

# ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Indicators Of Analogy Argumentation



## *1. Argumentative indicators*

Every argument can be characterized by an argumentation scheme, which defines the justificatory relation between the argument and the standpoint. In the pragma-dialectical approach, a distinction is made between three main categories of argumentation schemes: argumentation based on a causal relation, argumentation based on a relation of analogy and argumentation based on a symptomatic relation (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992). A similar division of types of schemes can be found in the classical rhetorical literature, in the traditional American debate textbooks and in the work of modern rhetoricians such as Weaver (1953).

In a research project on argumentative indicators that Frans van Eemeren, Peter Houtlosser and I are carrying out, we investigate which clues in the verbal presentation can be used to reconstruct the relationship on which an argumentation is based and to determine what type of argument is used. The project is embedded in the theoretical framework of the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation. Its aim is to make a systematic inventory of the verbal means used in the Dutch language to express an argumentative function of language use, to classify these means in terms of the ideal model of a critical discussion and to identify the conditions under which they can fulfill a specific argumentative function.

In our project we pay attention to all elements that are crucial to the evaluation of the argument and need to be represented in an analytic overview of an argumentative text or discussion, such as the type of dispute, the argumentation structure and the argumentation schemes. For each discussion stage we establish which words and expressions can function as indicators of the relevant moves in that particular stage and as indicators of the relations between these moves.

Each type of argumentation has its own assessment criteria: for each type of justificatory relation different critical questions are relevant. Someone who makes use of a particular argumentation scheme, thereby takes the first step in a

dialectical testing procedure that requires the arguer to deal with specific forms of criticism in order to defend the standpoint successfully (see van Eemeren, 'The importance of being understood'). In anticipation of possible criticism, the protagonist of a standpoint can follow up his argument with further arguments dealing with relevant objections. In a fully externalized discussion, the reactions of the opponent will relate to the evaluation issues that are relevant to the argumentation scheme concerned. It is therefore not only in the presentation of the argumentation itself, but also in the critical reactions of the opponent, and in the speaker's follow-up to his argument, that clues can be found as to the type of relation between argument and standpoint.

In this paper, I shall illustrate our approach to argumentative indicators by discussing various types of indicators of argumentation based on a relation of analogy. I shall make a distinction between 1) clues in the presentation of the argumentative relation, 2) clues in the critical reactions of the opponent, and 3) clues in the speaker's follow-up to his argument. I shall first explain why the expressions concerned can be seen as indicators. Then I shall discuss some problems in reconstructing the relationship on which an argument is based.

## *2. Argumentation based on a relation of analogy*

According to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992), in argumentation based on a relation of analogy, someone tries to convince by pointing out that something is similar to something else:

The argumentation is presented as if there were a resemblance, an agreement, a likeness, a parallel, a correspondence or some other kind of similarity between that which is stated in the argument and that which is stated in the standpoint (1992: 97).

Van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Snoeck Henkemans (2002: 99) give the following general argument scheme for the relation of analogy:

Y is true of Z,

*because:* Y is true of X,

*and:* X is comparable to Z

This argument scheme can for instance be used to argue that a certain judgment about Z is justified, because the same judgment can be made about X, and X is similar to Z in relevant respects, as in example (1):

1. It would be ridiculous if the telephone company made you pay for dialing a number that wasn't answered. I mean, you don't have to pay for a ticket to the

movies if they're already sold out either (and paying for a movie ticket that is sold out is comparable to paying for dialing a number that wasn't answered).

Comparisons can also be used to make a prediction, as in example (2):

2. Ordinary people in Britain will live like the rich do today. Fifty years ago only the rich could afford telephones, televisions, cars, or foreign holidays. Now ordinary people can. The same will happen in the next half century. Ordinary people will have the same spending power as today's high net worth individuals. Most will be millionaires ([www.adamsmith.org.uk](http://www.adamsmith.org.uk)).

Apart from the general argument based on a relation of analogy, there are also some subtypes that have their own specific indicating devices. In his dissertation on argumentation schemes, Garssen (1997) mentions two subtypes of argumentation based on a relation of analogy, that have been distinguished by Perelman (1982)(i).

A first subtype is the *figurative* comparison (or analogy in the strict sense). Unlike in the case of a literal comparison, in a figurative comparison a comparison is drawn between the way in which matters relate in one area and the way in which they relate in an entirely different area. The cases that are compared are then similar on a more abstract level of comparison.

Figurative analogies are not only used to argue that something must be seen or dealt with in a particular way, because this also happens in a similar case, but also to criticize an opponent's argumentation. Govier calls this technique 'the negative use of logical analogy'. She gives the following description of this use of analogy:

The negative use of logical analogy is found in the technique of refuting arguments by citing parallel flawed arguments. If two arguments are fundamentally similar as to structure, and the first is flawed, that refutes the second (1987: 59).

The second subtype that is mentioned by Garssen is argumentation based on the rule of justice. In this type of argumentation it is argued that a particular person (or a particular case) should be treated in a particular way by referring to the rule that people should be treated equally or that similar cases should be treated in the same way.

Overall, the most important critical questions to ask about argumentation based on analogy are:

1. Are the cases that are being compared really comparable?

2. Are there no significant differences between the cases being compared?
3. Indicators of the relation of analogy in the presentation of the argumentation and the standpoint

There are a number of expressions that can be used to make explicit that two persons or cases are comparable or similar. When these expressions occur in the major premise of the argument (the 'X is comparable to Z' premise), this is a sure sign that the argumentation is based on a relation of analogy. A first category consists of expressions containing the verb *to compare* or its derivations. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, one of the meanings of *compare* is 'to speak of or represent as similar, to liken.' Other terms that may be used to compare things or to represent them as similar are for instance *equivalent*, *parallel*, or *analogous*. The following list contains a number of expressions by means of which the relation of analogy can be made explicit:

- X is comparable to Z
- X may be compared to Z
- X congrues with Z/ X is congruent with Z
- X is analogous to Z
- X is equivalent to Z
- X is related to Z
- X corresponds to Z
- X is (just) like Z
- X has a resemblance (or likeness) to Z
- X may be likened to Z
- X has a likeness to Z
- X resembles Z
- X is similar to Z
- X is the same as Z
- There are parallels between X and Z
- X parallels Z
- X reminds me of Z
- X is exactly as (beautiful, important etc. as) Z

In examples (3) to (5) some of these indicators of the relation of analogy are used:  
3. Susan Anton, a paleoanthropologist at Rutgers University, said human origins research is complicated because scientists look at fossils across large geographic ranges and spans of time, and try to reach conclusions based on morphological

evidence from a small number of fossils. The *situation is comparable to* a researcher, one million years from now, looking at a few fossil remains of an African pygmy and an NBA basketball player (*National Geographic News*, March 25, 2002).

4. Al Gore's \$10,000 tax deduction for college tuition sure reminds me of the misleading "you have won \$1 million" mailers from magazine sellers. Nobody would have \$10,000 more to spend on college for their children. Far from it. For most taxpayers, his proposal would only reduce taxes by \$800 or so, as it is a deduction, not a credit (*Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 2000).

5. Credit cards are *just like* drugs. [...] They offer short term pleasure and long term pain (*credit.about.com./library/weekly*).

Both in example (3) and (4), the arguers make use of a comparison to defend their point of view. In example (5) the author is implicitly defending the standpoint that people should not make use of credit cards, by comparing them to drugs which also offer you short term pleasure and long term pain.

Other expressions that can be used to say that something that has been said about a particular person or thing also applies to another person or thing, and thus to point out a similarity are expressions like *too*, *also*, *the same* and *both*. When these expressions occur in the standpoint, they are a strong indication that the argumentation supporting the standpoint is based on a relation of analogy. Examples of such expressions are:

too

as well

also

either

just as (much)

a similar

both (have, are, etc)

the same (applies)

In the following examples, these expressions serve as an indicator of comparison argumentation:

6. A good essay is not a list of your accomplishments. Remember when your mom told you that it's quality, not quantity, that counts? Well, the *same* adage *applies* for your college essay (*uga.berkely.edu/apa*).

7. "Right now we can outshine our own sun with the powerful lasers we have

today,” Werthimer said, “[...] So, if we can do that, the chances are with us that other civilizations can do that too” ([www.berkely.edu/news/features/2001/07](http://www.berkely.edu/news/features/2001/07)).

8. Don’t stereotype police *either*. [...] I’m not saying that in some stores racial profiling doesn’t happen, but this type of paranoia seeps into people’s minds and before anyone realizes it, every person is on the short end of a stereotype. Calling all police officers racists is exactly as unjust as stereotyping anyone else (*Dailyilliny.com*, February 28, 2002).

In example (6) the arguer defends the standpoint that it’s the quality that counts in a college essay, not the quantity, because college essays are comparable to all other things in life for which this adage holds. Werthimer (example (7)) thinks that it is probable that other civilizations will also be capable of outshining their sun with powerful lasers, since it may be expected that other civilizations can do the same things we can do. The author of example (8) believes that for the same reasons that one should not stereotype anyone else, one should also not stereotype the police.

#### 4. Indicators of subtypes of analogy argumentation

##### *Indicators of figurative comparisons and negative analogy*

Figurative comparisons can be introduced with many of the devices that are indicative of the relation of analogy in general, but there are also a number of expressions that typically occur in the context of non-literal comparisons.

A first example is the expression *as though* and its synonym *as if*. According to the Oxford English dictionary, the meaning of *as though* is ‘as would or might be the case if.’ *As though* is used to draw a comparison with a hypothetical case. The hypothetical case is presented as something that is not really true, or does not exist in reality. The expression *as though* is, in other words, used to introduce an imaginary comparison between events, actions, things or persons and is therefore a strong clue for a figurative comparison.

Another expression that can be used to introduce a figurative expression is *that’s like* or *that’s like saying*.

In example (9) and (10) these expressions are being used to introduce figurative comparisons:

9. *Ellen Vanstone*: I remember running into you a few years ago, and hearing you were writing a book about pain, which made us both laugh, but I’m not sure why.

*Marni Jackson*: It was a bit absurd, really, to tackle such a huge subject. *It’s like saying*, oh, I’m working on a slim volume about life (*The Globe and Mail*, June 1,

2002).

10. In two recent cases, the Electronic Frontier Foundation lost battles that should have been won easily, perhaps losing the war itself. Instead, the courts ruled that [...] it was legally appropriate to prevent a scientist from presenting a paper that explores the inner workings of the Secure Digital Music Initiative (SDMI) music encryption system. Suddenly, *it's as though* there is no difference between discussing murder and committing it ([www.newarchitectmag.com](http://www.newarchitectmag.com), March 2002).

The expression *that's like saying* can also be indicative of a negative analogy, in which the argumentation of a real or imaginary opponent is first represented and subsequently criticized, as in example (11) and (12):

11. After sitting in barber chairs abroad for several years, I was just about convinced that I would never find a hair-cutting emporium like those back home. For someone like me, who has less hair than a floor tile, any barber would seem to do. But *that's like saying* any surgeon will do, even the fellow who operates out of the back of a Buick LeSabre. I don't merely want the cutting; I want the packaging (*International Herald Tribune*, May 1, 2000).

12. My fellow commuter Manny Leach, a dyspeptic type who often rides his bike to and from the Dinky, likes to say that Princeton would be a wonderful place if only it weren't filled with students. I for one don't agree with Manny. *That's like saying* the zoo would be a terrific park if it weren't for the animals. (Hmm, the *zoo analogy* may be a good one - I mean, have you seen these kids at feeding time?) (*Princeton Alumni weekly*, December 22, 2000).

In example (11) the author refutes the possible criticism that because he is almost bald, it doesn't make any difference to which barber he goes. According to the author, this way of reasoning amounts to saying that any surgeon will do, whatever the circumstances in which he is operating, whereas the author thinks the circumstances ('the packaging') *are* important. In example (12), the author disagrees with Manny Leach, who thinks Princeton would be a wonderful place if there were no students. His analogy makes clear that Princeton would not be a university if there were no students, just as a zoo is no zoo without the animals.

### *Indicators of argumentation based on the rule of justice*

The following expressions are examples of indicators of argumentation based on the rule of justice:

Should be treated just like/the same as/equally

Deserve the same (treatment)

X should have the same rights as Z

X deserves no less than Z

(Z...) Then how about X?

It is hard to see why X does (doesn't)... and Z does not (does)

X can, but Z can't?

These expressions are an indication that we are dealing with a case of analogy argumentation based on the rule of justice, either because they explicitly express that two cases should be treated similarly (X should be treated the same as Z), or because they make clear that treating the one case different than the other would be inconsistent (Then how about X?),

In the following examples, these indicators are used:

13. As employees, postgraduates *should have exactly the same rights* to air grievances through appropriate procedures. Similarly, if they face disciplinary, poor performance or similar allegations they should have every right to defend themselves through the agreed procedures and with the full support of their trade union. All these rights are either lawful entitlements or standard good practice that higher education institutions apply to their other employed staff. Employed postgraduates *deserve no less*. For too long the major contribution, which many postgraduates make to teaching, has been taken for granted. That teaching *deserves the same* support as any other teaching. The postgraduates who deliver it *deserve the same* support as any other academic staff (*Guardian Unlimited*, April 18, 2002).

14. *Then how about Koch?* Revalo P. Oliver, a professor in the Classics Department of the University of Illinois [...] asserted that Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested as a suspect in the shooting of former Major General Edwin A. Walker, but released "through the personal intervention of Robert F. Kennedy." Of John F. Kennedy, Oliver wrote that he had been a Communist "working in close collaboration with Khrushchev," [...] Gary Porter, writing in the *Daily Illini*, calls attention to the parallel between Oliver's case and that of Professor Leo Koch, who wrote a letter to that paper condoning pre-marital sexual relations. [...] He was promptly fired. The university says it has no intention of disciplining Professor Oliver. The university is to be commended. Oliver, like any other citizen, has the right to air his opinions, even when they are as offensive as they are in this instance. [...] But *where does this leave* the University of Illinois? Koch's views, while offensive to some, were far less inflammatory than Oliver's, and *it is*



*hard to see why one man should be dismissed and the other retained* (The Nation, March 2, 1964).

15. *Putin can rampage but Sharon can't?* Watching the rapidly escalating pressure on Israel from the safe distance of Moscow [...] Vladimir Putin might afford himself a secret smile. Even as Ariel Sharon is pilloried for using a campaign against terrorism to assault Palestinian civilians and their self-government, Putin is quietly getting away with almost *exactly the same* crime. [...] The world has checked the hand of Sharon while giving Putin a free pass (*International Herald Tribune*, April 30, 2002).

##### 5. *Clues in the critical reactions to the argumentation*

That the argument to which an opponent is reacting was based on a relation of analogy can sometimes become clear from the opponent's use of expressions that explicitly state that a particular comparison is not sound. Examples of such expressions are:

You are comparing apples and oranges

Is not a felicitous comparison

Is a false analogy

Is a wrong analogy/comparison

X and Z are incomparable

Is a farfetched comparison

Is not the appropriate analogy

X can't compare to Z/ X can't be compared to Z

In examples (16) to (18) the arguer uses these expressions in his criticism of an opponent's argument:

16. With public opinion polls showing little support among the American public for splitting apart Microsoft, lawyers for the government are invoking the 1982 divestiture of AT&T as justification for their unprecedented plan. But equating the breakup of AT&T to the dismemberment of Microsoft is *like comparing apples and oranges*.

##### 17. *Original message:*

Given all the negative comments here, I'm now going to see this film. Whenever this many people hate a movie, it's usually a sign that it brilliant in some way people just can't appreciate. This reminds me of the public's response to Brazil. Maybe *Mission to Mars* is a brilliant-B waiting for me to discover it... then again...

*Response:*

Brazil is such a *wrong comparison*. Brazil is genius and was only hated by people that couldn't stand the darkness of its satire. *Mission to Mars* is merely dumb - stupid - awful - a horrible waste of talent, money and, ultimately, the entire credibility of the sci-fi genre (*Filmindustry.com*, Monday, March 13).

18. In her letter in the Nov. 20 issue of the Los Gatos Weekly-Times, Rachel Bingham implies that ethnic slurs come in gradations, ranging from harmless to offensive, and that they can be interpreted subjectively, just like the shapes of buildings! This is a *farfetched comparison* for a weak point. Ethnic slurs are ethnic slurs, regardless of how many people are familiar with them (*Los Gatos Weekly-Times*, 12 November 1996).

By means of these expressions, the opponent makes it clear that he regards the comparison as unsound, because the things compared are in fact not comparable (first critical question). Often, the opponent further supports the incomparability by pointing out that there are significant differences between the cases being compared (second critical question). That the opponent is raising the second critical question, may also become clear from his use of expressions such as the following:

That is different/ is a different case

X doesn't have that

By contrast

Unlike Z, X...

In the following examples, the opponent makes use of such expressions to indicate that he thinks there are crucial differences between the compared cases:

19. A person goes to a gym after work but won't take a shower at the gym for fear of being seen. If this is brought up, one spouse may say, 'But you undress to shower at home.' She says, "*Yes, but that's different*". ([www.nudistweb.net/~wholesome/different](http://www.nudistweb.net/~wholesome/different))

20. Baretta's trial can't compare to O.J.'s case. Race. O.J. was about race. Yes, it was also about fame, beauty, wealth and, of course, murder. But at its angry core, it was a racial trial. Blake's case *doesn't have that*. He is white. His murdered wife, Bonny Bakley, was white (*Detroit Free Press*, April 21, 2002).

#### *6. Clues in the speaker's follow-up to his argument*

The way a protagonist follows up his comparison argument in anticipation of possible critical reactions, may also provide us with clues as to the nature of the relationship that underlies his argumentation. I'll illustrate this with the help of

example (21):

21. *Other groups deserve the same scrutiny as the football players*

Editor,

While I agree with the editorial board opinion in the Nov. 7 issue of the Collegian concerning the actions taken by football coach Bill Snyder, I find it disturbing that the board only seemed to focus on trouble within our football team. I *wonder why I have never seen* an article about the numerous *other* K-State students, who are involved in extra-curricular activities and have been in trouble with the law.

Every time a student misbehaves, the editorial board should find out what groups or activities that student is involved in and put pressure on that group and its leader to kick that student out. Hey, isn't it *just as much* a privilege to be in the Rodeo Club, on the speech team or write for the Collegian as it is to play football? Now you might say that the football players seem to get in trouble *more* than the average student, so I have a challenge for the board. Pick any group on campus with about the same number of students involved as the football team and track its mishaps. I'm sure you'll find our players are in less trouble than the board would lead us to believe (Steve Levin, Aggieville Business Association member, [www.kstatecollegian.com](http://www.kstatecollegian.com)).

The title of this letter to the editor already makes clear that we are dealing with a case of comparison argumentation based on the rule of justice. The author thinks that other students deserve the same scrutiny as the football players. The arguer subsequently anticipates the criticism that others might find that the football players cannot be compared to the rest of the students because of their privileged status, and provides an argument for their similarity ("it is just as much a privilege to be in the Rodeo Club, on the speech team or write for the Collegian"). Next, he anticipates the criticism that there may be a significant difference between the football players and the other students: it may be the case that the football players get in trouble more than the average student. The arguer refutes this criticism by saying that he is sure their players are not as often in trouble as the board may think.

## 7. *Conclusion*

Starting from an analysis of the main characteristics of the relationship of analogy, I have discussed various types of clues for analogy argumentation. These clues are to be found in the presentation of the reasons and the standpoint, in the critical reactions and in the speaker's follow-up to his argument. Each of these

verbal devices may provide a strong or a less strong indication that the argumentation may have to be reconstructed as based on a relation of analogy. As an illustration of the use of these presentational clues for analogy argumentation, I have given a number of examples, taken from various sources, in which these clues are present.

In this paper, I have only discussed indicators of analogy argumentation. In our research project, we have also looked at clues in the verbal presentation for the two other types of argumentation schemes, causal argumentation and symptomatic argumentation, and their subtypes. By comparing the various clues for the different argumentation schemes, we argue that, especially in cases where there is room for doubt, it is possible to arrive at a more well-founded analysis of the type of argumentation at issue.

When reconstructing the relationship on which the argumentation is based, one cannot restrict oneself to merely pointing out there is an indicator of analogy argumentation. In the first place, it has to be established that the indicator is really used in an argument. Many of the indicators of analogy argumentation may also occur in non-argumentative discourse. An example of this is the expression 'is comparable to,' which may also be used merely descriptively. Furthermore, whether certain expressions are really indicative of an analogy argument will sometimes also depend on their position in the argument. The indicator *the same applies to*, for instance, can only be indicative of analogy argumentation if it occurs in the standpoint, not if it occurs in the premises, as in example (22):

22. Errors in spelling or, particularly, grammar can make writing more difficult to understand. *The same applies to illegibility.* A paper with such errors may therefore receive a lower grade than it otherwise would ([www.uark.edu/campus-resources](http://www.uark.edu/campus-resources)).

The standpoint that it is justified that a paper which has spelling or grammatical errors or is illegible receives a lower grade, is defended with the argument that such errors make writing more difficult to understand. The relationship between the argument and the standpoint is symptomatic, namely that it is a characteristic of good papers that they are understandable.

For a well-founded reconstruction therefore, apart from the indicating device, a number of factors need to be considered, among which the main characteristics of the argumentation scheme at issue and those of the alternative schemes, and the part of the argumentation scheme in which the potential indicator occurs. It is only by looking at the combination of these factors that the analysis of the relationship between the argumentation and the standpoint can be justified.

## NOTES

**[i]** Some of the subtypes classified by Garssen as based on a relation of analogy are regarded by Perelman as quasi-logical argumentation.

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