

## **Strategic Maneuvering in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*: A Comparative Critical Stylistic Study**

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**Abstract:** This study examines strategic maneuvering in 14 online articles on artificial intelligence in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*. The study explores how the different writers employ the three aspects of strategic maneuvering, namely topical potential, audience demand, and presentational devices. The data are carefully selected and have specific criteria as the articles are only argumentative opinion articles on artificial intelligence covering the span of four years as of 2020 till 2023. To this end, the study relies on Van Eemeren's (2018) model of strategic maneuvering along with Van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Henkemans' (2002) taxonomy of fallacies, Wodak and Meyer's (2001) taxonomy of topoi, van Dijk's (2012) argumentative moves, and Jeffries' (2010) critical stylistic model. The article fills a gap in the literature by integrating argumentation and critical stylistics. In addition, the researcher suggests specific elements to explore the audience demand aspect and the presentational devices aspect. Results show that the two newspapers balance between reasonableness and effectiveness by making certain topical choices, meeting the audience's preferences and utilizing suitable presentational devices. Besides, the writers keep warning the readers of the negative side and potential dangers of artificial intelligence which stresses their disapproval of unplanned automation.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, critical stylistics, opinion articles, strategic maneuvering

### **1. Introduction**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a cause célèbre in the entire world. Big tech companies like Apple, Microsoft and Tesla compete each other by launching new apps and tools to win as many customers as possible. The continuous development of AI has resulted in dividing the world into AI proponents and AI opponents. These two parties are evident in different types of discourse especially opinion articles. Different opinion columnists have their own stance toward AI and argue for or against employing AI in everyday life. Hence, this study investigates how different English writers maneuver strategically to persuade the readers and influence their stance regarding AI. To achieve this goal, 14 opinion articles are taken from *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* as of 2020 up till 2023. The data under investigation are analyzed via Van Eemeren's (2018) model of strategic maneuvering by means of an eclectic approach.

### **2. Objectives of the study**

The present study aims at extracting the three aspects of strategic maneuvering in the selected data. It attempts to reveal the most prominent argumentative devices in

the English articles. In addition, the study examines the impact of critical stylistic tools on the persuasion process. Finally, the study seeks to reveal where the English writers in both newspapers stand when it comes to AI.

### 3. Research questions

1. How is the topical potential aspect realized in the selected articles of *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* to allow writers to maneuver strategically?
2. How do the English writers of the selected articles strategically adapt their discourse to audience demand in the different newspapers?
3. What are the most prominent fallacies, topoi, and argumentative moves employed strategically as presentational devices in the selected newspapers?
4. How do the tools of naming and describing, modality and negation persuade the reader in the selected data?
5. Where do the English writers of the selected newspapers stand when it comes to AI?

### 4. Data selection

*The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* are particularly chosen owing to their wide readership and global impact. *The Guardian* is a British daily newspaper. It is a general-interest newspaper that covers national and international news in different fields including politics, sports and business. *The Financial Times* is a British daily financial newspaper based in London that provides essential news and analysis to various companies around the world. The study examines the similarities and differences between the two newspapers which share the same language and differ in genre.

Six opinion articles are derived from *The Guardian* and eight opinion articles are taken from *The Financial Times*. The selected articles are carefully chosen. First of all, the articles are only opinion articles and not news reports or features. In other words, editorials and opinion articles are the focus of the study. Second, all the selected opinion articles tackle AI or AI tools. Third, the selected opinion articles are argumentative in nature. This means that the writer has a certain standpoint which he/she defends against another party. The writer has written his/her article on purpose to establish a difference of opinion with a previous point of view. Thus, expository articles are excluded from the present study. This criterion is of utmost importance and it is the reason behind the limited number of articles in the study. Dozens of articles have been written on AI, however, only a few articles have tackled the issue from an argumentative perspective. Fourth, the selected articles cover the span of four years as of 2020 till 2023. These years are the ones in which many AI inventions have invaded the market. As a result, several newspapers started focusing on the topic of AI. Thus, the selected articles meet the previous criteria. The data statistics of the present study are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Data statistics

Point of comparison	The Guardian	The Financial Times	Total
No. of articles	6	8	14
No. of words	5600	5800	11,400

## **5. Definition of key terms**

### **5.1 Strategic maneuvering**

At the beginning of the 21st century, Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002: 382) attempted to integrate both the dialectical approach and the rhetorical approach in argumentation and prove that they complement one another by introducing the concept of strategic maneuvering. Strategic maneuvering 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: 40). In strategic maneuvering, the arguer seeks to strike a balance between reasonableness and effectiveness by means of a dialectical perspective and a rhetorical perspective respectively (Van Eemeren 2010: 42). In a difference of opinion, people attempt to resolve it reasonably but still in their own favor (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002: 134-135). Through strategic maneuvering, parties are expected to select the material that suits them best, appeal to the audience, and present their views in the most effective ways. Hence, strategic maneuvering draws on three main aspects namely topical potential, audience demand, and presentational devices (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002: 139).

First of all, topical potential refers to “the collection of possible argumentative moves that are as it were available to be made at a particular point in the discourse” (Van Eemeren 2018: 112). Topical potential is concerned with the topics that the arguer selects (Van Eemeren 2010: 96). The possibilities are fluid and open in terms of topical potential. In other words, there are no fixed lists of topics to choose from (Van Eemeren 2010: 96). Second, speakers or writers need to adjust their argumentative moves in a way that appeals to the attitudes of the audience (Van Eemeren 2018: 112). In argumentative discourse, it is common that the audience listening to a speech have different backgrounds. This diversity means that the arguer needs to exert an effort to identify the preferences of the audience and adjust the speech to comply with such preferences (Van Eemeren 2010: 108 - 110). The contribution of the present study is suggesting a concrete list of elements that signify audience demand. In this regard, the audience demand aspect is classified into ethical appeal, emotional appeal, logical appeal, and aesthetic appeal. Third, presentational devices are “the aggregate of stylistic and other means of expression that can be utilized in giving presence to an argumentative move” (Van Eemeren 2018: 112). Van Eemeren (2010: 120) clarifies that there are explicit and implicit presentational devices. For example, speech acts can be explicit or implicit via the communicative function of the

statement. In the present study, the presentational devices are fallacies, topoi, argumentative moves, and critical stylistic devices. The purpose of choosing such devices is to unveil the ideology of the text producers.

## 5.2 Critical stylistics

Critical stylistics is a model concerned with how language conveys social meaning (Olatuwoye 2015: 88). According to Jeffries (2016: 159), critical stylistics is “text-based stylistics with a particular (critical) purpose”. Through critical stylistics, Jeffries (2010: 16) brings the best of stylistics and critical linguistics together. The aim of such model is to expose the ideology of the text producer as well as to reveal what kind of world the text represents (Jeffries 2016: 160). Jeffries (2010: 1) developed critical stylistics so as to provide the reader with concrete accessible tools from the field of stylistics. Such tools of analysis are known as textual-conceptual functions (Jeffries 2014: 409). These textual-conceptual functions are a combination of textual triggers or features and ideational function. The list of these functions may not be complete as there is the potential for other languages and cultures to have their own conceptual functions that are different from those in English (Jeffries 2014: 412). Among those tools are naming and describing, negating, and hypothesizing which are the focus of the present study.

Naming and describing are concerned with how texts name and describe people or things in certain ways through the choice of nouns, noun phrases, and nominalization (Jeffries 2014: 413). Negating refers to a conceptual practice that allows the reader or hearer to create a version of the situation that is at odds with the one existing in the text. It has a persuasive power as it could be employed to scare people of possible scenarios or to persuade them to buy a certain product (Jeffries 2010: 106-107). Hypothesizing is realized through modality and conditionality as well as other similar mechanisms (Jeffries 2016: 165). Epistemic modality is related to the speaker’s certainty in or doubt about a proposition. Deontic modality is built on the idea of obligation. Boulomaic modality is based on desire (Jeffries 2010: 116-117).

## 6. Literature review

Several studies have investigated strategic maneuvering in different types of discourse. Rivolta (2011) investigates the impact of American political bias in four American magazine opinion articles concerned with the U.S. Supreme Court decision concerning the treatment of detained unlawful enemy combatants at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. Results show that liberals use less provocative presentational devices than the conservatives. Besides, the party with more to contradict or to overcome tends to draw on rhetorical strategies to resolve the dispute.

In terms of political discourse, Keinpointner (2013) investigates thirteen of Obama’s speeches and three of his books to assess them in terms of rationality and efficiency. Results show that Obama’s attempts to change the traditional style of political rhetoric by his orientation towards both consensus and universal values. Obama also practices self-criticism to win his audience.

Strategic maneuvering is found in legal discourse as well. El-Zouka (2019) examines strategic maneuvering in Mark Zuckerberg's hearings before the Congress after the Cambridge Analytica breach scandal. Results show that members of Congress tackle issues of importance to all Facebook users while Zuckerberg attempts to win the users and try to end the discussion to his favor.

Al-Hindawi and Kadhim (2022) focus on strategic maneuvering in spoken religious discourse, specifically in the speech of Imam Al Hassan son of Ali Bin Abi Talib after the truce between him and Muaawiya. The findings show that he uses certain strategies like high-status power and speech acts to maneuver strategically and affect the audience.

As for social media, Nadeem (2023) integrates narrative positioning and strategic maneuvering to examine a TED Talk released in 2014 about practicing emotional first aid. The analysis reveals that the general context and the knowledge gap between TED speakers and the audience makes the utilization of narrative arguments effective and persuasive.

Second, when it comes to critical stylistics, several studies have tackled Jeffries' (2010) tools in journalism. Olaluwoye (2015) explores how minority groups are represented in two Nigerian print media, *The Nation* and *The Guardian*. Results show that the tools of enumerating and exemplifying, assuming and implying, and presenting processes and states are used to a great extent. The articles uncover how the society views the different groups and reveal the society's attitude towards them.

Similarly, Hamad and Al-Nasrawi (2022) conduct a critical stylistic analysis on news articles from *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. The study aims at detecting which textual conceptual tools are employed to reflect ideologies regarding digital addiction. Results show five tools are used which are naming and describing; representing actions, states, and events; prioritizing; presenting others' speech and thoughts; and representing time, space, and society. Moreover, the ideology of the writers is mainly to warn people against the negative impacts of digital addiction.

Critical stylistic analysis is not restricted to written media discourse. Some studies have tackled the linguistic choices in literary genres. Hussein and Hussein (2021) explore two soliloquies by Shakespeare's Hamlet from a critical stylistic perspective. Results show that most verbs in the soliloquies are material action verbs to express intent and volition. Two part lists are employed to affect the hearer. Deontic modality is mainly used to express obligation such as the death of Claudius.

Likewise, Sarhan (2023) examines gender representation in El Shamy's (1980) *Folktales in Egypt* based on the tools of naming and describing and the representation of action, events, and states. Results show that men are seen as agents who carry actions while women are represented rather than being involved in actions.

As shown in the previous studies, only one discipline is included. Hence, the present study fills a gap in the literature by integrating strategic maneuvering and critical stylistics and proving the link between them through concrete examples. The study takes into consideration the distinctive features of digital media and how

they enhance the persuasive message of the argument. Such aspect is sometimes overlooked in many researches. In addition, the researcher concretizes the aspects of strategic maneuvering by suggesting specific criteria, which is a suggested addition to Van Eemeren and Houtlosser's (2002) model.

## 7. Methodology

The present study is descriptive and analytic in nature. It relies on the pragma-dialectical approach and critical stylistics. The study follows a mixed approach. First of all, the three aspects of strategic maneuvering are extracted. The researcher focuses on the topical potential in the two newspapers. Then, the audience demand aspect is investigated in the selected data. After that, the researcher extracts the presentational devices in the data which are divided into argumentative devices and critical stylistic tools. The argumentative presentational devices are the fallacies, topoi, and argumentative moves found in each article. For this purpose, Van Eemeren et al.'s (2002) taxonomy of fallacies, Wodak and Meyer's (2001) taxonomy of topoi, and Van Dijk's (2012) argumentative moves are utilized respectively. In addition, critical stylistic devices constitute significant presentational devices. Hence, Jeffries' (2010) critical stylistic model is chosen as another tool of analysis in the study. The study explores the similarities and differences between the two British newspapers in terms of strategic maneuvering and critical stylistics.

## 8. Results and discussion

### 8.1 Topical potential in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*

Topical potential means the main topics tackled in an argumentative discourse. By investigating the topical potential in both newspapers, it is found that *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* share a number of topics. The topical potential in both newspapers is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Topical potential in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*

Main topic	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Financial Times</i>
Debate/controversy	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
The negative impact of AI	6 (100%)	7 (87.5%)
The duality of man versus machine	5 (83%)	6 (75%)
Background information about AI/AI tools	4 (67%)	5 (62.5%)
Regulating AI/AI companies	5 (83%)	4 (50%)
The positive impact of AI	0 (0%)	3 (37.5%)

In Table 2, the first column includes the main topic that is tackled. The second and third columns indicate the number of articles that touch on such topic and the percentage is inserted between brackets in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* respectively. To start with, debate or controversy is the most prominent topic in both newspapers. All of the selected articles refer to a sort of debate or controversy related to AI. This topic is what makes the article argumentative in nature. A difference of opinion is an essential component in any argumentative discourse. Second, the negative impact of AI is found in all of the articles of *The Guardian* and almost all of the articles of *The Financial Times*. This shows that the writers of both newspapers are pessimistic about the dark side of AI. They are against the hasty development of AI tools. Third, the duality of man and nature is evident in the majority of articles of both newspapers. The similarities and differences between man and machine are a topic of interest here. The writers are concerned with distinguishing between what man can and cannot do and what a machine can and cannot do.

Fourth, background information about AI or AI tools is also evident in several articles in the two British newspapers. This shows that the writers are keen on providing the reader with the necessary information to be able to understand the article and at the same time be up to date. Fifth, the idea of regulating AI itself or AI companies concerns many writers in both newspapers. Since the negative impact of AI is crystal clear, regulating AI and AI companies is a must in the writers' point of view. Finally, the positive impact of AI is the least frequent topic in both newspapers. It is absent or almost absent in the two newspapers. This shows that the dark side is more evident than the positive side. Moreover, the continuous development of AI leads to unveiling the cons of employing AI and thus, experts and ordinary citizens start to fear it.

## **8.2 Audience demand in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times***

The audience demand aspect is concerned with adapting to the preferences of the listeners and readers. The researcher classifies such aspect into ethical appeal, emotional appeal, logical appeal, and aesthetic appeal. Thus, writers attempt to affect their readers through the concept of 'image', emotions, logic, and visuals. Table 3 summarizes the audience demand aspect in both newspapers. In Table 3, the first column includes the appeal itself. The second column indicates the realization or sub elements of the appeal. The third and fourth columns include the number of articles that exhibit such sub element in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* respectively and the percentage of each is inserted between brackets.

First of all, the ethical appeal is strong in both newspapers and evident through the writers' identity, links to other content, keywords/topic, comments section, and credible sources. Each article includes the name, image, and post of the writer. This shows that each of the newspapers is proud of and confident in its writers. In addition, the writer is either a columnist or a specialist in the field of AI. This increases the credibility of the newspaper itself. Links to other content or simply hyperlinks are common in both newspapers. This allows the reader to know

more information about any difficult term or any new AI tool. Keywords or topics are found at the end of each of the selected articles. This feature facilitates the searching process and allows the readers to find articles that belong to the same topic easily. The comments section is a prominent element in both newspapers that gives space to the readers to express their opinions. This proves that both newspapers respect the readers' rights and the idea of freedom of expression. Finally, credible sources are included in the articles to increase the credibility of what is said. Hence, the ethical appeal in both *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* is crystal clear allowing the writers to maneuver strategically and persuade the readers through the concept of 'image'.

Table 3. Audience demand in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*

Appeal	Realization	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Financial Times</i>
Ethical appeal	Writer's identity	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Links to other content	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Keywords/Topics	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Comments section	5 (83%)	8 (100%)
	Credible sources	6 (100%)	7 (87.5%)
Emotional appeal	Catchy headline	4 (67%)	5 (62.5%)
	Imagery	4 (67%)	5 (62.5%)
	Pull quotes	2 (33%)	0 (0%)
Logical appeal	Simple language	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Definitions/General information	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Evidence from real life	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Numbers/Statistics	3 (50%)	4 (50%)
Aesthetic appeal	Font colors	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Images	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Special effects	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Contrast between text and background	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Division into short paragraphs	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Drop caps	6 (100%)	0 (0%)

Second, the emotional appeal has a significant role in the audience demand aspect and is realized through catchy headlines, imagery, and pull quotes. First of all, a catchy headline refers to a headline with surprising, shocking, or intriguing information. It encourages the reader to read the article out of curiosity. It could be a question or an ambiguous statement that is counter

expectation. For instance, one of the writers of the *The Guardian* gives her article the following title: “A Fake News Frenzy: Why ChatGPT Could Be Disastrous for Truth in Journalism”. This highlights the writer’s lack of confidence in AI. Second, imagery through metaphors, similes, and personifications is evident in the majority of articles of the two newspapers. For instance, in one of the selected articles of *The Financial Times*, the writer cites what an assistant professor says about the negative impact of AI warning that it is “a recipe for disaster for the students’ self-esteem”. Using a metaphor here intensifies the dark side of AI and makes the idea closer to the reader. The writer does not approve of AI’s harmful effects on students. Finally, pull quotes is a feature that is found in only two articles in *The Guardian*. Pull quotes refer to sentences chosen by the writer that appear in a bigger font next to the different parts of the article and are inserted between quotation marks. They summarize the main ideas and most influential parts in the articles. Thus, the emotional appeal involves playing on the emotions of the readers through catchy headlines, imagery, and pull quotes.

Third, the logical appeal stresses the role of reasoning in affecting the reader. It is realized through simple language, definitions or general information, and numbers and/or statistics. To start with, simple language is a prominent feature in all of the selected articles. Even if the writer is a specialist in AI, he/she does not use complicated language and delivers the meaning to the readers in simple terms. Furthermore, simple language serves the persuasive effect of the article. If the reader understands the article, he/she can be easily affected. By contrast, the use of complicated language makes the reader refrain from reading the article especially if he/she is not familiar with AI. Second, definitions and general information complement the previous element. Several writers resort to defining terms like AI to make sure that the reader understands the whole article. General information allows the reader to trace the history of AI tools and their development. Thus, the big picture is presented to the reader when it comes to AI. Evidence from real life is the third element in the logical appeal aspect. Mentioning examples from everyday life makes what the writer says more believable and trustworthy. Finally, numbers and/or statistics constitute part of the logical appeal. It is found that half of the articles of both *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* make use of such feature. This feature proves that the writer is knowledgeable and reads several researches and surveys. Thus, logical appeal is crystal clear in the selected articles through simple language, definitions or general information and numbers, and/or statistics.

Fourth, the aesthetic appeal addresses the readers’ sense of vision through font colors, images, special effects, the contrast between the text and the background, the division of the article into short paragraphs, and drop caps. First, both newspapers employ different font colors to grab the reader’s attention. For instance, the main text is in black in both newspapers and the hyperlinks are in orange in *The Guardian* and in blue in *The Financial Times*. This allows the reader to distinguish between the different parts of the article. Second, images are common in all of the selected opinion articles. It gives the reader a summary of the whole article and breaks the monotony in it. Third, special effects are evident in the two

newspapers through the bold effect and the italics effect. For instance, the headlines in both newspapers are in bold. Fourth, the contrast between the text and background facilitates the process of reading. The newspapers make use of a black text against a light background. Hence, this improves the readability of the article. Fifth, dividing the article into short paragraphs allows the reader to know the main idea of each paragraph and at the same time navigate through the text in an easy manner.

Finally, drop caps is a common feature in *The Guardian* only. A drop cap is a large capital letter used that is usually employed at the beginning of a paragraph or a section as a decorative element. This element makes the text more appealing and constitutes a welcoming message to the reader to enter the world of the article. Thus, font colors, images, special effects, the contrast between the text and the background, the division of the article into short paragraphs, and drop caps constitute the aesthetic appeal in the selected articles.

To sum up, *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* share a lot of elements concerning the audience demand aspect. However, *The Guardian* includes more elements as seen in the pull quotes and drop caps which improve the emotional impact and readability of the article.

### 8.3 Presentational devices in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*

As mentioned before, the presentational devices aspect in the present study is classified into argumentative and critical stylistic devices.

#### 8.3.1 Argumentative presentational devices in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*

Table 4 presents a summary of the most prominent fallacies, topoi, and argumentative moves identified in the two newspapers.

Table 4. Argumentative devices in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*

Category	Type	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Financial Times</i>
Fallacies	Exaggeration (Overgeneralization)	4 (67%)	6 (75%)
	Slippery slope	3 (50%)	4 (50%)
	Strawman fallacy	5 (83%)	3 (37.5%)
	Abusive variant	1 (17%)	3 (37.5%)
Topoi	Topos of reality	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Topos of disadvantage	3 (50%)	7 (87.5%)
	Topos of danger/threat	5 (83%)	4 (50%)
	Topos of advantage	2 (33%)	8 (100%)
Argumentative moves	Example/Illustration	6 (100%)	8 (100%)
	Evidentiality	6 (100%)	7 (87.5%)
	Comparison	2 (33%)	7 (87.5%)
	Number game	3 (50%)	4 (50%)

The first column specifies the general category, the second column identifies the specific type, and the third and fourth columns indicate the frequency of occurrence in the articles published by *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*, respectively. The writers of both newspapers employ these argumentative strategies to persuade their readers and achieve their intended rhetorical goals.

The writers of the two newspapers rely on certain fallacies. Overgeneralization as a subtype of exaggeration is evident in the majority of the articles. Writers tend to expose how AI evangelists exaggerate about its benefits or unveil how AI opponents exaggerate about the dangers of AI. For instance, in one of the editorials of *The Guardian*, the editorial board expose the “GPT-3 **hype**” highlighting that the CEO of OpenAI himself lowered people’s expectations. Slippery slope is another fallacy that is evident in half of the articles of both newspapers. Some writers show that some experts are worried about the potential effects of AI and expect things to get from bad to worse. For example, in one of the articles of *The Financial Times*, the writer mentions the concern of AI researchers that AI machines “**might** flood the internet with untruths, automate meaningful jobs and even threaten civilization”. Third, the strawman fallacy is used a lot by the writers of *The Guardian* and to some extent by the writers of *The Financial Times* to attack the standpoint of a certain party. For instance, in one of the articles of *The Guardian*, the writer mentions Lemoine Blake’s claim that AI is sentient. Then, the writer explicitly attacks the antagonist’s standpoint revealing that “Lemoine’s claims of sentience for LaMDA are ... entirely **fanciful**”. Thus, the writer directly weakens the antagonist’s view point. Finally, abusive variant is a fallacy that is not found a lot in both newspapers, however, it plays an important role in revealing the dark side of AI companies. For instance, in one of the articles of *The Financial Times*, the writer criticizes some managers who choose to ignore the harmful effects of AI to keep their profits. This proves the greed of such managers. Hence, writers include fallacies such as overgeneralization, slippery slope, strawman fallacy, and abusive variant to persuade the reader and maneuver strategically.

Concerning *topoi*, writers tend to rely on certain types. First, the *topos* of reality is the most prominent *topos* in both newspapers. Writers focus on matters of fact and reality as it is. For instance, one of the writers of *The Financial Times* opposes the science fiction view of humanoid robots and clarifies that “the **reality** is that humanoid robots remain lousy at interacting with us in the physical world in the varied and instinctive ways humans do”. Second, the *topos* of disadvantage plays a role in revealing the potential negative effect of AI. For example, in one of *The Guardian* articles, it is shown that it has taken a short time for ChatGPT “to have a **disruptive effect** on journalism”. This stresses the writer’s disapproval of using AI in journalism. Third, the *topos* of danger/threat complements the *topos* of disadvantage and reinforces the negative impact of AI as in “**the most immediate danger** is the role that AI data analysis and generation plays in spreading **disinformation** and **extremism** on social media” as stated in one of the articles of *The Guardian*. Again, the writer’s fear of AI is crystalized here. Finally, the *topos* of advantage is the least frequent *topos* in *The Guardian*, however, it is evident in

all of the articles of *The Financial Times*. The writers of the latter sometimes highlight the benefits of robots or AI and sometimes stress the pros of regulating AI. Hence, the writers make use of such topos for different purposes. For instance, one of writers uses such topos to stress the importance of regulation and how “Britain maintained its leading position” because of the published 1984 regulations to face infertility. Thus, the writer calls for regulating the tech sector to achieve similar results. Thus, the topos of reality, the topos of disadvantage, the topos of danger/threat, and the topos of advantage are found in the different articles of the two newspapers to stress the negative side of AI and the importance of regulating it. This allows writers to maneuver strategically and persuade the readers in a smooth way.

Regarding the argumentative moves, they complement the fallacies and topoi employed in the articles. First, example/illustration is an indispensable argumentative move in all of the articles. Writers rely on concrete examples to prove their point of view as in “the Ai-Da humanoid robot that gave evidence to a House of Lords committee earlier this month had to be rebooted halfway through the session to make sense” as stated in one of the articles of *The Financial Times*. This example sheds light on the limitations of AI robots. The writer here depicts AI robots as unreliable and thus does not trust their role in the society. Second, evidentiality is another significant argumentative move that supports the writers’ argument. For example, one of *The Financial Times* writers cites what a professor of computer science at Oxford university says in “These models have incredible capabilities. But they do not understand the world and are completely disembodied from the world”. These are the words of an AI expert who sheds light on the limitations of AI models. Third, comparison is an argumentative move that is employed a lot in *The Financial Times* articles and to a limited extent in *The Guardian* articles. The main purpose of using such move is to compare and contrast the capabilities and attitudes of human beings and machines. For example, in one of *The Financial Times* articles, the writer refers to “a call centre employee in the US who was monitored by AI, [and] she couldn’t work out why the algorithm was rating her poorly when her human supervisors had always given her good assessments”. Thus, it is clear that the calculations of AI are not always accurate. Finally, number game is employed in half of the articles of the two newspapers. For instance, in one of *The Guardian* articles, it is mentioned that after using ChatGPT, “the dormant BuzzFeed share price immediately surged **150%**”. Thus, numbers play an important role in persuading the reader. To sum up, example/illustration, evidentiality, comparison, and number game contribute to the persuasive effect of the argumentative articles.

### **8.3.2 Critical stylistic devices in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times***

In addition to the argumentative devices, the critical stylistic tools play a role in persuading the reader and achieving the writer’s goal. The tools that supplement the argumentative devices in the present study are naming and describing, modality, and negation. The frequency of each tool in the selected articles of the two British newspapers is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Critical stylistic tools in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*

Tool	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Financial Times</i>
Naming	34 (16%)	61(16%)
Describing	110 (50%)	219 (57%)
Modality	34 (16%)	45 (12%)
Negation	49 (39%)	59 (15%)

Table 5 presents the distribution of critical stylistic tools identified in the two newspapers. The first column lists the critical stylistic tool, while the second and third columns indicate its frequency and percentage of each tool in *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*, respectively. It is evident that describing is the most frequently used tool in both newspapers. Writers tend to assign positive or negative attributes to AI and AI companies depending on their ideology. For instance, noun phrases like “racist and sexist biases”, “large scale unemployment”, and “serial liar” in *The Guardian* are selected to highlight the threats posed by AI. These negative attributes reflect the writers’ skepticism and concerns regarding AI adoption. Negation is the second most frequent tool in *The Guardian* and the third most frequent tool in *The Financial Times*. It is mainly used to contrast humans with machine or refute earlier claims. For instance, in one *Financial Times* article, an employee complains that “humans are **not** robots or machines” when employers expect them to work for long hours without error, underscoring unrealistic expectations and reinforcing that humans should not be treated like machines. Naming ranks second in *The Financial Times* and third in *The Guardian*. This tool serves the ideological stance of the writer allowing him/her to directly show approval or disapproval of using AI through nouns with positive or negative connotations respectively. For example, nouns like “bigotry”, “lies”, and “criminality” in *The Guardian* highlight the dangers of AI and its potential to violate community standards, positioning the writers against its harmful effects. Finally, modality appears less frequently in both newspapers. Epistemic and deontic modality are present, while boulomaic modality is almost absent. Epistemic modality signals degrees of certainty, as in *The Guardian*’s statement that “GPT-3 is **probably** the best non-human writer ever”, showing cautious acknowledgment that requires confirmation. Deontic modality, by contrast, issues advice or specific obligations. For instance, a *Financial Times* writer warns that the destructive effects of AI “must be addressed”, reflecting unease and urgency. Hence, the use of naming, describing, modality and negation reveals the writers’ ideology, while allowing them to maneuver strategically.

#### 8.4 The link between argumentative devices and critical stylistic tools

It is worth mentioning that a strong link exists between argumentative devices and critical stylistic tools. In more specific terms, several fallacies, topoi, and argumentative moves are realized via critical stylistic tools. Examples of such connections are provided in Table 6. Table 6 shows that a link does exist between argumentation and critical stylistics. The first column indicates the argumentative

device. The second column includes the corresponding critical stylistic tool. The third column includes the example as extracted from the newspapers. The last column clarifies the source of the example. This proves that argumentation and critical stylistics are not two distant disciplines.

Table 6. The link between argumentative devices and critical stylistic tools

Argumentative device	Critical stylistic tool	Example	Source
Strawman fallacy	Describing	“Lemoine’s claims of sentience for LaMDA are ...entirely <b>fanciful</b> ”.	<i>The Guardian</i>
Overgeneralization	Naming	“There is much <b>hype</b> about the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to combat corona virus”.	<i>The Guardian</i>
Slippery slope	Modality and naming	AI machines “ <b>might</b> flood the internet with <b>untruths</b> , automate meaningful jobs and even threaten civilization”.	<i>The Financial Times</i>
Topos of danger/threat	Describing and naming	“The <b>most immediate danger</b> is the role that AI data analysis and generation plays in spreading <b>disinformation</b> and <b>extremism</b> on social media”.	<i>The Guardian</i>
Topos of disadvantage	Describing	“The incorporation of <b>ethnic and gender bias</b> in datasets used by AI programs that determine job candidate selection, creditworthiness, and other important decisions is <b>a well-known problem</b> ”.	<i>The Guardian</i>
Comparison	Negation	“Humans have to eat and sleep. Machines do <b>not</b> .”	<i>The Financial Times</i>

## **9. Conclusion**

The study has investigated strategic maneuvering in written media discourse. 14 opinion articles from *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* have been analyzed. The study has adopted a mixed approach integrating argumentation and critical stylistics. The results of the study have revealed that the two prominent newspapers share a number of topics including debate/controversy about AI, the negative impact of AI, the duality of man versus machine, background information about AI/AI tools, and regulating AI/AI companies. When it comes to the audience demand aspect, the study has revealed that, in terms of the ethical appeal, both newspapers reveal the writer's identity, include links to other content, the keywords/topics in the article, a comments section and rely on credible sources. As for the emotional appeal, both newspapers focus on employing catchy headlines and imagery. *The Guardian* includes pull quotes to grab the reader's attention. Regarding the logical appeal, the selected articles rely on simple language, definitions, evidence from real life, and numbers/statistics. The aesthetic appeal is realized via different font colors, images, special effects, the contrast between the text and the background, and the division of the article into short paragraphs. *The Guardian* employs drop caps to welcome the reader to the article.

The presentational devices in the study have been classified into argumentative and critical stylistic ones. The former is constituted through fallacies, topoi, and argumentative moves. The most common fallacies are overgeneralization, slippery slope, strawman fallacy, and abusive variant. The most frequent topoi are the topos of reality, the topos of disadvantage, the topos of danger/threat, and the topos of advantage. The most recurrent argumentative moves are example/illustration, evidentiality, and number game. *The Financial Times* relies more on comparison. Describing is the most frequent critical stylistic tool in the data and directly reveals the ideology of the writer. Both the argumentative devices, and the critical stylistic tools have been proven to be linked to each other. Finally, where the writers stand when it comes to AI has been unveiled. The writers are pessimistic about the use of AI and warn the readers of the potential threats of technology. This has been shown through the selected topics, the different argumentative devices and the critical stylistic tools.

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