

Strategic Maneuvering in Argumentative  
Confrontations: A Pragma-Dialectical Analysis  
of Mark Zuckerberg's Congressional Hearings

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## **Abstract**

The present study examines strategic maneuvering in Mark Zuckerberg's hearings before the Congress because of the role played by Facebook in the Cambridge Analytica data breach scandal. Using van Eemeren's (2018) Pragma-Dialectical theory of argumentation, the study investigates how members of Congress and Mark Zuckerberg employ the three aspects of strategic maneuvering, namely topical potential, adaptation to audience demand and presentational devices in the four stages of the critical discussion in the hearings. These are: the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage. Results show that in each of the four stages, the two parties seek to balance between the dialectical goals of maintaining reasonableness and the rhetorical aims of achieving effectiveness by making certain topical choices, meeting the preferences of the audience, and using suitable presentational devices.

**Keywords:** Pragma-Dialectical theory – argumentative discourse – strategic maneuvering – Mark Zuckerberg – congressional hearings – Cambridge Analytica

## **المخلص**

**المناوراة الاستراتيجية في المواجهات الجدلية: تحليل تداولي- جدلي لجلسات استماع مارك زوكيربرج أمام الكونجرس**

يهدف البحث إلي دراسة المناورة الاستراتيجية في جلسات الاستماع الخاصة بمارك زوكيربرج أمام الكونجرس بسبب الدور الذي لعبه الفيسبوك في فضيحة شركة كامبريدج أناليتيكا المرتبطة بتسريب بيانات المستخدمين. وباستخدام نظرية الحجج التداولية الجدلية الخاصة بفان إيمرين (٢٠١٨) تقوم الدراسة ببحث كيفية قيام أعضاء الكونجرس ومارك زوكيربرج باستخدام الجوانب الثلاثة للمناورة الاستراتيجية وهي: الاختيارات الموضوعية والتكيف مع مطالب الجمهور واستخدام الأدوات التقديمية في المراحل الأربع للنقاش الحاسم في جلسات الاستماع ألا وهي: مرحلة المواجهة والمرحلة الافتتاحية ومرحلة المجادلة والمرحلة الختامية. وتظهر نتائج الدراسة أنه في كل مرحلة من مراحل النقاش يسعى الطرفان إلي تحقيق التوازن بين الأهداف الجدلية للإبقاء علي المعقولة والأهداف البلاغية لتحقيق الفاعلية بواسطة اختيار موضوعات بعينها وتلبية تفضيلات الجمهور واستخدام أدوات تقديمية ملائمة.

## **1. Introduction**

Argumentation permeates different spheres of life and takes place in various communicative practices since it constitutes an essential component of any communication process in which participants in a speech event hold conflicting opinions or adopt different standpoints. When the propositions included in the standpoints are met with doubt and criticism, the parties concerned resort to argumentation to try to resolve the difference of opinion on the merits, i.e. "based on the quality of the defense of the standpoint at issue" (van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017, p. 136) and convince each other of their standpoints by justifying, clarifying or refuting the propositions they put forward. In trying to resolve differences of opinion in their favour and achieving acceptance of standpoints, speakers in argumentative discourse maneuver strategically to balance between being reasonable and effective. Strategic maneuvering was employed by members of Congress and Mark Zuckerberg, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Facebook, to defend their views in the hearings held before Congress in light of revelations that Cambridge Analytica, a British political data company, violated Facebook's policies by accessing the data of 87 million Facebook users and using it to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Zuckerberg also maneuvered strategically to answer questions about how Russia meddled in the elections by using fake Facebook accounts to spread disinformation and influence eligible voters.

## **2. Aims of the Study**

Argumentation is an essential discursive activity in communicative practices that have a critical aspect because of the different positions taken by the participants on the issues under discussion. This is seen in various contexts, including institutional contexts like the U.S. Congress in which argumentative discourse is structured around question and answer exchanges. Members of Congress ask witnesses questions about decisions taken or deeds carried out and which can affect the public. They also cast doubt on the acceptability of the standpoints put forward by the witnesses and criticize them. Witnesses provide answers in which they justify or explain their standpoints and reject the criticism of the members of Congress of their standpoint. In these argumentative exchanges, which are performed before immediate and mediated audiences, each party tries to advance its standpoint and resolve the argument in its favour. To achieve the outcome while reconciling being reasonable and effective, members of Congress and witnesses engage in strategic maneuvering by making a topical selection that suits their purposes, taking the demands, needs and wants of the audience into consideration, and using different presentational devices that make their standpoints acceptable (Toader, 2016; van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002). In this respect, the present study investigates how members of Congress and Mark Zuckerberg maneuver strategically in the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage in Mark Zuckerberg's congressional hearings on his company's mishandling of users' private data as well as on Russian use of this platform to interfere in the U.S. 2016 presidential election. The study examines how strategic maneuvering is employed in the above-mentioned four stages

of the critical discussion in the two-day hearings. It attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1- How do members of Congress and Mark Zuckerberg use the topical potential strategically?
- 2- How do they strategically adapt their discourse to audience demand?
- 3- What are the presentational devices that are employed strategically by members of Congress and Mark Zuckerberg?

### **3. Data and Methodology**

Mark Zuckerberg's congressional hearings on Capitol Hill on April 10 and April 11, 2018 constitute the data of the present study. Zuckerberg answered questions on how Facebook handles users' personal information in two hearings on the two days of questioning. On April 10, he testified for five hours before two Senate committees: the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. On April 11, Zuckerberg faced five hours of questioning from the House Energy and Commerce Committee. The arguments presented by members of Congress and Mark Zuckerberg in the 10-hour hearing are analyzed.

To analyze strategic maneuvering in Mark Zuckerberg's arguments as well as those of the members of Congress, van Eemeren's (2018) Pragma-Dialectical theory of argumentation is employed to examine how speakers in the hearings maneuver strategically to maintain dialectical reasonableness and achieve rhetorical effectiveness. The three aspects of strategic maneuvering, namely topical potential, adaptation to audience demand, and presentational devices are analysed in the four stages of the critical discussion. These are: the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage. In each of the four stages, the three aspects of strategic maneuvering are examined in the arguments of the Congressmen and Mark Zuckerberg. More specifically, the choice of topical potential is presented then adaptation to audience demand and presentation devices are explained in the illustrative extracts given in which presentational choices are underlined.

## **4. Theoretical Background**

### **4.1 Pragma-Dialectical Theory of Argumentation**

Argumentation as an everyday communicative verbal activity deals with advancing strong and persuasive arguments to support or refute a standpoint since it is "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" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 1). This view is also expressed by Lauerbach and Aijmer (2007, p. 1335) who hold that argumentation is a dialogical activity in which two parties seek to settle a conflict of opinion and achieve consensus by putting forward claims and counterclaims in a number of sequences.

These views highlight some characteristics of argumentation, one of which is that it consists of a number of communicative acts which, taken together, form the act of argumentation. Another characteristic of argumentation is that it is part of a

dialogue, and is thus considered an interactional act in which the addresser seeks to make the addressee accept the standpoint presented. One more characteristic of argumentation is that it involves an appeal to reason (van Eemeren, 2018).

Pragma-dialectics is one comprehensive argumentation theory that was put forward by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 1992, 2004) and extended by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2000, 2002, 2003, 2009a) and van Eemeren (2010). It "examines interactive arguments, those in which (usually) two arguers advance, defend, and challenge standpoints in a sequential fashion, through which their moves can be identified and scrutinized" (Mohammed & Zarefsky, 2011, p. 89). Pragma-dialectics is so-called as it involves the study of language in actual communication and interaction (pragmatics) and the regimentation of critical exchanges (dialectics) (van Eemeren & Garssen, 2009; van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2009b; van Eemeren, Houtlosser, & Snoeck Henkemans, 2008).

Central to pragma-dialectics is the ideal model of a critical discussion which provides an overview of the argumentative moves needed to reconcile differences of opinion on the merits through argumentative discourse (van Eemeren, 2018, p. 35). It shows what is involved in an argumentative exchange in which participants aim to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits and "attempt to reach agreement about the acceptability of the standpoint at issue by finding out whether or not this standpoint is tenable against critical doubt and other criticism..." (van Eemeren, 2016, p. 3). The pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion comprises four stages through which an argumentative discourse must pass to achieve the resolution of conflicting opinions reasonably. These stages are: the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage (van Eemeren, 2018; van Eemeren et al., 2014).

In the confrontation stage, the participants initiate the discussion and the difference of opinion arises as one party does not accept the standpoint of another party and meets it with doubt, criticism or contradiction. In the opening stage, the material and procedural commitments and starting points of the discussion are determined, and the discussion roles of protagonist and antagonist are divided. While the protagonist is obliged to defend a standpoint, the antagonist is obliged to respond critically to the protagonist's standpoint to challenge it or reject it. In the argumentation stage of a critical discussion, the protagonist presents arguments to defend his standpoint and counter the doubts, critical responses and objections of the antagonist. In the concluding stage, the result of the discussion is established as the protagonist and the antagonist determine if the conflict of opinion has been settled and in whose favour. If the protagonist fails to counter the antagonist's critical responses and withdraws the standpoints, the difference of opinion is resolved in the antagonist's favour. If the antagonist retracts his/her doubts and criticisms, the difference is resolved in the protagonist's favour (Andone, 2014; van Eemeren, 2010; van Eemeren et al., 2014; van Eemeren, 2018; van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017).

## **4.2 Strategic Maneuvering**

In all pragmatic moves made in an argumentative discourse to realize the final aim of resolving the difference of opinion, the parties strive to achieve the dialectical aim of being reasonable by putting the standpoints they advance to test and the rhetorical goal of being effective by making the audience accept these standpoints (van Eemeren, 2013). To reconcile dialectical reasonableness and rhetorical effectiveness, participants engage in strategic maneuvering which "refers to the continual efforts made in all moves that are carried out in argumentative discourse to keep the balance between reasonableness and effectiveness" (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 40). More precisely, it is concerned with "the ways in which speakers choose to protect or advance their standpoints, in logical sequencing and in a relevant manner, and the ways through which they achieve their objectives, by making use of rhetorical strategies with the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of their arguments and meeting the demands of the audience" (Toader, 2016, p. 82).

According to van Eemeren (2018), strategic maneuvering is "the central tool used in pragma-dialectics in accounting for the strategic design of an argumentative discourse" (p. 112). In the argumentative moves made in the stages of resolving the difference of opinion, it manifests itself in three aspects: selection from the topical potential, adaptation to audience demand, and exploitation of presidential devices. Topical potential refers to the "repertoire of options for making an argumentative move that are at the arguer's disposal in a certain case and at a particular point in the discourse" (van Eemeren, 2010, pp. 93-94). It is concerned with choosing from the options available in every stage of the resolution process. In the confrontation stage, a participant's strategic maneuvering with respect to topical potential amounts to "making the most effective choice from among the potential issues for discussion...thus utilizing the 'disagreement space' available in the dialectical situation in such a way that the confrontation is defined in accordance with that party's preferences" (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 100). For example, the selection from the topical potential may involve choosing particular starting points, topics or standpoints that suit the speaker or writer most. In the opening stage, strategic maneuvering refers to the premises that can be used as starting points for the critical discussion (van Eemeren & Garssen, 2009). Each participant's strategic maneuvering in this stage "is directed at creating a 'zone of agreement' that offers the most advantageous procedural and material starting points; this aim can, for instance, be pursued by eliciting or calling to mind helpful 'concessions' from the other party" (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 100). In the argumentation stage, protagonists choose a strategic line of defence, and antagonists choose a strategic line of attack by selecting from the potential of arguments available the one that is most suitable and effective in the dialectical situation (van Eemeren, 2010; van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2009b). In the concluding stage, each participant directs his/her efforts to conclude the discussion as desired "by highlighting from his own perspective (positive or negative) implications of certain outcomes he wants drawn" (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 101).

Adaptation to audience demand in strategic maneuvering refers to taking into consideration "the preferences of the listeners or readers that a speaker or writer in the

argumentative discourse intends to reach" (van Eemeren, 2018, p. 112). In order to reach the intended audience, maintain reasonableness, and be effective, participants select arguments that appeal to the audience because they agree with their beliefs. Moreover, the strategic moves made in the stages of the resolution process are in line with the preferences, views, expectations and standards of the audience (van Eemeren, 2010, 2013, 2018; van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017). In the confrontation stage, adjustment to audience demand manifests itself in avoiding unsolvable contradictions. This can be done, for example, by communicating disagreement over values as a conflict of opinion with respect to facts because disagreement about facts is easier to accommodate. In the opening stage, adaptation to audience demand involves establishing material starting points that the audience will accept and which will make the discussion of the participant's standpoint proceed in his/her favour. In the argumentation stage, adaptation to audience demand consists in choosing and quoting arguments from sources that the intended audience trust and by referring to argumentative principles that they abide by. In the concluding stage, strategic adjustment to the audience involves presenting the result of the discussion without stressing or highlighting consequences that the audience do not like so as not to exasperate them (van Eemeren, 2010; van Eemeren & Garssen, 2012; van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2009b).

The third aspect of strategic maneuvering, namely the exploitation of presentational devices refers to "the aggregate of stylistic and other means of expression that can be utilised in giving presence to an argumentative move" (van Eemeren, 2018, p. 112). It is concerned with making different stylistic choices that are considered most suitable to defend a standpoint and present argumentative moves in such a way that is deemed most efficient and strategically acceptable (Eckstein & Lefevre, 2017; Toader, 2016; van Eemeren, 2010, 2013). Presentational devices used in strategic maneuvering occur in the four stages of the resolution process. According to van Eemeren (2010), in the confrontation stage, the different presentational devices made

may, for the listener addressed by the protagonist of a standpoint, include not making explicit his position with regard to the standpoint that has been advanced, so that the difference of opinion does not become unnecessarily or prematurely mixed. In the opening stage, the protagonist can, for instance, maneuver strategically by presenting his starting points by using a metaphor that is likely to appeal to the audience...Among the presentational choices that can be appropriate in the argumentation stage are, for instance, presenting all the arguments advanced in defense of one's standpoint explicitly and numbered, so that the rigor and quantity of the reasons that speak in favour of the standpoint may seem overwhelming. In the concluding stage, a strategic presentational choice the party who claims to have won the discussion could make is to present his claim matter of factly, in a restrained manner, so that the outcome of the discussion is not rubbed in. (pp. 121-122)

The three aspects of strategic maneuvering are necessary for the occurrence of strategic maneuvering since it takes place by choosing the topical potential, meeting the demands of the audience and employing suitable presentational devices (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 94). Because the three aspects represent different choices made in strategic maneuvering, they occur together in the argumentative moves made in the different stages of critical discussion in which parties seek to balance between effectiveness and reasonableness so as to convince the audience of the standpoints put forward (van Eemeren, 2013; van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017; van Eemeren et al., 2014). The interdependency of the three aspects of strategic maneuvering is shown in the strategic maneuvering triangle, shown in figure (1), which represents their interrelationship.

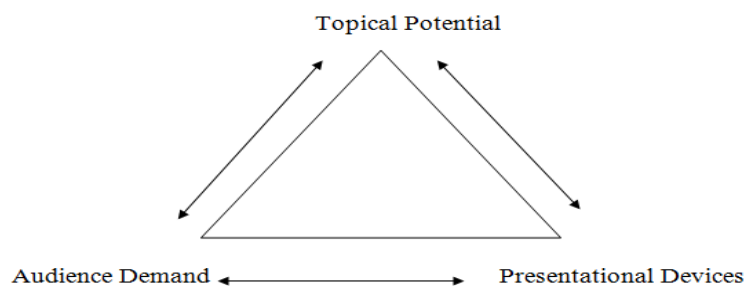


Figure (1): The Strategic maneuvering triangle (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 95)

In the strategic maneuvering triangle, the double direction of the arrows indicates the mutual relation between the three aspects of strategic maneuvering. This mutuality is attributed to the fact that the choice made from the available topical potential will determine what kind of adaptation to audience demand and presentational choices will be appropriate. Likewise, the choice of topical potential and presentational devices depends on the adjustment made to audience demand. Similarly, depending on the presentational devices employed, the selection made from the topical potential and the kind of adaptation to audience demand are determined in every argumentative move (van Eemeren, 2018).

Rather than occurring in an idealized critical discussion, strategic maneuvering takes place in various real-life communicative practices which have become conventionalized according to different requirements because they – the communicative practices – are associated with different institutional contexts, such as the political context, the interpersonal context and the legal context, in which they fulfil different goals (van Eemeren, 2010; van Eemeren & Garssen, 2012, 2015). Therefore, in the extended pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, the institutional environment in which argumentation takes place is taken into consideration. In other words, account needs to be taken of the communicative practice in which argumentation happens (e.g. legal domain, political domain, academic domain, medical domain, commercial domain, interpersonal domain) and the communicative activity types (e.g. criminal trial, plenary parliamentary debate, academic keynote speech, a doctor's consult, a chat) established in these domains (van Eemeren, 2010, 2016, 2018). In pragma-dialectics, communicative activity types are



"conventionalized communicative practices whose conventionalization serves to meet the institutional exigencies of the communicative domain in response to which the communicative activity types has developed" (van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017, pp. 151-152). Because communicative activity types are associated with communicative practices that prevail and have become ingrained in a communicative domain, they are more or less conventionalized. The rationale of the conventionalization of the communicative activity type forms its institutional point, which represents the institutional requirements that the communicative practice seeks to achieve. It is realized through implementing particular genres of communicative activities. These genres include, but are not limited to, adjudication in the legal domain, deliberation in the political domain, negotiation in the diplomatic domain, and communion in the interpersonal domain (van Eemeren, 2010, 2013; van Eemeren et al., 2014; van Eemeren & Garsen, 2012; van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017). Sometimes communicative activity types are hybrids, i.e. these activity types combine many genres of conventionalized communicative activity. This is seen in political interviews because "in order to realize the institutional point of enabling the audience to value a politician's views, the genres of enlightening and deliberating are combined, thus integrating disseminating information and opinion-forming" (van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017, p. 152).

Participants in everyday communicative activity type maneuver strategically to reasonably and effectively realize "the institutional point of the communicative activity in the specific macro-context in which the argumentative discourse takes place" (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 152). Therefore, in analyzing and evaluating strategic maneuvering, the conventionalization involved in fulfilling the institutional point of a communicative activity type is taken into consideration because it imposes extrinsic constraints on the strategic maneuvering that occurs in this communicative activity type. These constraints are described as extrinsic because they are not characteristic of strategic maneuvering. The extrinsic constraints form the institutional preconditions for maneuvering strategically in the communicative activity type since they – the constraints – can affect the argumentative moves made in the activity type. Accordingly, participants in a communicative activity type must take these institutional preconditions into account and maneuver strategically according to the preconditions of the communicative activity type. This is because some modes of strategic maneuvering may be considered appropriate or inappropriate for realizing the institutional point of a particular communicative activity type and the participants' dialectical and rhetorical aims in this activity type based on the institutional conventionalization which determines the extrinsic constraints and institutional preconditions (van Eemeren, 2013, 2016, 2018; van Eemeren et al., 2014; van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017).

The institutional preconditions for strategic maneuvering may vary between communicative activity types "depending on the impact the need for realizing the institutional point of a particular communicative activity and its specific institutional goals and requirements have on the argumentative characteristics of the empirical counterparts of the four stages of a critical discussion" (van Eemeren, 2013, p. 22).

Therefore, the institutional preconditions prevailing in a communicative activity type in which strategic maneuvering takes place can have an influence on the three aspects of strategic maneuvering in every stage of the argumentative exchange. There may be extrinsic constraints on the topical choices made, the adaptation to audience demand effected, and the presentational devices used. Although these constraints can limit the possibilities for strategic maneuvering for a participant in a communicative activity type, they can provide a chance for strategic maneuvering for other participants (van Eemeren, 2010, 2013, 2016; van Eemeren et al., 2014; van Eemeren & Garssen, 2015).

With respect to U.S. Congress, the communicative activity type that takes place in this communicative practice is congressional hearings which include asking questions by members of Congress and testimonies from witnesses. It is a hybrid communicative activity type that combines the genres of deliberating and informing as it involves collecting and evaluating information, forming opinions and convincing the audience of certain standpoints.

Congressional hearings have institutional points that render them exploratory in nature. These include obtaining information, conducting investigations, and hearing testimonies from witnesses on topics of interest ("Congressional Hearings", 2018). This is the case in Mark Zuckerberg's 10-hour testimony before Congress as members of Congress question Zuckerberg about protecting user privacy on Facebook. The aim of the questions is to conduct an investigation and collect information about the leak privacy issue that has affected millions of users since this is an issue of public interest and concern. The institutional points of this communicative activity type impose extrinsic constraints which determine the institutional preconditions for strategic maneuvering that participants in this activity type can make in their attempt to reach their primary audience by engaging in an argumentative exchange with the secondary audience, which consists of the interlocutors, to realize their dialectical and rhetorical aims and the institutional points of the communicative activity type.

Pragma-dialectics and strategic maneuvering have been examined in a number of domains including the medical domain (Goodnight, 2009; Goodnight & Pilgram, 2011; Pilgram, 2017; van Poppel, 2017), the legal domain (Feteris, 2009, 2017; Jansen, 2017), and the political domain in which previous research has focused on political interviews (Andone, 2009, 2013; Andone & Gata, 2011), political speeches (Ietcu-Fairclough, 2009; Mohammed & Zarefsky, 2011), press conferences (Peng, 2017; Peng & Zhu, 2015) and debates (Doury, van Haaften & Snoeck Henkemans, 2011; Eckstein & Lefevre, 2017; Plug, 2017; Snoeck Henkemans, 2017; Toader, 2016, van Eemeren & Garssen, 2012, 2015; van Haaften, 2017; Zarefsky, 2009). To the researcher's knowledge, strategic maneuvering has not been studied in the hearings held in the U.S. Congress nor in non-political issues that are investigated in this legislative body. The present study attempts to fill this gap by examining strategic maneuvering in Mark Zuckerberg's 2018 congressional hearings to show how it is employed by the Congressmen and Mark Zuckerberg to realize their dialectical and rhetorical aims.

## **5. Analysis**

In this section, strategic maneuvering with respect to topical potential, adaptation to audience demand and presentational devices in the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage in Zuckerberg's congressional hearings is presented and analysed.

Zuckerberg's congressional hearings were investigative in nature as members of Congress sought to understand how Cambridge Analytica used the personal data of millions of Facebook users without their knowledge or consent to influence voters. They also investigated Facebook policy concerning access to and use of users' information in order to pass legislation that would enable users to have more control over their data. Mark Zuckerberg, on the other hand, attempted to defend his position and clarify the data privacy issue as well as other issues like fake news, hate speech and foreign interference in elections. Accordingly, the topical potential selected in the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage in the hearings serves the Congressmen's and Zuckerberg's goals. It is also determined by the presence of a multiple, broad and heterogeneous audience.

Since the Congress is regarded as the voice of the people, the hearings are open to the public that form the listening, watching or reading audience. This audience is usually heterogeneous, non-interactive and includes opponents, supporters, neutral attendees and onlookers (van Eemeren & Garssen, 2015). In the case of Mark Zuckerberg's congressional hearings, in addition to the Congressmen, it was attended by members of the press, members of Facebook communications team, Facebook's General Counsel Colin Stretch, and the public that included protesters who held signs that had "protect our privacy" and "stop corporate spying" written on them (Roose, 2018; Wagner, 2018). The orientation to this audience in the hearings determines the topical choice made and the presentational devices used to realize strategic maneuvering and thus enhance dialectical reasonableness and rhetorical effectiveness.

### **5.1 The Confrontation Stage**

In the confrontation stage, strategic maneuvering with respect to the topical potential lies in making an effective choice from the available issues and limiting the disagreement space "in such a way that the confrontation is defined in accordance with the speaker's or writer's preferences" (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999, p. 484). In Zuckerberg's hearings, members of Congress question Zuckerberg about how the data of 87 million Facebook users was leaked and obtained by Cambridge Analytica as well as about the reason behind not informing the users that their information was obtained and used without their consent. In discussing the Cambridge Analytica problem, the Congressmen select two issues to deal with. These are: the ignorance of Facebook users regarding how their information was used or handled, and the failure of Facebook to monitor third-party developers. These issues are shown in the following extracts.

### Extract (1)

consumers may not fully understand...the extent to which their data is collected, protected, transferred, used and misused...Consumers must have the transparency necessary to make an informed decision about whether to share their data and how it can be used. Consumers ought to have clearer information, not opaque policies and complex click-through consent pages. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

The primary audience, in this extract, is Facebook users. They are identified by being referred to using "consumers". It is adapted to by presenting their preferences regarding how their personal information is used by Facebook through a number of presentational devices. These include the use of passivization in "...their data...can be used" in which the agent is deleted to focus on the actions that matter most to users with respect to the privacy of their data. Modality is used to provide a contrast between how users' information is handled on Facebook and how it should be dealt with. The auxiliary modal "may" is used to show that the system of Facebook does not permit users to know how their data is dealt with by third-party developers. The modals "must" and "ought to" are used to highlight users' inalienable right to know how their information is used to decide whether they accept or do not accept to make Facebook use it in whichever way it desires. Orientation to the audience demand is also achieved by using other presentational devices, including the possessive determiner "their", which is repeated twice to stress the necessity of allowing users to decide who they want to gain access to their data, and how they want it to be used. Moreover, some adjectives are used to underline the importance of making consumers take their own decisions concerning their data. These adjectives are the predicative adjective "necessary" and the attributive adjectives "informed" and "clearer". The attributive adjectives "opaque", "complex" and "click-through" are used to give a negative presentation of the current Facebook policies concerning users' information so as to censure and reprehend them. The lexical choice "transparency" is also significantly used to adapt to the audience demand because it helps establish a correlation between taking corrective measures towards Facebook's policies and regaining users' trust.

### Extract (2)

Facebook allowed developers access to an unknown number of user profiles on Facebook for years — potentially hundreds of million...and partnered with individuals and app developers such as Aleksandr Kogan, who turned around and sold that data...to...Cambridge Analytica...there's a real trust gap...why should we trust you to follow through on these promises when you have demonstrated repeatedly that you're willing to flout...your own internal policies...when the needs suit you? (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11)

In this extract, adaptation to audience demand is effected by criticizing Mark Zuckerberg who is directly addressed using the second person pronoun "you", which is repeated four times for emphasis, and the possessive determiner "your". The presentational devices used to adapt to the audience demand include the use of hyperbole in "years — potentially hundreds of million..." to underscore the view that Facebook does not protect users' data and even partners with third-party developers who profit from this data. They also include using the verbs "partnered", "turned around", "sold" and "flout" to criticize Facebook's policies so as to delegitimize them. In order to imply that Facebook's policies regarding third-party developers in general and the Cambridge Analytica incident in particular can have serious consequences because they can cause a deep distrust problem with users, a number of presentational devices are used. These are: the use of the attributive adjective "real", the hyperbolic word "repeatedly", inclusive "we", and the rhetorical question "why should we trust you...when the need suits you?"

In addition to inquiring about the Cambridge Analytica data breach, members of Congress show their concern about the policies and practices of Facebook with regard to the access and use of users' data by third parties that seek to profit from their information. They show that Zuckerberg failed to protect users' data and privacy. To express their standpoint, the Congressmen select two issues to support their position, namely that Facebook is not concerned about the privacy and security of users' data, and that it prioritizes profit over privacy. The two issues are illustrated in extracts (3) and (4).

### Extract (3)

Facebook claims that users...control their data, yet their data keeps being exposed on your platform, and these breaches cause more and more harm... (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11).

In extract (3), Facebook users are adapted to by being represented through generic reference in which "social actors are generalized, referred to as classes of people rather than as specific, identifiable individuals" (van Leeuwen, 2009, p. 282). Generic reference, seen in the use of "users", helps establish an Us vs. Them dichotomy (van Leeuwen, 1996, 2009). Thus, it is used to make a distinction between Facebook users and executives who are responsible for protecting users' information. Other presentational devices are used to adapt to the preferences of the audience. The verb "claims" shows the contradiction between what Facebook says concerning users' ownership and control over their information and what happened in the Cambridge Analytica problem. "Exposed" and "breaches" are used to assert the inappropriateness of selling users' data. This is also indicated by using hyperbole in "more and more" to further underscore the harm inflicted upon users for misusing their personal information.

#### Extract (4)

...you use and sell the same data to make money. And in the case of Cambridge Analytica, you don't even know how it's used after you sell it (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10).

In extract (4), Facebook users who have been harmed by the Cambridge Analytica breach are adapted to by attacking and criticizing Zuckerberg who is directly addressed using the second person pronoun "you". This pronoun is repeated three times to accuse Zuckerberg of dishonesty because being the chairman and CEO of Facebook, he knows everything concerning how users' data is handled. The implication is that he deliberately took part in selling users' information "to make money". This is also indicated by repeating the verb "sell" twice to show that Zuckerberg prioritizes profit over privacy.

By selecting the above-mentioned issues, members of Congress restrict the "disagreement space" in the confrontation stage by leaving implicit the negative outcome of data and privacy breaches by third parties on Facebook users.

Zuckerberg's testimony is a response to inquiries about Facebook policies with respect to users' privacy as well as to the accusations leveled against him for failing to protect their data. With respect to topical potential in the confrontation stage, Zuckerberg's testimony is divided into two parts. In one part, he shows concern about not making mistakes in handling users' information. To defend this standpoint, Zuckerberg addresses two issues; highlighting the need to change the view of those running Facebook of their responsibility as a company, and explaining the measures taken to correct the mistakes made to ensure that they do not happen again. These issues are shown in extracts (5) and (6), respectively.

#### Extract (5)

...because our service is about helping people connect...we try not to make the same mistake multiple times...we're going through a broader philosophical shift in how we approach our responsibility... we need to take a more proactive role and a broader view of our responsibility... (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10).

In this extract, users of Facebook are the audience that is being adapted to through indetermination which "occurs when social actors are represented as unspecified, 'anonymous' individuals or groups whose identity does not matter" (van Leeuwen, 2009, p. 283). It is seen in the use of "people" to show that all Facebook users, and not just those who were affected by the Cambridge Analytica problem, are being addressed. Besides indetermination, other presentational devices are used to adapt to the audience. For example, the possessive determiner "our" is repeated three times and exclusive "we" is repeated four times to assure the audience that the Facebook team is working hard on correcting any mistakes that can have a negative effect on users. Hyperbole is used in "multiple" to admit that the same mistakes were made before but the company is persistent in rectifying them. This is also shown in

the repetition of the noun "responsibility" and the comparative attributive adjective "broader" two times each as well as the use of the nouns "shift", "role" and "view", the attributive adjectives "philosophical" and "proactive". These devices serve to assert the genuineness of the Facebook team in making sure that the Facebook tools are used in a useful, rather than a harmful, way.

#### Extract (6)

First, we're getting to the bottom of exactly what Cambridge Analytica did, and telling everyone who may have been affected...Second...we're now investigating every single app that had access to a large amount of people's information on Facebook... And, if we find someone that improperly used data, we're going to ban them from our platform and tell everyone affected. Third...we're making sure developers can't access as much information... (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11)

In extract (6), all the hearing and watching audience is being adapted to using several presentational devices. These are: the use of the attributive adjective "single", the quantifiers "every", "a large amount of" and "everyone" which is repeated twice, indeterminateness in "someone" and "people's", and exclusive "we" which is repeated five times. These presentational devices are used to realize two purposes. First, they show all those responsible for running Facebook are involved in implementing a series of measures deemed essential and necessary to correct the mistakes that were made in the Cambridge Analytica incident and make sure they do not happen again. Second, they reflect a desire to regain users' trust by trying to show that the work done at Facebook to rectify mistakes and appease users continues unabated, is in full swing, and is carried out meticulously.

The second part of Zuckerberg's testimony constitutes an explanation of the standpoints of Facebook with respect to some issues chosen to clarify the company's position. The issues include data privacy and foreign interference in elections. Examples of Facebook's standpoint regarding these issues are shown in extracts (7) and (8).

#### Extract (7)

We don't sell data...it's widely mischaracterized about our system that we sell data. And it's actually one of the most important parts of how Facebook works is that we do not sell data. Advertisers do not get access to people's individual data. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

The audience that Mark Zuckerberg adapts to in this extract is the Congressmen and Facebook users. Adaptation to audience demand is realized through using some presentational devices. For example, the adverb "widely" is used to emphasize that the belief that Facebook sells users' data is widespread. In an attempt to defy this deep-seated belief, Zuckerberg uses the superlative form "the most" and the assertive "advertisers don't get access to people's individual

data" and "we don't sell data" which is repeated twice to show that it goes against the grain either to sell users' data or to allow advertisers to access it.

#### Extract (8)

Fake accounts...are a big issue...the solution here is to build more A.I. tools...And we've been able to do that in order to take down tens of thousands of accounts, especially related to election interference (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11).

In this extract, the preferences of the watching and hearing audience are oriented to using the attributive adjective "big" to describe the issue of fake news to show that Mark Zuckerberg realizes, and shares the audience's views, that this is a crucial issue that is handled seriously because it can have undesired potential results. The quantifier "more" is used to indicate that Facebook has already started dealing with fake news and foreign interference in elections. This is also indicated by the use of exclusive "we" in "And we've been able to do that..." to show that all members of the Facebook team are involved in handling fake news and interference in elections. To show that effective hard work has been successfully done in this respect, hyperbole is used in "tens of thousands".

By apologizing for the mistakes made in dealing with users' data and clarifying his company's policies regarding some issues, including data privacy and foreign interference in elections, Zuckerberg attempts to restrict the "disagreement space" to avoid damaging his image and losing credibility. He selects from the "disagreement space" issues that can be easily dealt with and which the audience would accept. Thus, the difference of opinion is presented as being disagreement over facts rather than values.

### **5.2 The Opening Stage**

In the opening stage, speakers in a critical exchange seek to establish "the 'zone of agreement' the parties can fall back on during the discussion" (van Eemeren, 2018, p. 117). They determine the common starting points of the discussion and their roles in it as protagonists and antagonists. Strategic maneuvering with respect to topical potential in this stage occurs when each party creates the starting points that the other party would accept and which would serve its interests. In Zuckerberg's hearing, members of Congress are the protagonists since they advance standpoints and defend them while Zuckerberg is the antagonist as he responds to these standpoints. They also establish the most advantageous starting points and create an agreement zone by focusing on three broad issues: the importance of Zuckerberg's testimony in light of the positive role Facebook plays in people's lives, the inappropriateness of using users' data without their consent, and the necessity of not being more concerned with profits than privacy. These issues are shown in extracts (9), (10) and (11).



### Extract (9)

Mr. Zuckerberg...the story that you've created represents the American Dream. Many are incredibly inspired by what you've done... you have an obligation... to ensure that that dream does not become a privacy nightmare for the scores of people who use Facebook. This hearing is an opportunity to speak to those who believe in Facebook and those who are deeply skeptical about it. We are listening, America is listening and...the world is listening... (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

In this extract, Mark Zuckerberg is addressed using the second person pronoun "you" which is repeated three times to emphasize Zuckerberg's full responsibility for Facebook and what this entails in terms of the necessity for clarifying critical issues concerning this platform. The Congressman here uses presentational devices to adapt to the preferences of the audiences who are Zuckerberg and all users of Facebook whether in America or worldwide. The quantifier "many" is used along with the hyperbolic word "incredibly" to praise Zuckerberg, show that he is considered a role model for many people all over the world and not just in America, and accentuate the enormous influence of Facebook in people's lives. The lexemes "dream", "nightmare", "believe in", and "skeptical" are used to highlight the contrast between two groups of people, one of which is those who look up to Zuckerberg and his achievement and would like to follow in his footsteps because they "believe in" him because he represents the "dream". The other group includes all those who have become "skeptical" about Zuckerberg and to whom Facebook has become a disturbing "nightmare" because of the privacy issue. The lexical choices serve to indicate and assert the importance of Zuckerberg's testimony. This is also achieved by the use of hyperbole in "scores" and "deeply" to show that so many people use Facebook and that some of them started to have growing distrust of this platform. The importance of the hearing to Zuckerberg, Facebook users and the whole world is also indicated by the use of exclusive "we", the three-part list in "we are listening...the world is listening", and personification in "America is listening" in which America is compared to a human being who is listening to the testimony.

### Extract (10)

The idea that for every person who decided to try an app, information about nearly 300 other people was scraped...is...disturbing...foreign actors are abusing...Facebook to interfere in elections and take millions of Americans' personal information...to manipulate public opinion and target individual voters. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

In this extract, Facebook users who have been affected by the Cambridge Analytica incident are the audience that is being adapted to through indetermination and aggregation which "quantifies groups of participants, treating them as 'statistics'" (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 49). Indetermination is seen in the use of "people" and aggregation in the use of "Americans". Adaptation to the audience is also realized by

using the predicative adjective "disturbing" to reflect concern with users' feelings of anger and distrust, and thus construct an audience that accepts the standpoints advanced by the Congressmen. This is also achieved by using other presentational devices, namely the use of the thinking verb "decided" and quantification in "...for every person...", "...nearly 300 other people", and "...take millions of Americans' personal information...". Drawing on premises accepted and shared by the audience, some presentational devices are employed to discredit and criticize the people responsible for the Cambridge Analytica breach. For example, they are represented through exclusion (van Leeuwen, 1996, 2009) which is realized by using passive agent deletion in "was scraped" in which the agent is deleted to focus on the action to show that it is despicable and grotesque. A number of verbs are also used to delegitimize the act of misusing people's data so as to underscore the inappropriateness of using users' information without their knowledge or consent. These verbs are: "scraped", "abusing", "interfere", "manipulate", and "target."

#### Extract (11)

...you'd agree, that the performance on privacy has been inconsistent. I wonder... myself whether that's because it's not a bottom line issue. It...appears that the shareholders are interested in...maximizing profits, privacy neither — certainly doesn't drive profits...but also may interfere with profits if you have to sacrifice your ad revenues because of privacy concerns. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11)

In extract (11), the audience that is being adapted to is not Zuckerberg but the other Congressmen and Facebook users. Adaptation to the preferences of this audience is realized using the phrase "and you'd agree" to create an agreement zone and show that the subsequent proposition is non-negotiable. Moreover, the impersonal "you" and possessive determiner "your" indicate that the proposition is addressed to all Facebook shareholders and not just Zuckerberg, and thus show that the Congressman believes that Zuckerberg is not the only person who should be held responsible for mishandling users' data. The negative predicative adjective "inconsistent", the hyperbolic word "certainly", the phrase "it's not a bottom line issue", and the assertives "the shareholders...maximizing profits" and "privacy...profits" are used to show that Facebook shareholders, including Zuckerberg, care about profits more than privacy, and that they sacrifice it – privacy – for the sake of profits. Two more presentational devices are used to adapt to audience demand. These are: the use of the phrase "may interfere with profits" and the repetition of "privacy" and "profits" three times each to underscore the fact that privacy should take precedence over profits and not vice versa, as is currently the case.

As for Zuckerberg, because public opinion was against him at the time of the Cambridge Analytica data breach problem, he had to clarify his position not only to the Congressmen but also to the public. Therefore, he selects from the topical potential in the opening stage issues that constitute starting points that make the

audience accept his propositions and agree with him. These issues are: apologizing for the Facebook data collection scandal, highlighting the benefits of Facebook, and guaranteeing that Facebook will not be used to do any harm of any kind. Extracts (12), (13) and (14) demonstrate these issues.

#### Extract (12)

...we didn't do enough to prevent these tools from being used for harm...and that was a big mistake. It was my mistake, and I am sorry. I started Facebook, I run it, and...I am responsible for what happens here (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11).

In this extract, Zuckerberg addresses not only the Congressmen but also the attendees and the public. He adapts to the audience by claiming full responsibility for what happens in Facebook by using the possessive determiner "my" and the first person pronoun "I", which is repeated four times. In addition, the lexical item "mistake" is repeated twice and modified using the attributive adjective "big" not only to admit that a mistake was made but also to show that Zuckerberg realizes that it is a serious and grave mistake.

#### Extract (13)

...as Facebook has grown, people everywhere have gotten a powerful new tool for staying connected to the people they love...we've seen the "Me Too" movement...organized...on Facebook. After Hurricane Harvey, people came together to raise more than \$20 million for relief. And more than 70 million businesses...use Facebook to create jobs and grow. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

Zuckerberg, in this extract, seeks to exert emotional pressure on the audience and adapt to its preferences. This is achieved by using some presentational devices such as the positive attributive adjective "powerful" and the verbs "came together", "raise", "create", and "grow" are used to remind the audience of the benefits of Facebook. In addition, the hyperbolic word "everywhere" is used to emphasize Zuckerberg's view that Facebook was originally meant to do good and be a useful tool. Other presentational devices include the representation of Facebook users through indetermination by using the lexeme "people", the repetition of "Facebook" and "people" three times each, and the use of the assertive "70 million...grow". These devices serve to establish a zone of agreement with the audience by showing that Facebook permeates the lives of all the people all over the world, including that of Zuckerberg and the Congressmen, and that it has had considerable social and economic benefits.

#### Extract (14)

It's not enough to just give people a voice. We need to make sure that voice isn't used to harm other people... it's not enough to just give people control

of their information. We need to make sure that the developers that they share it with protect their information...I am committed to getting this right, and that includes the basic responsibility of protecting people's information... (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11)

In extract (14), adaptation to audience demand is realized by repeating key words and phrases. For example, "people" and "information" are repeated three times each to show that Zuckerberg, being Facebook CEO, is highly concerned with benefiting all users of Facebook and protecting their data. Furthermore, exclusive "we" is repeated twice and the phrases "It's not enough" and "we need to make sure" are repeated twice to show that the Facebook team has a collective responsibility to do all what is required to gain the satisfaction of the users and make up for the Cambridge Analytica mistake. Other presentational devices are used to meet the preferences of the audience. These are: the attributive adjective "basic" and the commissive speech act "I am committed". The attributive adjective "basic" underlines the importance of ensuring the privacy of users' data and shows that it is the number one priority. The use of the commissive speech act, along with the first person pronoun "I", reflects Zuckerberg's sincerity, genuine willingness and firm intention to personally see to it that all the necessary changes are made to better Facebook and guarantee that it is not used for ill purposes.

### **5.3 The Argumentation Stage**

In the argumentation stage in Zuckerberg's hearings, members of Congress advance a number of arguments to question Zuckerberg about Facebook policy concerning a number of issues, on top of which is the privacy of users' data. With respect to topical potential, they select arguments that serve to create a line of attack and defend the standpoints they put forward. These arguments include providing evidence from previous deeds by attributing propositions to sources, highlighting self-contradictory positions adopted by Facebook, and criticizing Zuckerberg. The arguments deployed by the Congressmen are shown in the following extracts.

#### Extract (15)

...the information collected included... according to some reports... private direct messages between users. Professor Kogan is said to have taken data from over 70 million Americans... the CEO, Alexander Nix, declared that Cambridge Analytica ran all the digital campaign...for the Trump campaign...press reports indicate Facebook learned about this breach in 2015, but appears not to have taken significant steps to address it until this year...The FTC found that Facebook's privacy policies had deceived users in the past. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

In this extract, propositions are attributed to different sources to cite evidence to show what Cambridge Analytica did with users' data. These sources are: reports, the FTC (Federal Trade Commission), former Cambridge Analytica CEO Alexander Nix,

and Professor Kogan who obtained the data of millions of Facebook users and sold it to Cambridge Analytica (Shah, 2018). A number of presentational devices are employed to adapt to the preferences of the audience which consists of other members of Congress as well as the people who have been affected by the Cambridge Analytica breach. This is seen in the use of generic reference in "users" to identify this class. Professor Kogan and the CEO Alexander Nix are referred to via nomination and functionalization. In nomination, "social actors may be represented in terms of their unique identity, by being nominated" (van Leeuwen, 2009, p. 284). Social actors in functionalization "are referred to in terms of an activity, in terms of something they do, for instance an occupation or role" (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 54). Representing these two social actors who are affiliated to Cambridge Analytica via nomination and functionalization serves to prove that Facebook mishandled users' information, and that its privacy policies are inappropriate. Other presentational devices include the use of quantification in "everything" and "70 million Americans", the attributive adjectives "private direct", and the verbs "have taken", and "ran" to present the deeds done by Cambridge Analytica in a bad light. Adaptation to audience demand is also realized through the use of the attributive adjective "significant" and the verb "deceived" to underscore the fact that Facebook has a serious deficiency in protecting users' personal details and has not taken the necessary and appropriate measures that should have been taken since 2015 when it knew about this breach. The implication is that Facebook persistently and deliberately misuses people's personal data.

#### Extract (16)

...this practice of making bold and engaging promises about changes and practices, and then the reality of how Facebook has operated in the real world, are in persistent tension... And there are...examples where there have been things brought to your attention, where Facebook...has said we're going to change our practices and our policies...policies aren't worth the paper they're written on if Facebook doesn't enforce them. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

In this extract, Zuckerberg is introduced to self-contradictory positions adopted by Facebook regarding its policies with respect to users' information. To adapt to the demands of the audience, some presentational devices are used. Inclusive "we", which refers to the people running Facebook, and the possessive determiner "our" are used to directly level accusations of dishonesty and irresponsibility at Zuckerberg and the Facebook team. The lexical items "practices" and "policies" are repeated twice to shed light on the two most crucial aspects that Facebook has to pay close attention to and work hard to correct the mistakes made regarding them. The attributive adjectives "bold" and "engaging" are used to ironically describe the promises made by Facebook so as to show that they are false promises that are never fulfilled. The aim is to prove that the people responsible for Facebook, including Zuckerberg, are not sincere in making any changes in their policies and practices.

This is also indicated by the use of the attributive adjective "persistent" which is used to assert the conflict between the words and deeds of Facebook and thus prove that Facebook deliberately mishandles users' data.

#### Extract (17)

The 87 million accounts extracted...are just the beginning, with, likely, dozens of other third parties that have accessed this information...you gave permission to mine the data of some 87 million users, based on the deceptive consent of just a fraction of that number...Why should they trust you again with their likes, their loves, their lives? Users trusted Facebook to prioritize...data security, and that trust has been shattered...every time we saw what precautions you have or...have not taken, your company is caught unprepared and ready to issue another apology. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11)

In extract (17), some presentational devices are used to orient to the preferences of the audience concerning holding Zuckerberg responsible for the Cambridge Analytica data breach issue. These devices include using inclusive "we" to include the Congressmen and the hearing and watching audience as well as using the lexical item "users", which is repeated twice, to represent the people whose data was stolen by Cambridge Analytica via generic reference to promote unity and solidarity with the audience. The second person pronoun "you" is repeated three times to directly criticize Zuckerberg. Criticism of Zuckerberg is also expressed using quantification in "87 million", which is repeated twice, hyperbole in "dozens", and the attributive adjective "deceptive" to emphasize the gross negligence in handling users' private information. Other presentational devices are used to criticize Zuckerberg and indicate the adverse effect of prioritizing profit over data privacy and security. These are: the use of the predicative adjectives "unprepared" and "ready", and the verb "shattered". Moreover, the rhetorical question "Why should...their lives?" is employed to elicit agreement concerning the propositions expressed in these questions, namely the inability of users to trust this platform or believe the promises made by the Facebook team to change the practices followed to protect their information. Therefore, the rhetorical questions help construct a sense of shared beliefs, harmony and unity between the views held by members of Congress and the audience they represent.

In the hearings, Zuckerberg attempts to respond to the enquiries and refute the accusations made against him by defending himself and his company by means of argumentation. Therefore, in his responses, he advances arguments to overcome the criticisms and doubts of the Congressmen. These are: shifting blame, justifying practices, and explicating policies and actions. The following extracts demonstrate these arguments.

### Extract (18)

...people signed into that app expecting to share the data with Kogan, and then he...in violation of our policies and in violation of people's expectations, sold it to...Cambridge Analytica...what I think people are rightfully very upset about is that an app developer that people had shared data with sold it to someone else... (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11)

Extract (18) shows that Zuckerberg seeks to shift the blame for the data breach onto Cambridge Analytica's Aleksandar Kogan. To meet the preferences of the watching and hearing audience, he uses some presentational devices. For example, Professor Kogan is represented via nomination using his surname, and Cambridge Analytica is represented via indetermination using "someone" to indicate that the blame for what happened lies primarily with Professor Kogan and the company where he works. To show concern and care for Facebook users, they are represented through indetermination by using "people" and repeating it four times. Moreover, the lexical item "violation" is repeated twice to assert that Kogan is the one who should be blamed for breaking Facebook rules and betraying users' trust. Epistemic modality is used in "I think" to show that the proposition that follows represents Zuckerberg's own judgment and opinion. Exclusive "we", which refers to the Facebook team, is repeated twice, and the intensifier "very" are used to try to absolve the people running Facebook from the blame and assure the Congressmen and the audience that Facebook is not the main culprit. The adverb "rightfully" and the intensifier "very" in "very upset" are used to create empathy and communion with the audience, and show that Zuckerberg understands how users feel, shares their feeling of anger, and believes they have every right to be upset.

### Extract (19)

I think it's pretty much impossible...to start a company in your dorm room and then grow it to be at the scale that we're at now without making some mistakes... Cambridge Analytica wasn't using our services in 2015...as of the time that we learned about their activity in 2015, they weren't an advertiser. They weren't running pages. So we actually had nothing to ban. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

In this extract, Zuckerberg attempts to justify the practices adopted whether in running Facebook in general or in the Cambridge Analytica incident in particular. To this end, he adapts to the audience demand by using a number of presentational devices. The assertive used in "...they weren't...pages", and epistemic modality in "I think" serve to express Zuckerberg's view, high affinity and commitment to the proposition expressed to try to convince the audience of the truth of what is said and justify Facebook practices. Exclusive "we" is repeated three times to acknowledge that mistakes are bound in running Facebook. In addition, the intensifier "pretty much" is used to emphasize the high possibility and even inevitability of the

occurrence of mistakes, and thus justify any practices or policies that might be unsatisfactory to users. The lexical item "ban" is used to assure the Congressmen and Facebook users that had Cambridge Analytica been an advertiser in 2015 or ran pages, Facebook would have banned it. Thus, Zuckerberg indirectly tries to justify not taking action against Cambridge Analytica in 2015.

#### Extract (20)

...the two most important things that we're doing are locking down the platform to make sure that developers can't get access to that much data so this can't happen again going forward...going backwards we need to investigate every single app that might have had access to a large amount of people's data... (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

In extract (20), Zuckerberg explicates the policies implemented and actions carried out to protect users from any harm that might be done to their data. To orient to the demands of the audience, which consists of the Congressmen and Facebook users, he employs different presentational devices. For example, exclusive "we" is repeated twice to assert that Zuckerberg and all the people responsible for running Facebook are determined to deal with and put an end to any misuse of the information found on Facebook to spread disinformation or affect elections. The lexical item "data" is repeated twice to show that it is a major concern for Facebook. Third parties are represented via generic reference in "developers" whereas users are represented using indeterminateness in "people's" to make a generalization so as to indicate that the focus of attention is on all third parties that might misuse people's information as well as on all users who have trusted Facebook and believed that their data is safe on this platform. Antonymy is employed in "forward" and "backward" to assert that Facebook has already taken certain past and future procedures regarding the Cambridge Analytica issue to ensure that users' data is safe on Facebook. Presentational devices also include the use of the attributive adjectives "important" and "large". "Important" is preceded by the adverb "most" to create the superlative form to emphasize the importance of the measures taken to deal with the Cambridge Analytica problem. The attributive adjective "large" is used to try to show Zuckerberg's consideration for, and understanding of, people's anger by acknowledging that Cambridge Analytica misused a lot of users' personal details.

#### **5.4 The Concluding Stage**

In this stage, the chairmen of the committees on the two days of the hearing close it – the hearing – by highlighting the importance of accepting the arguments made in the hearings. Zuckerberg is encouraged to keep his promises, protect users' privacy, and suggest names of CEOs whose hearings can be helpful in dealing with issues that are of major concern such as net neutrality. Extracts (21) and (22) demonstrate these choices of topical potential.



### Extract (21)

Mr. Zuckerberg's answered a lot of questions today but there are also a lot of promises to follow up with some of our members...I think it's going to be hard for us to fashion solutions to solve some of this stuff until we have some of those answers...as you get those answers, you will be able to forward those to us and it'll help shape our thinking in terms of...where we go from here. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

In this extract, the chairman adapts to the audience demand by using a number of presentational devices in the closing statement of the hearing. For instance, Zuckerberg is directly addressed using the second person pronoun "you" which is repeated twice to show that the changes that need to be made in the practices of Facebook are in his hands only since he is the chairman and CEO of the company. Exclusive "we", the possessive determiner "our" and the object pronoun "us" are repeated two times each to indicate the insistence and determination of the Congressmen to follow up the Cambridge Analytica issue and pass the necessary legislation to protect people's data on Facebook. Moreover, the lexeme "promises", the antonyms "questions" and "answers", and the adjective "hard" are used to highlight the importance of Zuckerberg's testimony in solving the data breach problem as this will help boost faith in the country's government and institutions. The importance of Zuckerberg's cooperation in solving the problem is indicated by the use of the quantifier "a lot of" which is repeated twice to show that Zuckerberg answered several questions on the privacy issue and also made many promises to cooperate which must be kept in order to regain users' trust.

### Extract (22)

I would welcome your suggestions of other technology CEOs we might benefit from hearing from...These are all important. They are very controversial. We're fully cognizant of that. We want to get it right, and — and so we appreciate your comments and testimony today. (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 11)

In this extract, the preferences of the audience, which includes Facebook users, are met through some devices. For example, exclusive "we", which excludes the speaker, i.e. the chairman, from the audience and thus refers to all members of Congress, is repeated four times to underscore the efforts devoted to addressing users' needs and solve all Internet-related problems. Furthermore, the quantifier "all", the intensifiers "very" and "fully", and the predicative adjectives "important", "controversial" and "cognizant" are used to show knowledge and deep conviction of the seriousness, significance, and sensitive nature of privacy issues. This reflects a desire to win the support and trust of the audience and encourage Zuckerberg to provide the information that can help the Congressmen introduce and implement legislative measures, and do what is necessary "to get it right". The lexical items "suggestions", "comments", and "testimony" serve to show Zuckerberg the importance

of the hearings and urge him to cooperate, thereby implying that if he does so, he can regain people's trust.

Although it is not in Zuckerberg's hands to determine the outcome of the hearings, he tries to win the support, sympathy and trust of the Congressmen and all Facebook users in the concluding statement, which he makes in one hearing only, by stressing the desire to make sure bad actors do not misuse users' data and that people's speech is protected. This is shown in the following extract.

#### Extract (23)

If there is an eminent threat of harm, we're going to take conservative position on that and make sure that we flag that and understand that more broadly...I want to make sure that we provide people with the most voice possible. I want the widest possible expression... (Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government, April 10)

Zuckerberg's attempt to adapt to the demands of the watching, reading and listening audience, in this extract, is seen in the use of some presentational devices. These include the use of exclusive "we" which is repeated three times to assert the concern of everybody working in Facebook with correcting the mistakes made and ensuring that no harm is done to the users' information. To show the audience that he will personally see to it that users' data and speech are protected, Zuckerberg repeats the phrase "I want" twice. Facebook users and the people running and working in Facebook are represented as unspecified individuals through the use of indetermination seen in "people" to underscore Zuckerberg's desire to make all the people in his company do all they can to regain users' trust. The comparative and superlative forms are another presentational devices used by Zuckerberg to emphasize the truth of what he says. The former, seen in "more broadly", shows that Zuckerberg knows that the people running his company did not do a good enough job with respect to taking action against third-party developers. The latter, used in "the most voice possible" and "the widest possible expression", emphasizes Zuckerberg's firm intention to take all possible and needed measures to guarantee free speech. This is also indicated by using the attributive adjective "conservative". The attributive adjective "eminent" implies that sometimes there are threats of harm that might go unnoticed. Zuckerberg tries here to win the sympathy of the audience as he wants to make them understand that if Facebook does not take steps to face bad actors, this is attributed to the inability to detect some threats of harm.

## **6. Conclusion**

Using van Eemeren's (2018) Pragma-Dialectical theory of argumentation, the present study has examined how strategic maneuvering is employed by members of Congress and Mark Zuckerberg in the congressional hearings held on April 10 and April 11, 2018 to account for obtaining the data of 87 million Facebook users without their knowledge or consent at the hands of Cambridge Analytica which misused this information for political purposes. It has investigated how speakers achieve dialectical

reasonableness and rhetorical effectiveness with respect to the three aspects of strategic maneuvering, namely topical potential, adaptation to audience demand and presentational devices in the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the opening stage of the discussion process.

In the confrontation stage, members of Congress select two issues to discuss the Cambridge Analytica breach. These are: the ignorance of the users with respect to how their data is used, and the failure of Zuckerberg's company to monitor third-party developers. They also express their standpoint concerning Facebook policies and practices regarding users' data. In this respect, they tackle two issues, the first of which is that Facebook does not show concern about the privacy of users' information. The second issue is that the company prioritizes profit over privacy. To limit the disagreement space in this stage, members of Congress leave implicit the negative results that the Cambridge Analytica scandal can have on Facebook users. As for Zuckerberg, he restricts the zone of disagreement in the confrontation stage by selecting issues that can be easily dealt with and accepted by the audience. Thus, disagreement is presented as being a conflict over facts rather than values. As for the topical potential selected by Zuckerberg in this stage, he shows concern about not making mistakes in handling the personal details of Facebook users. To defend this standpoint, he selects two issues, namely showing the need to make changes in how Facebook views its responsibility as a company and explicating the measures taken to correct the mistakes made in handling users' data. Zuckerberg also explains the standpoint of his company regarding some vital issues such as data privacy and foreign interference in elections. The presentational devices used by members of Congress in the confrontation stage include passivization, modality, the possessive determiners "their" and "your", attributive and predicative adjectives, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, inclusive "we", significant lexical choices, the second person pronoun, repetition and generic reference to represent social actors. The devices employed by Zuckerberg are: repetition, the possessive determiner "our", hyperbole, attributive adjectives, exclusive "we", adverbs, superlatives, assertives, quantifiers, and social actor representation via indetermination.

In the opening stage, strategic maneuvering regarding topical potential takes place when speakers establish a zone of agreement and advantageous starting points that will be accepted by other speakers in the critical discussion. To do so in Zuckerberg's hearings, members of Congress address three issues. These are: the importance of Zuckerberg's testimony given the positive and crucial role played by Facebook in people's lives, the inappropriateness of using people's information with no permission, and the necessity of not showing more concern with profit than privacy. Zuckerberg selects from the topical potential available in this stage three issues that help create an agreement zone and make the audience, both members of Congress and Facebook users, accept his propositions. These issues are: apologizing for the data breach scandal, shedding light on the advantages of his platform, and ensuring that it will not be used to do any harm. The presentational devices employed by the Congressmen in the opening stage are: quantifiers, adverbs, hyperbole, repetition, the second person pronoun, impersonal "you", the possessive determiner

"your", exclusive "we", predicative adjectives, the three-part list, personification, important lexical choices, passive agent deletion, assertives and representing social actors via indetermination, aggregation and exclusion. The presentational devices used by Zuckerberg in this stage are: the first person singular pronoun "I", the possessive determiner "my", repetition, assertive and commissive speech acts, exclusive "we", hyperbole, attributive adjectives, and social actor representation via indetermination.

In the argumentation stage, members of Congress ask Zuckerberg about the policy adopted by Facebook regarding a number of issues, including the privacy of users' information. Concerning topical potential, they put forward arguments which are used to create a line of attack and support their standpoints. The arguments include attributing propositions to sources to provide evidence for earlier deeds, showing self-contradictory positions held by Facebook and criticizing Zuckerberg. In this stage, Zuckerberg attempts to defend himself and his company against accusations by advancing arguments that serve to overcome criticisms of members of Congress. The presentational devices used by members of Congress are: repetition, the use of quantification, attributive and predicative adjectives, the possessive determiner "our", significant lexical choices, hyperbole, inclusive "we", rhetorical questions, the second person pronoun and social actor representation through nomination, functionalization, and generic reference. The following are the presentational choices made by Zuckerberg in the argumentation stage: repetition, epistemic modality, adverbs, exclusive "we", assertives, intensifiers, antonyms, attributive adjectives, superlatives, significant lexemes, and representing social actors via nomination, indetermination, and generic reference.

In the concluding stage, the chairmen of the Senate's Commerce and Judiciary committees and the House Energy and Commerce Committee assert the importance of accepting the arguments made in the two-day hearings. They urge Zuckerberg to fulfil the promises made in his testimony, protect users' data and suggest names of CEOs whose hearing can help in tackling crucial issues like net neutrality. In his closing statement, which is made in one hearing only, Zuckerberg attempts to win the support, sympathy and trust not only of members of Congress but also of Facebook users by emphasizing his desire to ensure that people's information and speech are protected. The presentational devices employed by members of Congress include: second person pronoun, repetition, exclusive "we", the possessive determiner "our", the object pronoun "us", antonyms, quantifiers, important lexical choices, epistemic modality, intensifiers and predicative adjectives. Zuckerberg uses the following presentational devices: exclusive "we", repetition, comparatives, superlatives, attributive adjectives, and social actor representation via indetermination.

The study has shown that members of Congress address issues that are of primary concern to all Facebook users and require Zuckerberg to provide an account for them. Zuckerberg, on his part, seeks to explain the practices of his company with respect to these issues to clarify his position so as not to lose users' trust, win acceptance of his policies, and try to end the discussion in his favour. Because the arguments presented by members of Congress and Zuckerberg are geared towards a

multiple, broad and heterogeneous audience, in every discussion stage the topics selected and presentational devices used are determined by the adaptation made to audience demand. For Zuckerberg, the audience consist not only of the Congressmen but also Facebook users in general and those who were affected by the Cambridge Analytica data breach in particular. The watching, reading and listening audience are the main audience of members of Congress. Accordingly, in the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage, members of Congress and Mark Zuckerberg maneuver strategically to strike a balance between the dialectical goals of maintaining reasonableness and the rhetorical ones of achieving effectiveness and persuasiveness to end the discussion favourably by selecting from the available topical potential, meeting audience demand, and making opportune presentational choices. However, it seems that Zuckerberg was unsuccessful in employing strategic maneuvering since Facebook has been fined to £500,000 for the role it played in the Cambridge Analytica data scandal. Moreover, the institutional conventions of the activity type of congressional hearings determine the topics and presentational choices allowed to make the necessary adaptations to the preferences of the audience.

The analysis has revealed that van Eemeren's (2018) Pragma-Dialectical argumentation theory is applicable to congressional hearings. Therefore, future research can apply it to other kinds of argumentative discourse. For instance, it can be used to examine strategic maneuvering in the speech of politicians across different cultures in different types of argumentative discourse like the Parliament and debates. Future research can also compare how politicians and non-politicians maneuver strategically in different contexts such as television talk shows and interviews. Argumentation that takes place in heated discussions and meetings in workplaces can also be examined. Research is also needed to study gender differences in maneuvering strategically in various political and non-political argumentative discourse genres.

### **Transcription Convention**

... omitted speech

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