All of them can be used by the hearer to infer the propositional content from the speaker's act F(A) (see Fig. 2). As a result, three schemes for peripheral IP-arguments can be formulated (their versions for a simple assertive act are given in Budzynska 2010b):

PERIPHERAL IP-ARGUMENT SCHEME FROM SOURCE CREDIBILITY

- *Premise 1*: *i* performs communicative act *F(A)*
- *Premise 2*: *i* is credible
- *Conclusion*: *A* is (plausibly) true

PERIPHERAL IP-ARGUMENT SCHEME FROM SOURCE ATTRACTIVENESS

- *Premise 1*: *i* performs communicative act *F(A)*
- *Premise 2*: *i* is attractive
- *Conclusion*: *A* is (plausibly) true

PERIPHERAL IP-ARGUMENT SCHEME FROM SOURCE LIKEABILITY

- *Premise 1*: *i* performs communicative act *F(A)*
- *Premise 2*: *i* is likeable
- *Conclusion*: *A* is (plausibly) true

It is assumed here that the credibility does not necessarily have to be related to the domain containing an inferred propositional content similarly as attractiveness and likability has nothing in common with the content of the message. Obviously, such patterns of reasoning are highly uncertain. Yet, the elaboration of messages in the peripheral route is not so irrational as it may seem, since it has some serious advantages over the processing in the central route. Its most important strength is cognitively low cost. It allows the agent to save time, energy and his "mental resources" in processing information received regardless of a risk of a mistake associated with the peripheral route.

In the peripheral processing, the component of authorization remains implicit, i.e. when challenged the speaker would not respond "I believe it, since John said it is the case and John is attractive" but rather "I believe it, since John said it is the case" even if John's attractiveness was the cue that made the speaker believe the claim. The inherent

implicitness of the peripheral authorization component is represented in the diagram with a dotted line (see e.g. Fig. 1). Similarly, no critical attitude (such as critical questions) can
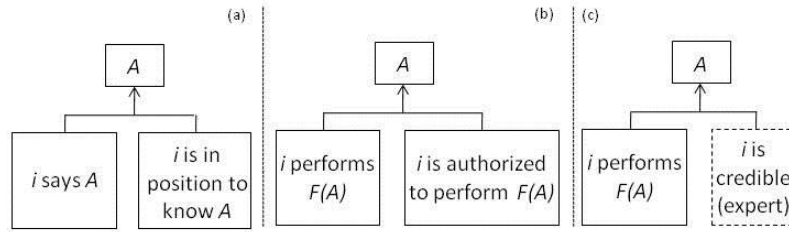

Fig 3. Central IP-argument in (a) a standard model, (b) the new model, and (c) corresponding peripheral IP-argument.

be adopted by the arguer with respect to those components, since the acceptance is a result of a cognitive shortcut which aim is opposite to critical and explicit central processing (i.e. to limit cognitive load of processing). In other words, if the component of authorization remains implicit, it cannot be critically tested.

The reference to someone's communication act is not exclusive for peripheral route. It can also be considered in the central type of processing, however, central IP-argument structure will be closer to what is assumed in standard accounts of IP-argumentation such as the structure of the argument from position to know (Fig. 3a). In the more general case described in Budzynska (2010a), the arguer considers if the performer of communication act is authorized to perform this act, e.g., on the basis of the constitutive rules of the act (Fig. 3b). As a result, the authorization can be explicitly tested with critical questions. The vulnerability to manipulation in the case of central IP-arguments may be a result of the potential for *route shift* during a communication (i.e. the hearer may start with elaborating the message in the central route and then shift to the peripheral route because he lost e.g. interest in the topic of the message) or the possibility of joint elaboration via both of the routes (i.e. the hearer may process a message somewhere in a midpoint of the central-peripheral continuum).

3.2 Attack in peripheral IP-structures

Attacks on the components of IP-arguments are expressed by different *ad hominem* arguments. In this section I focus on its basic type, i.e. on generic *ad hominem. Ad hominem* arguments attack a speaker's authorization to perform a given speech act or more generally they aim at discrediting an agent as a rightful participant of the social discourse.

The standard treatment of *ad hominem* has two main limitations. First, it focuses on questioning an agent's right to perform a speech act *argue*, while in natural contexts any speech act may be questioned. Second, standard models do not recognize *ad hominem* as counter-arguments, at least not at their structural level. Attacks are commonly modeled by means of a relation on a set of arguments (denoted by arrows in the diagram), such as e.g. in argument abstract framework (Dung 1995). Yet, in standard accounts like e.g. in Walton's model (1998), the generic *ad hominem* attack is not explicitly represented (Fig. 3), but can be only "reconstructed" from the content of its premise and conclusion:

they describe that someone attacked other agent ("you are a bad person") questioning his argument ("your argument should not be accepted").
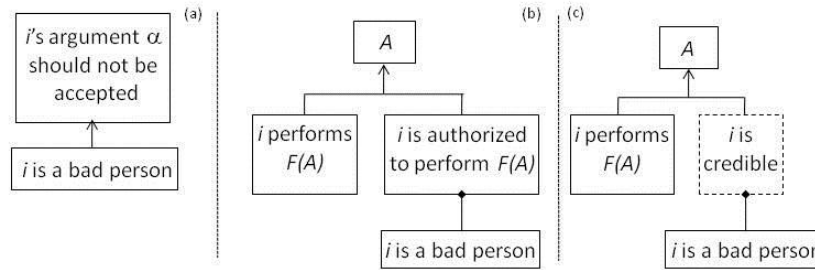

Fig. 4. *Ad hominem* in (a) a standard model, (b) the new model with the central processing and (c) in the new model with the peripheral processing.

In the new model, the second limitation is addressed by assuming that the attack's effect is similar to the effect of undercutters, i.e. the conclusion is not accepted since the inferential transition between the premise and the conclusion is "blocked". As a result, the generic *ad hominem* attack "*i* is a bad person" is directed at the component "*i* is authorized to perform *F(A)*" (Fig. 4b). In order to avoid the first limitation, the new model allows generic *ad hominem* to attack authorization to perform any speech act, e.g. simple assertives such as: *claim(A)*, as well as commissives or directives.

In the peripheral IP-structure, the attack is directed at the speaker's general credibility, attractiveness or likeability. Since the peripheral authorization component is implicit and not related to a topic under discussion, the attack is not explicit and specifically directed either, it rather aims at "overall" undermining the person, showing him in a negative light and not necessarily in the context of the content of the message that *ad hominem* argument refers to (i.e. to A in Fig. 4c). During a political campaign the adversary's attractiveness or likeability can be undermined by presenting a compromising information or photograph. For example, in the 2005 presidential campaign in Poland the candidate Donald Tusk was accused that during the Second World War his grandfather was a solder in Wehrmacht. Similarly, in the 2000 Polish presidential campaign one party presented the video in which Marek Siwiec from the rival party (of the presidential candidate Aleksander Kwaśniewski) makes a gesture of the cross and Kwaśniewski asks him if he has already kissed the ground for what Siwiec responds by kissing the ground. This appealed to the gestures characteristic for the pope John Paul II what presented Kwaśniewski in a particularly negative light because of Polish people loyalty to the pope.

4. ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL AND INFERENCE ANCHORING THEORY

The hearer may take into account the features of a proponent not only with respect to argumentation that he proposes but generally to any of his communication act. The most basic component of communication that is relevant to the different type of message processing is therefore not the authorization component characteristic for the IP-inference, but the component responsible for the transition between a communication act and its content. The model that allows the representation of this transition is the Inference Anchoring Theory, IAT (Budzynska and Reed 2011). Consider a dialogue between Barbara and Witold:

(1)   Barbara: You know what? Harry was in Dundee.
       Witold: How do you know?
       Barbara: I saw him.

In the dialogue (1), Barbara and Witold jointly build argumentation: Harry was in Dundee, since Barbara saw him in Dundee. At the level of the inferential structures, the basic type of units are propositions which may refer to any situation. They can describe someone's speech act (e.g. Barbara's assertion that Harry was in Dundee) as well as to any other action or situation (e.g. Harry's presence in Dundee). The main types of transitions (relations) between those units are inferences denoted by RA (see Fig. 5). At the level of the dialogical structures, the basic type of units are propositions describing communication acts. The transitions (relations) between communication acts are governed by dialogue rules, TA.

The communication acts in a dialogue (e.g. Barbara's assertion that Harry was in Dundee) have their propositional contents placed in a dialogue domain (e.g. Harry was in Dundee). The transitions (relations) between the inferential structures and dialogical
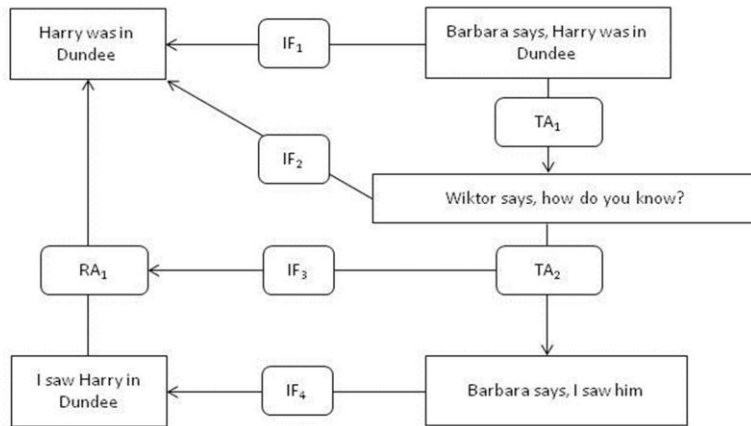
Fig. 5. The communication structures in IAT

structures are assumed to be governed by illocutionary connections, IF, related to the illocutionary force of a communication act (Searle 1969). An illocutionary connection links a communication act and its contents in an inferential structure. The illocutionary force of an utterance can be of a number of types and can involve various presumptions and exceptions of its own.

The dialogical context enables keeping track of the agents' interaction: argumentation is invoked by Witold's communication act, and provided by Barbara's communication acts. IAT assumes that argumentative illocutionary connection is structurally different than e.g. assertive connection, since it begins at TA rather than at a communication act and aims at RA rather than at an act's content. Summarizing, RAs typically map from propositional contents to a propositional content, TAs map from a communicative act to a communicative act and IFs map from a communicative act to its content or from a transition between communicative acts (TAs) to a transition between the acts' contents (RAs).
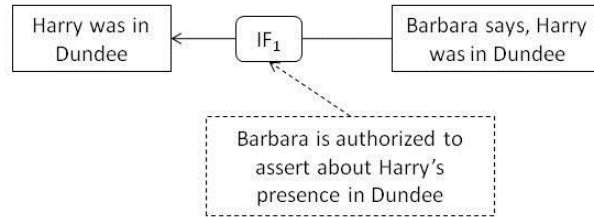
Fig. 6 The authorization of communication act.

In IAT, the transition between the acts in a dialogue and their contents in the dialogue domain is warranted by the authorization granted to the performer of this act (Fig. 6). That is, the content of the act will be transferred into the dialogue domain only if the speaker is allowed to perform this act. The specific conditions of when the speaker is granted the authorization can be represented by different models, e.g. in Budzynska and Reed (2011) the specification is built upon Searle's (1969) speech act theory.
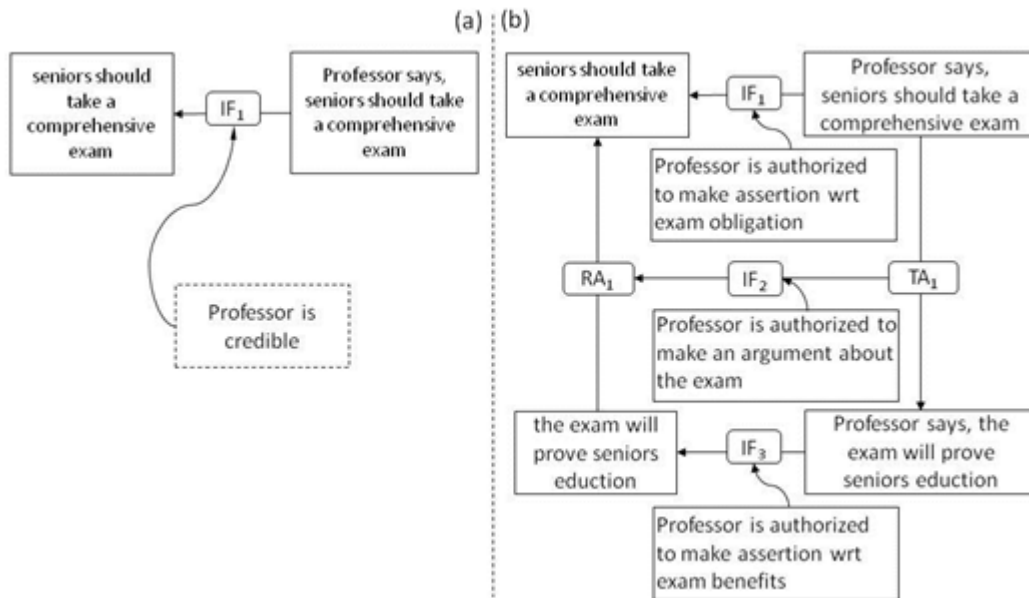

Fig. 7. The parts of communication processed in
(a) the peripheral route and (b) the central route

4.1 Inference Anchoring Theory in central vs. peripheral route

According to the ELM, in the central route the hearer evaluates message arguments—"the true merits of the advocacy" (Petty and Cacioppo 1986: 205)—, while in the peripheral route he focuses on the message source. In the latter case the receiver accepts a claim not on the basis of cognitively expensive reasoning, but on the basis of some shortcut "without engaging in any extensive cognitive work relevant to the issue under consideration" (Petty and Cacioppo 1996: 256). The peripheral cues are based not on the mechanism of comparing and inferring message's contents, but on a mechanism of social influence—

such as e.g. the mechanisms of authority or liking (Cialdini 2001)—which use people's built-in, automatic reactions.

In an experiment described in Petty et al. (1981), students listened to a message advocating that seniors should take a comprehensive exam in their major prior to graduation. One group of subjects was highly involved, since they were told that the policy would begin next year, and the other group was lowly involved, since they were told that the policy would begin in ten years. The results of the experiment showed that the students of the second group were influenced by the speaker's expertise (a professor of education at Princeton University vs. a junior at a local high school) regardless of the quality of arguments, while in the first group source expertise had no impact on students' attitudes.

Consequently, we should assume that in IAT the communication structures will be differently processed depending on what route is activated. In the peripheral route, the hearer takes into account only the cues related to the message source (IF_1 in Fig. 7a), while in the central route he will process all the communication structures including inferential structures (RA_1 in Fig. 7b). As a result, in the central processing the quality of the arguments will influence the persuasion outcome. Using the terminology of speech act theory, we may say that an illocutionary act has different perlocutionary effect depending on the route in which it is elaborated. In the central route, a communication act of the credible source will be accepted only on the grounds of the quality of its content, while in the peripheral route it may be believed just because of the credibility of the communicator. In the central-based elaboration, the authorization component serves as a mean allowing the transition of the content to the dialogue domain, while in the peripheral-based elaboration it is the only indicator taken into account for assessing the message acceptability (in contrast with the central route where the main indicator is the message's quality).

4.2 Attack on the authorization component in the central IAT-structure

In the central route, the evaluation of message credibility can influence the evaluation of source credibility. In particular, it may serve as a counterargument for IF-component.

> (...) consider an expert source (Professor of Education at Princeton) who suggests that tuition be increased at his university. When elaboration likelihood is low (e.g. as a result of low personal relevance or high distraction), this prestigious source might serve as a simple positive cue. When the elaboration likelihood is high, however, a subject considering the source and message together might realize that the expert source is biased or has a vested interest in the presentation of some arguments (e.g., an argument to raise tuition to increase faculty salaries).
>
> Petty and Cacioppo (1986: 205)

In the communication structures, the argument "faculty salaries should be increased" could undermine the professor's credibility, i.e. it may attack (see CA_1 which is the component representing an attack, Fig. 8) the component of authorization (warranting an illocutionary connection IF_2 in Fig. 8). Thus, even though in this route the authorization component is not crucial for the acceptability of the content of communication act, it still plays an important role here, since the successful attack on this component may block the transition of the act's content to the dialogue domain.

The hearer's attack on the authorization component is rather uncommon in the peripheral route because of the implicit nature of the peripheral authorization component. Still, speaker's credibility (or any other peripheral source cue) may be undermined by the

third party which can have a direct effect on the evaluation of communication executed by the peripheral participant of communication.
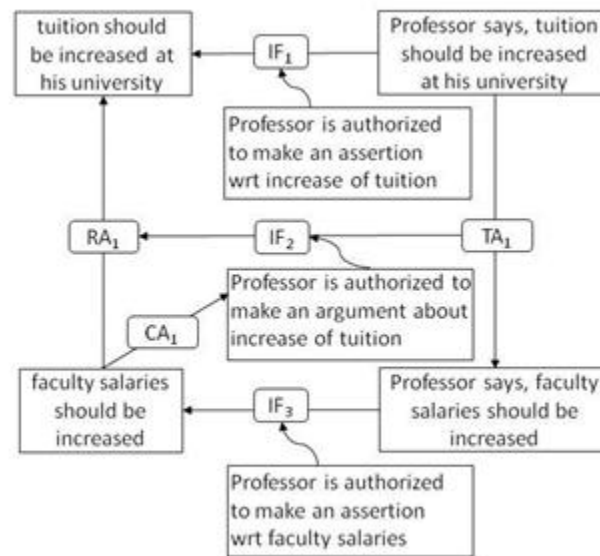

Fig. 8. The influence of argument evaluation
on the evaluation of source credibility.

4.3 Peripheral cue vs. peripheral argument

According to the ELM, the source factors may serve both as arguments and cues (Petty and Cacioppo 1986: 205) what in IAT corresponds to the distinction between peripheral IP-RAs and peripherally processed IFs. Consider the following dialogue:

(2)   Barbara: You know what? Harry was in Dundee.
        Witold: How do you know?
        Barbara: Jan told me that.

In the dialogue (2), the content of Barbara's second communication act is the sentence "Jan told me that Harry was in Dundee" (transferred by an illocutionary connection IF4 in Fig. 9). Yet, it is still a report of another communicative act which is linked by means of illocutionary connection (IF5 in Fig. 9) with the content "Harry was in Dundee" (i.e. with the conclusion of Barbara's argument transferred from the first utterance in the dialogue (2) by IF1, Fig. 9). Thus, primarily, the connection between "Jan told me that Harry was in Dundee" and "Harry was in Dundee" is via illocutionary structure (IF5). Nevertheless, since Barbara uses Jan's words with an argumentative illocution, the connection between those two sentences secondary obtains also an inferential character (RA_1).
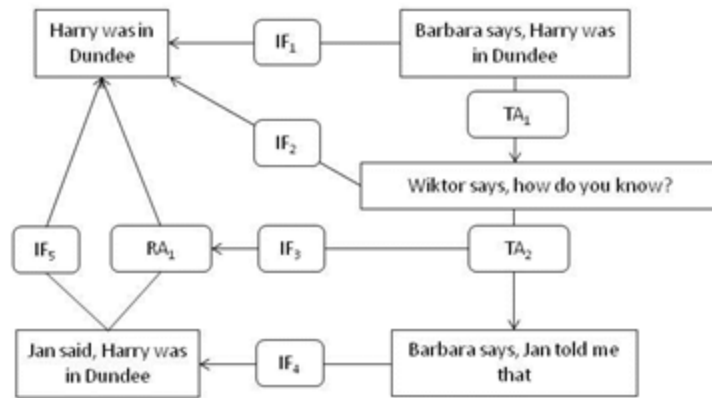
Fig. 9. The IP-argument in IAT-structure

5. CONCLUSIONS

The paper adopts the elements of the Elaboration Likelihood Model to propose the specification for the components characteristic for communication (represented with Inference Anchoring Theory) and interpersonal argumentation (represented with IP-argumentation Model) executed by the proponent and processed by the audience in the context of persuasion. Depending on the route activated, the hearer may concentrate either on the quality of arguments (in the central route) or on cognitive shortcuts such as the features of the proponent (in the peripheral route). In the communication structures, it means that the peripheral hearer may evaluate a communicative act only on the grounds of attractiveness of the proponent ignoring all the inferential support delivered by the proponent. In the interpersonal argumentation structures, it means that the peripheral hearer may infer the propositional content taking into account just the credibility of the proponent regardless of the relevance of his credibility to the inferred content and quality of arguments that he delivers in his message.

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Commentary on "STRUCTURE OF PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION AND ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL" by Katarzyna Budzynska

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1. INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin by congratulating the author on an interesting essay. The work in this essay represents a continuation of an interesting line of research initiated by Dr. Budzynska looking at approaches to formalizing argumentation schemes in the context of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo 1984) of persuasive message effects. In my commentary on her essay, I will begin by identifying some of the challenges to argumentation analysis from the point of view of the ELM and then talk about some of the strengths and opportunities for development I see in Budzynska's approach to studying argumentation.

2. THE ELM AND ARGUMENTATION THEORY

In her contribution to this addition of the OSSA conference, Budzynska writes that the purpose of her essay is to link several theoretical approaches to argumentation, language, and persuasion in developing a model of argumentation structure in persuasive communication. Much of this analysis is organized around the ELM theory of persuasive message effects. As she points out, the ELM is a fairly parsimonious theory of persuasion. The theory essentially says that people generally attend to either the propositional content of a persuasive message (when processing via the central route to persuasion) or they attend to elements that adorn, or are attached to, a message (when processing via the peripheral route to persuasion). Whether people direct their attention to the propositional content or the peripheral elements of a message depends on their ability and motivation to spend the time and energy required to closely examine the argumentative content. Budzynska correctly points out that we have many ways of thinking about, diagraming, and formalizing, the propositional content of messages that are clearly argumentative. The ambitious part of this paper involves her thinking about how not so obvious argumentative cues in persuasive messages might be diagramed in ways that make the propositional structure more apparent and more amenable to analysis. The importance of this kind of work was manifest in the workshop on visual argumentation during the OSSA conference. Finding ways to understand how messages that are non-propositional, but none the less argumentative in their effects, will make a very important contribution to the field of argumentation. The ELM is used in this project as a sort of organizing framework for thinking about how

these message cues work both as arguments and as persuasive messages. In the next few paragraphs, I will identify some challenges posed by the use of the ELM for such a task.

The first challenge comes from the conflict between ELM's conceptual fit between theoretical constructs and operationalization of variables. As other argumentation scholars, such as O'Keefe (e.g., O'Keefe 2010), have pointed out, the ELM conflates argument "strength" with receivers' acceptance of arguments. The usual way for researchers to generate a list of "strong" and "weak" arguments demonstrates this problem. Generally, researchers generate a long list of possible arguments for a particular policy, usually comprehensive exams for graduation or increasing the cost of tuition. The researchers then submit this list to research participants who write down their thoughts about each of the arguments. Researchers then label arguments eliciting the largest number of favorable thoughts as strong arguments and the arguments eliciting the fewest favorable thoughts are labeled weak arguments (e.g., Petty, Harkins & Williams 1980). Thus, argument strength in the ELM refers to the overall positivity of participants' thoughts about an argument, not the argument's conformity with standards for cogency or validity. So far, few attempts to construct normatively strong arguments exist in the ELM research paradigm. In short, the ELM research suggests that people are more persuaded by highly persuasive arguments under conditions of maximum elaboration, whereas, under conditions of low message elaboration, the persuasiveness of the message content has no persuasive effect on the message recipients. The research further shows that people who do not possess the motivation or ability to think about the content of the message rely almost exclusively on cues around the periphery of the message, such as the message source's credibility, likeability, or attractiveness, the number of arguments in the message, and so forth (Petty et al. 1987). So, the ELM really has little to say about what makes arguments strong or weak, and it hardly seems to deal with things like premise acceptability, inferential adequacy, or logical validity at all. This is one reason for my preference for a different organizing framework for the author's work. I want to emphasize that this is entirely an issue with ELM and not with Dr. Budzynska's research generally. The challenge I see here for her, however, is that the ELM may not be well suited for studying argumentation structures since it is a psycho-logical approach to persuasion rather than a logical one. And it is not that the author's work is unrelated to ELM, in fact, I think scholars' testing and expanding the ELM should take her work into account, though I think choosing a different framework for analyzing non-propositional argumentation would be to her benefit.

The second challenge has to do with the terminology Budzynska borrows from ELM. The main problem here lies with differentiating argument types as central arguments and peripheral arguments. In the present essay, Budzynska differentiates between central route and peripheral route arguments. However, Petty and colleagues (e.g., Petty, Kasmer, Haugtvedt, & Cacioppo 1987; Petty et al. 1987) do not really consider peripheral cues to be arguments. Instead, peripheral cues should be thought of as signs, signals, or associations rather than inference generating arguments. Original ELM scholars do not use the word "argument" in reference to peripheral cues. Peripheral cues could be better understood as triggers that initiate the use of heuristic decision making rules or message features that create associations between perceptual objects. If an attractive person advocates for a particular brand of beer, the attractiveness does not so much get used as evidence for a claim as much as it creates an association between the brand and the experience

the person has of the attractive model. Further, what makes any element of a message (whether categorical syllogism or picture of a scantily attired model) central or peripheral depends on the receiver's information processing strategy, not really the qualities of the message itself (Petty et al. 1987). So, even a categorical syllogism's effect is determined by whether the person spends effort and resources elaborating the message or, whether he spends very little effort thinking about the contents of the message. For example, a person might receive a persuasive message in the form of a categorical syllogism and think, "that guy sounds smart, I'm with him" without ever considering the content of the message. A normatively perfect argument is not necessarily a central route argument unless the receiver actively thinks about the contents of the message and is persuaded by positive thoughts generated by the argument. Likewise, a picture of a young woman in a tight shirt advocating the election of a particular political candidate becomes just a weak argument when it is centrally processed rather than being a peripheral cue by virtue of the relationship between grounds and claim being one of association rather than one of implication.

3. QUASI-ARGUMENTS

Here is what I propose to the author: Instead of using the nomenclature of ELM to describe arguments as peripheral or central, I want to suggest that the author consider talking about the way the peripheral cues create the facade of an argument rather than creating a flawed or fallacious argument. Perhaps calling them something like "quasi-arguments" or some other suitable substitute would help clear this up. In this case, a quasi-argument would be a message that takes on the appearance of an argumentative message but the reason/evidence/grounds do not imply the truth of the claim; instead they create a favorable association between the communicator and the claim such that liking, being attracted to, or trusting some object (or person), leads to liking, being attracted to, or trusting in the acceptability of the claim associated with the object. I think this is exactly what the author is getting at, but using some other conceptual system would avoid the confusion associated with using terminology from the ELM. In peripheral processing, people are not really concerned so much with the truth of a message as in the acceptability of the conclusion for satisfying the immediate goals of the situation. If a person is not interested enough to engage in thoughtful elaboration of the content, then the person is probably not interested enough to need the certainty of truth. Instead, the conclusion they arrive at just has to be "good enough." Now, these quasi-arguments certainly do act like peripheral cues, so there is still some connection to ELM without having to use ELM concepts as a basis for differentiating among types of arguments. And quasi-arguments are not really heuristics either, that is, they are not pre-packaged decision rules like "seeing is believing" or "scientists know more than non-scientists." When Jack believes X because John claimed X and John is attractive, Jack probably doesn't believe that John's attractiveness implies the truth of what he says. Instead, John's attractiveness is conveyed to his claim, that is, the claim becomes attractive because it is associated with and takes on the attractiveness of the person who communicated it. I think if the author can help us understand how quasi-arguments associate cues peripheral to the propositional content to the message with the acceptability of the claim made in the message, it would make a very large contribution to theories of argumentation and persuasion. That is the direction I would encourage her to go with this very interesting and important line of research.

I also think her analysis of looking at attacks on arguments in terms of a close examination of the link between premise and conclusion works here. How does one attack a message that is masquerading as an argument? In actual arguments from authority, one simply need attack the source's authorization to make the claim—exactly as the author says in her paper. The author also points out exactly how one would go about attacking a quasi-argument by association. One must find a way to show that the association does not convey from the qualities of the person to the claim or that the qualities attributed to the source are offset by some other less desirable qualities that associate negatively with claim.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the author's work represents some exciting developments for how we understand argumentation in persuasive situations and has great potential for expanding argumentation theory by explicating patterns of reasoning in messages that are often thought to be non-argumentative.

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