

ANDRZEJ ŁYDA
University of Silesia
Katowice

APPROACHING CONCESSION – SYNTAX, SEMANTICS, RHETORIC AND INTERACTION*

The present paper aims to discuss the concept of concession and the various senses in which it has been used in the literature. The fact that the term *concessive* has acquired many different senses is not to mean, however, that we have been dealing with a terminological chaos but rather that the understanding of concession has been undergoing a continuous development paralleling the development of new linguistic theories and the emergence of new fields of linguistic studies.

1. Concession as a clausal semantic relation

1.1. Concession: contrast and obstacle approaches

Almost thirty years after the publication of Maciej Grochowski's now classic *O strukturze semantycznej przyzwolenia* the final conclusions drawn by that author are almost as valid as they were then. In his analysis of the exponents of the relation in Polish Grochowski (1976) points to the fuzziness of the traditional concept of concession and demonstrates that what had been defined previously as a semantic relation observable in complex sentences with a specific type of adverbial clauses introduced by a set of specific concessive markers is actually a relation partly independent of syntax or at least of the markers of subordination. As Grochowski shows, the semantics of concession cannot be reduced to a finite set of clauses combinations and a set of formal exponents of the relation because it is often the case that the same markers (e.g. Polish *ale* or *lecz* (but)) can be employed in other contexts to express semantic relations of a different type, for example, adversativity. Secondly, as Grochowski observes, the formal markers of concessivity can express simultaneously another relation, for example conditionality, as in *even if* clauses or (in)causality, as in:

* The present article is based on Łyda (in preparation).

(1) *Liczba mieszkań nie zależy od wysokości domu.*

The number of apartments does not depend on the height of the building.¹

Finally, as shown in (1) above concessivity can be expressed not only by complex sentences but also simple ones.

The above findings lead Grochowski to the conclusion that concession is only a traditional umbrella term for at least three types of interclausal semantic relations as exemplified by (1) *chociaż p, q* (although p, q), (2) *chociażby p, q* (even if p, q) and (3) *p nie zależy od q* (p does not depend on q).

What Grochowski's considerations illustrate is that concessivity borders on other categories, conditionality among others, sometimes even overlapping into them. This raises the question of the status of the relation among a multitude of other ones. Fortunately, the observation by Aarts (1988: 39) that 'the notion of concession has never been dealt with in any great depth in the linguistic literature', seems to have lost its validity in view of an enormous number of relevant publications in the late 1980s (see e.g., Altenberg 1986; König 1988) and especially in the 1990s and 2000s (see e.g., König 1991; Ford 1993; Rudolph 1996; Di Meola 1997; Iten 1997; Grote, Lenke and Stede 1997; König and Siemund 2000; Verhagen 2000; Fretheim 2002; Barth-Weingarten 2003). No longer is Quirk's complaint about the meagreness of descriptions of concession in "average grammars" justified either, although that part of his remark that refers to the trend among grammarians to equal concessive clauses with clauses introduced by *although* is still in force.

However, in spite of the massive amount of studies into concession and adversativity, not to mention the general relation of *contrast*, it is far from obvious whether an agreement might be reached among linguists on how to define the categories and the relationship between them. At one extreme there are researchers for whom concessivity is a subtype of the adversative relation (see Quirk 1954 for earlier studies; Halliday and Hasan 1976); at the other one we find studies carefully distinguishing between the two relations (Mann and Thompson 1988, Barth-Weingarten 2003). Somewhere beyond this paradigm, there are attempts to characterise concession as a relation of *counterexpectancy*, cutting across other relations such as purpose, condition, means and consequence (Martin and Rose 2003). And even having agreed on the inclusion of concession within the general class of adversativity, we may identify dissimilar criteria of such a classification. On the one hand, we find Lerch (1929), in whose view 'the adversative relation becomes concessive when the opposition is **so great** (my emphasis A.Ł.) that the content of the dependent member normally excludes the content of the nondependent one' (Lerch (1929) cited after Quirk 1954:4). On the other hand, the idea of the degree or intensity of the opposition is completely ignored as irrelevant and is replaced by the requirement of the presence

¹ Actually, as early as in 1967 in his analysis of the syntax of the complex sentence in Upper-Lusatian Polański identified two semantic subtypes of concessivity: causal-concessive and conditional-concessive (Polański 1967).

of formal markers of concession, that is, subordinating conjunctions of a particular type.

In an overwhelming majority of studies concession is referred to as a relation between two clauses: the adverbial concessive clause and the main one combined by a subordinating conjunction of concessive type, where the idea of concessivity is actually expressed in the main clause (Molencki 1997:352). Such syntactic constructions are defined as concessive clauses, concessive conjunctions of clauses or simply concessives, to use the most frequently applied terminology. It is also equally common to characterize the relation of concessivity in terms of contrast, be it, a contrast of expectations, contrast to the normal cause-and-effect or contrast of the causal weight of events (Mensing 1891) and in terms of irrelevance of an event to the occurrence of another event.

Summarising tendencies observable in grammar writing Rudolph (1996:180) distinguishes between those descriptions that concentrate on the contrastivity of states of affairs referred to in the two clauses and those which rely on the notion of obstacle normally hindering the occurrence of another event. In the former type the contrast consists in the fact that in the real world the state of affairs 'in the subordinate clause normally would imply a different fact from the second state of affairs mentioned in the main clause', as in (2a):

(2a) Although his car hit a lamp-post, the bumpers were not damaged.

In the other approach the event in the real world mentioned in the subordinate clause would normally prevent the state-of-affairs in the main clause, which nevertheless is the case:

(2b) Although the kid is only nine months old, she can speak three languages.

These two distinct concepts of concession can be seen, however, to be consistent with Rudolph's view of concession as an instantiation of the relation of contrast. For Rudolph both adversativity and concessivity are relations based on contrast, the semantics of which she represents formally as in (3).

(3) Contrast (A – B) = (SIMUL A, B : (CONTRAST A, B))

This formula should be interpreted as expressing the speaker's opinion 'that the two propositions A and B are valid simultaneously and proposition B marks a contrast to the information given in proposition A' (Rudolph 1996: 20). CONTRAST is viewed as a basic concept whose meaning can be paraphrased as 'differing in more than one respect'. How the two entities or states referred to in propositions A and B differ is, in her view, a matter of instructions for cognitive operations. The instructions are encoded in the connective expressions, which signal the presence of a connective relation and the speaker's view on this relation. A consequence of this approach is the necessity of accepting the claim that various connectives should provide the hearers with different instructions on the intended mental operations to which they are in-

vited by the speaker. It may also lead to a conclusion that whenever the connective expressions are absent it remains undecided what the speaker's opinion on a possible relation between two clauses is. Consequently, asyndetic constructions, being ambiguous, cannot be identified as signalling one particular relation without an appropriate context and should be excluded from any class of semantic relation whatsoever. However, Rudolph does not move that far in her analysis, allowing for the possibility of contrastive, and hence concessive and adversative, interpretation of asyndetic coordination. In this way she distances herself from understanding of adversativity and concessivity purely in terms of subordinating connectives. For her adversativity and concession are to a certain degree two distinct realization of contrast, yet based on the same pattern. The pattern that she devises, so called contrastive indication mark, is shown in Fig. 1.

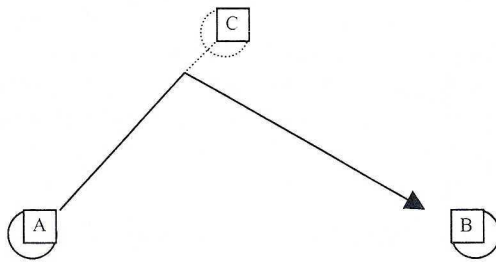


Fig. 1. The contrastive indication mark (adopted from Rudolph 1996)

Here proposition B contrasts with proposition A and proposition C is an expected end of a possible but not necessary causal chain from A to C (Rudolph 1996:31).

The actual relation between A and B above is not clear. Various solutions have been proposed, such as Lakoff's (1971) 'semantic opposition' and 'denial of expectation' 'cancellation of implicit or explicit information' or Blakemore's (1987) 'constraint on relevance'. What remains, however, unquestionable in most studies is that comprehension of sentences based on the relation of contrast requires prior knowledge about compatibility and correlation between the categories referred to in propositions A and B.

1.2. Concession and causality: *tertium comparationis*

The basis and the prerequisite for the assessment of compatibility or correlation has been recently called by Lagerwerf (1998) in his model of concession in monologue a contextually available claim or *tertium comparationis* within a shared domain. However, the idea of a general principle underlying the relation of concession is much older, being already mentioned as 'leading principle' in Peirce (1955). This general principles in accordance with which reasoning or arguing takes place is probably best-known under the name of 'warrant', which is one of six constituents in the

Toulmin Model (Toulmin (1958)).² The warrant is the speaker's justification for inference from the grounds of a person's claim. It is crucial that the warrant should not be equated with the premises since the claim is not obtainable from the warrant but rather it is shown to follow from the grounds of the speaker's claim in conformity with the warrant. In other words, the warrant licences the inference but is not a premise for the claim made by the speaker. Hitchcock (2002) illustrates it with Toulmin's own example:

To repeat Toulmin's hackneyed and familiar example, suppose someone asserts, 'Harry is a British subject.' A challenger requests justification of this claim, to which the reply is, 'Harry was born in Bermuda.' The challenger further asks how this ground supports the claim, to which the reply is, 'A man born in Bermuda is generally a British subject.' As a defeasible warrant, this assertion has conditions of rebuttal, which could be made explicit: 'unless neither of his parents is of British nationality or he has changed his nationality'. Asked to justify the warrant, the author of the claim will cite the British Nationality Acts, where these rules for determining nationality are set out. (Toulmin 1958, 99–102)

It is exactly the same idea of the connecting principle that triggers the contrastive interpretation of the relation between two states or situations mentioned in propositions A and B that we can find in Clark (1977) and recently in Barth-Weingarten's discussion of the relation between Negated Causality and Concession (Barth-Weingarten 2003). In the former work it is assumed that for the identification of the relation involving definite descriptions there is required commonsense knowledge shared by the speaker and the listener. Barth-Weingarten, on the other hand, applies a model of warrant schema derived from Toulmin (1958) and Rudolph (1996) to illustrate the structure of a variety of contrast relations. Consider for example her representation of *You were wounded in the war, but you are in apparent good health*, involving negated causality, and the warrant schema for the utterance in line 6:

Excerpt 1. Larry King: wounded (74.02 DAT:532)

Adapted from Barth-Weingarten (2003:30)

AE radio programme. Larry King is interviewing Bob Dole, who at that time was running for President despite his rather advanced age. Alluding to this fact King inquires about Dole's present state of health

- | | | |
|---|-------|--|
| 1 | King: | 'ey you know bob, |
| 2 | | I think the average American male now lives to |
| 3 | | seventy-four, |
| 4 | | [seventy-five, =(-) |

² The model of argument consists of six elements: a claim made, (2) grounds to support the claim, (3) a warrant relating the grounds and the claim, (4) backing as a foundation of the warrant, (5) modal qualifiers moderating the claim, and (6) possible rebuttals.

- 5 Dole: [right;
 6 King: =you were wOunded in the wAr,=
 7 =but you're in apparent good hEAlth,
 8 Dole: [good health;
 9 King: [that will be a big question of you, (-)
 10 Dole: Sure;

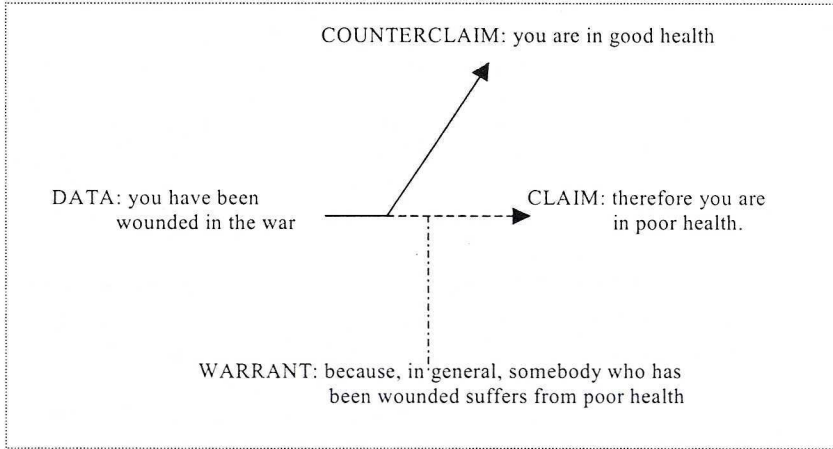


Fig. 2. Warrant schema for Negated Causality (after Barth-Weingarten 2003:31)

In Fig. 2 the expected consequence (a possible CLAIM) justified by the warrant is actually replaced by the COUNTERCLAIM in line 7. However, in another example Barth-Weingarten convincingly demonstrates that even if the warrant of a negated causal relation is not reconstructable, because no general principle underlying an argumentation can be identified, the sequence can be considered a case of Concession in the sense she analyses it in her study (Barth-Weingarten 2003:321). In this way she adopts the view that rather than being in the relation of inclusion Negated Causality and Concessions overlap only partly.

Also Pötters (1992) finds the idea of the common knowledge of the interlocutors indispensable in the representation of concessivity, when he postulates a general principle of implicative type *if p, then q (according to the speaker's experience of the world)*, which he regards as presupposed. However, where his understanding of concessivity departs from previous accounts is in his conclusion that apart from the presupposed implication and the presupposition of the truth of the assertion in the main clause, there operates a third presupposition, namely the presupposition of an implicit cause/unidentified warrant effective in getting out of the normal course of things projected by the general rule. Thus, the representation of the warrant schema could take the form, as in Fig. 3:

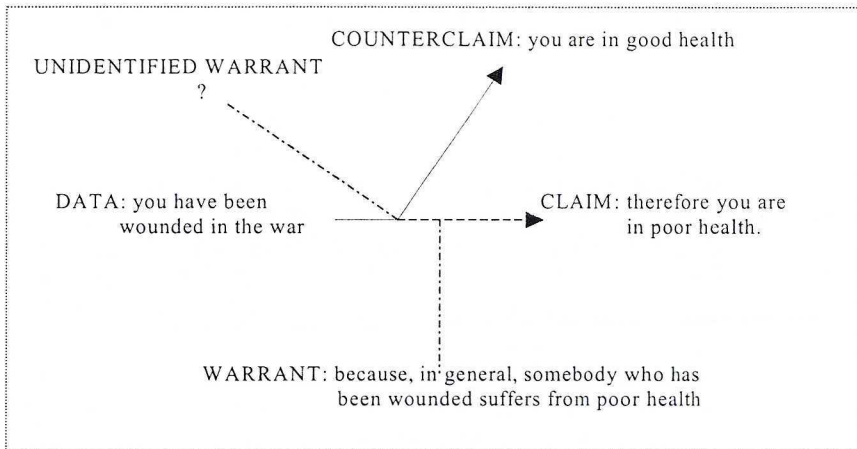


Fig. 3. Unidentified Warrant schema for Negated Causality

Pötters does not define the status of the unknown cause, and it remains unclear whether it should be expressed as a negated warrant, to leave aside the question whether such a negation could be external or internal. Pötters simply opposes concessivity to causal/conditional relations, calling it anti-explicative in the sense of non-explication of 'one states of affairs through another states of affairs' (Rudolph 1996:211). Thus, it remains undecided whether the other cause invalidates or suspends the causal relation based on the warrant, or better, supersedes it, which sends us back to the initial problem raised by Rudolph.

Rather than considering the dilemma of the mechanism of the unknown cause influencing the expected cause-and-effect relation, Baschewa proposes in her study of concessive sentences in German (Baschewa 1980) that concessivity can be explained best in terms of a semantic property of *irrelevance*. By this she means that the situation expressed in the subordinate clause is presented as irrelevant for the occurrence of the situation in the main clause. Consequently, Baschewa confines her analysis of concessive sentences only to these complex sentences in which the subordinate clause is linked by a conjunctive element signalling irrelevance. However, what seems initially a third way of viewing the relation, eventually turns out to be the case of restriction and abolition or invalidation of the causal / conditional relation, at least for the subgroup of non-conditional concessiveness of *obwohl* (*although*) type. For Baschewa the characteristics *irrelevant* signals the abolition of the expected $q \rightarrow \neg p$ and replacement with $q \rightarrow p$. Thus, Baschewa's answer provided to the question whether the causal relation is invalidated or suspended consists actually in demonstrating that both of these are involved in concessive sentences.

1.3. Concession and causality: duals, incausals and hidden causality

Causality has long been among the most common notions deemed instrumental for the description of the semantics of concession and numerous studies in this domain are available. To a certain extent this logic-oriented approach can still be regarded as the dominant force in research upon concession, mainly thanks to works by Ekkehard König (König 1985a, 1985b, 1988, 1991, 1994), and to be just, the rich German tradition of studies in contrastive relations. Nevertheless, the discussion should begin with a mention of the work by Blumenthal (Blumenthal 1973), whose predicate logic analysis of conditional/causal and concessive constructions led the author to the conclusion that concessive clauses can be paraphrased as negated causal sentences with a simultaneous shift of the presupposed and asserted elements from the subordinate clause to the main one, i.e., what is asserted in the causal clause is presupposed in the concessive ones and what is presupposed in causal clauses becomes asserted in the corresponding concessives.

The same concept of negated implication, sometimes referred to as *Inkonditional*, is invoked by Hermodsson (1973), yet with two reservations. First, while Blumenthal's study raises the possibility of analysing concession as a negation of causal or conditional sentences, Hermodsson seeks to provide an answer to the question about the semantics of concession on the basis of conditional relation only, adding 'that often a clear differentiation between causal and conditional is impossible' (Rudolph 1996: 206). Secondly, the linguistic material he studies consists only of sentences denoting events involving an association of a natural cause and a scientifically justified effect, which relieves him from the necessity of taking into consideration contextual conditioning of the relation and the application of standard negation tests to German *obwohl*, *wenn* and *weil* sentences permits him to draw a conclusion similar to Blumenthal's: the concessive relation equals a negated conditional relation.

Also König and Siemund (2000) express an opinion that some types of adverbial relations are semantically linked. According to them the relatedness can be observed in adverbials of cause, condition, condition-concession, and finally concession, the differences between any pair lying in properties that they share.

Two such criteria among others are a) hypotheticality vs. factuality and (b) harmony and dissonance. This allows the authors to propose the representation of these adverbials, as in Table 1 (König and Siemund (2000:342):

Table 1. Sense relations

	Hypothetical	Factual
Harmony	Conditional	Causal
Dissonance	Concessive conditional	Concessive

Of these the second category of properties is of particular importance in this context, as it refers to relations:³

[...] whose arguments are in harmony with general tendencies, i.e. they describe typical sequences of situations or typical concomitance of situations in the world, as opposed to those relations between situations that are not in harmony with such tendencies, i.e. express a dissonance with general regularities of cooccurrence.

What this definition demonstrates is that like in previous studies there emerges the same idea of an underlying warrant, here called a *tendency*. It is worth noting that tendency replaces two other terms mentioned above, i.e., rule and principle, which only emphasizes their defeasibility.

In view of these similarities, König and Siemund conclude that it is inevitable that further similarities should become apparent in the formal expression of those relations, depending on the priority of the horizontal and vertical axes in a particular language. Consequently, they hypothesize that similarity should be sought in the expression of concessives and causals or concessives and concessive conditionals, but not in the concessive and conditional pairing. Actually this claim gains support in various languages, including English, if one considers Harris's observation that 'there was no exclusively concessive conjunction in Old English' (Harris 1988:78; see also Molencki 1997), the historical development of concessive conditional *though* into a concessive proper⁴ and Herman's claim that in all Indo-European languages concessives are a relatively new development (Herman 1963). Further evidence for the hypothesis of the strong affinity between Cause and Concession is brought forward in Kortmann (1997:1988–202), where the semantic affinities in CCC (cause, condition, concession) group are measured.⁵

A closer examination of König (1989) and König and Siemund (2000) reveals that although these authors too claim the existence of a relation between concessives and causal constructions, their understanding of concessivity differs in many respects from Blumenthal's and Hermodsson's. According to König, Hermodsson's *incausals*, also elsewhere referred to as 'inoperant cause' (see e.g., Kortmann 1997:203), should be regarded as duals of causal adverbials.

The very term 'dual' is derived from Löbner (1987), where in the course of his discussion on quantifiers dual is defined as the external negation of its internal negation. As Löbner argues, if all possibilities of negation are exhausted, then the results can be then represented by means of a duality square in Fig. 3:

³ An objection can be raised against the terms harmony and dissonance, which in the formalised elaboration of causal – concessive interface sound too general, if not too metaphorical. Actually the terms are not necessarily binary antonyms.

⁴ A detailed discussion of the diachronic issues can be found in König (1985, 1986, 1988)

⁵ Kortmann (1997:203) writes that "[...] (i) there is not a single instance where a polyfunctional subordinator has Concession as a primary reading and a causal or conditional reading as a secondary one."

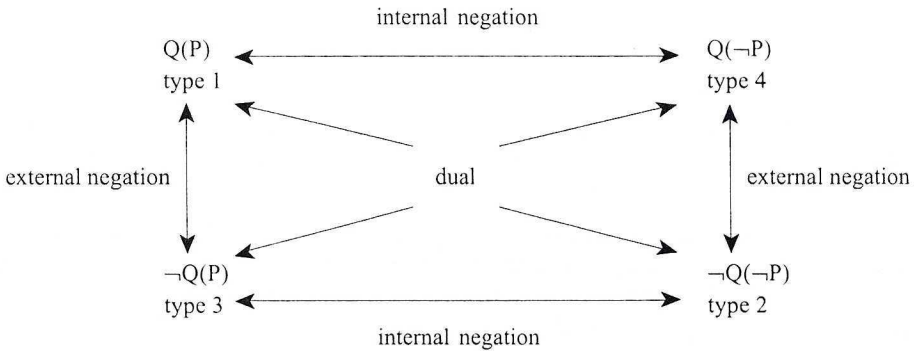


Fig. 3. The duality square for the general quantification $Q(P)$
(adapted from Iten 1997:2)

Extending this approach to *because* and *although*, König finds (4) is equivalent to (5):

(4) \neg (Because P, $\neg Q$)

(5) Although P, Q

König concludes that the fact that the two adverbials are connected by duality makes it possible to account for the meaning of one of these relations in terms of the meaning of the other one. In other words, whenever a claim is made about the meaning of causals, it also serves as an explanation of the meaning of concessives.

The validity of the claim is called in question by Iten (1997). First, she treats with reserve the very applicability of Löbner's duality square to concessives and causals, for which she cannot envisage any quantifier-like analysis. Secondly, what is an even stronger counterargument, Iten demonstrates that one kind of problem encountered in König's analysis (1989) concerns the difference in the contribution of the connectives *because* and *although* to the truth-conditions of sentences in which they occur. According to her while the truth-conditions of *although*-sentence should be represented as:

(6) *Although* P, Q is true iff P is true and Q is true

any representation of *Because* P, Q should account for the presence of the connective contributing to the truth-conditions in the following way:

(7) *Because* P, Q is true iff P is true and Q is true, and P causes Q.

The list of other problems that Iten identifies is long enough to raise doubts about the otherwise very elegant account of concessive-causal relationship. Yet such minor flaws as the indeterminability of \neg (Although P, $\neg Q$), which should have the same truth conditions as *Because* P, Q, due to the fact that 'negation cannot take scope over concessive connectives' (Iten 1997:8) and the applicability of the duality account only to some types of concessives, tend to undermine König's theory of concessives as duals of causals.

Taking a Relevance Theory view, Iten claims that undoubtedly there are sentences, or rather utterances of causal and concessive sentences that express the same proposition. That it is so happens to result from the context in which the utterances are made. The role of the context of the utterance is according to Relevance Theory effective in determining the proposition expressed as contrasted with the proposition encoded. In the particular case of *although*, it functions as a signal of the following form: "P contradicts, but does not eliminate X, where X is an aspect of the interpretation of Q, [...] a proposition expressed by Q, one of its higher-level explicatures, or an implicature of Q' (Iten 1998:20). This sends the hearer to a set of contextual assumptions, saves the hearer's processing time and hence the effort required to reach the intended interpretation. In the case of *because*- and *although*-sentences used in the same context, the truth conditions are similar, only if the negation takes narrow scope in both the causal and concessive sentences and *because* acquires epistemic interpretation in the sense of Sweetser (1990) not contributing to the truth conditions just like *although*.

The idea of causality as underlying concession has been revisited and modified by Di Meola (1998). Contrary to previous studies, in which concessive relations have been thought to involve one causal relation, Di Meola proposes that two such relations be identified. Consider the following example:

(8) Although she is ill, she goes to work.

In his view this sentence is based on a negated and ineffective causal relation:

(9) Since she is ill, she doesn't go to work.

and another effective causal relation, which is not explicitly mentioned and depends on the context:

(10) Since she has an important meeting [or, depending on the context, some other reason], she goes to work.

Schematically, these two causal relations are represented in Di Meola (1998:338) as:

A1: <i>being ill</i>	→ A2: <i>not go to work</i>
B1: <i>important business meeting</i>	→ B2: <i>go to work</i>

Presented in this way, concessivity is based on a regular causal relation. However, what is coded in a concessive sentence is the antecedent of one causal relation and the consequent of the other one. The effective cause, or at least more effective than the coded one, is not mentioned and has to be recovered contextually. This observation leads Di Meola to the decision to call concessivity 'hidden causality'. Because of that, unlike causality proper, concessivity is 'uncooperative', because it requires of the interlocutor more processing effort.

Looking at this property from a communicative point of view, König and Siemund (2000: 349–350) find the semantic mechanism of concessive relations highly implausible, considering the fact that it would go against Gricean principle of cooperation in almost all languages in which the relation has been found (see Grice 1975).

Another argument advanced against Di Meola's account of concessivity concerns the very possibility of reconstruction of the unmentioned cause. König and Siemund (2000:348) provide a long list of sentences, such as the ones below, to demonstrate that at times the hidden cause is hardly conceivable:

- (11) Although the flat is too small, it is located in a nice area.
- (12) He was laughing, although he was desperate.
- (13) The ostrich is a bird, although it cannot fly.

The degree of recoverability of the hidden cause(s) varies for these sentences, with examples (12) and (13) not posing any obvious problem:

- (13a) Since the ostrich has wings and feathers, it is a bird.
- (13b) Since the ostrich cannot fly, it is not a bird.

where *having wings and feathers* is stronger than *not being able to fly*. However, König and Siemund may be right in having reservations about (11), a very natural sentence, for which the schema might take a questionable form of (11a) or (11b) with a missing causal element:

- (11a) ***Since the flat is too small, it is not located in a nice area.
- (11b) Since ???, it is located in a nice area.

where ??? defeats *the flat is too small*.

What is attractive in Di Meola's theory is the fact in the real world any attempt to understand why an event took place, while according to one's knowledge it should not have happened, normally invites a question about what caused it to happen, that is, a question about the unknown 'hidden' cause. That the cause cannot be ascertained is often the case. Consequently, it should not be expected then that any causal explanation can be explicitly communicated or even hinted at by the speaker, which is to say that Di Meola's account is psychologically plausible.

As concerns König and Siemund's objection to this account on the ground that Di Meola's concessive relation is uncooperative in the sense of Grice (1975), then it can be pointed, however, that Grice's maxim of quality warns against saying 'that for which you lack adequate evidence' (Grice 1975: 48) if the general co-operative principle is to be observed. Thus, the alleged lack of cooperation could be actually an instance of observing the maxim of quality in order to be optimally cooperative.

What presents, however, an insurmountable problem for Di Meola's double-cause theory are examples like (11a), in which it is difficult to establish any causal link. König and Siemund suggest that the problem could be alleviated by restricting Di Meola's analysis to Sweetser's content or factual level linking (Sweetser 1990). However, in examples like (11a) the incompatibility is not related to the consequents of relations with two different causes in the antecedent but rather to the implicatures of each of the two clauses arising in a particular context, e.g.:

- (14) The flat is too small → it is not worth the money/ we don't take it
The flat is located in a nice area → it is worth the money/ we take it,

which has been well captured in Iten's analysis of *although* shown above and which is also predicted by Cardinal Concessive Schema Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (1998, 1999), to be discussed below as a third distinct approach to concessivity.

2. Concession in the Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST)

2.1. Rhetorical Structure Theory

In the 'classic' approach to concessivity outlined above what is stressed is the existence of a close relation between syntax and semantics. Although the existence of an interface between the syntactic structure of text and the way texts are structured as coherent entities to produce the effect of 'a kind of wholeness or integrity' is not denied by the founders of the Rhetorical Structure Theory, the essence of such an interface depends on the very syntactic theory ((Mann 1984; Mann & Thompson 1985, 1986, 1987, Matthiessen and Thompson 1989, Mann, Matthiessen and Thompson 1992). The Rhetorical Structure Theory, most often referred to as RST (Mann and Thompson 1988), puts forward a claim that alongside the syntactic structure of text there can be identified another structure, a functional and organizational one, responsible for the impression of the wholeness of the text. At the same time Mann and Thompson (1988) emphasize distinctness of the two structures in question, although not their absolute independence, so that a syntactic structure does not map uniquely to one and only one functional structure.

The applicability of a relation definition never depends directly on the form of the text being analysed; the definitions do not cite conjunctions, tense, or particular words. RST structures are, therefore, structures of functions rather than structures of forms.

An important consequence of the claim is then that what has traditionally been regarded in syntactico-semantic theories as *concession*, i.e. the subordinate relation of contrast established mainly on the basis of certain conjunctions like *although* does not necessarily correspond, and indeed in many instances it does not, to concession, or rather CONCESSION, understood as one of numerous rhetorical relations identified by Mann and Thompson within a framework known as Rhetorical Structure Theory.

Rhetorical Structure Theory, developed in 1980s, has aimed to analyse and describe a corpus of written texts and represent their structure for the purposes of computer text generation.

It should be remembered, however, that the identification and classification of rhetorical relations proposed in RST model arose from the need to provide a descriptions of the *writer's* intentions in text constructing. This is probably why its application has been practically limited to written monologue. As a result of the initial restriction on the communication modes studies focusing on dialogue and polilogue, such as Fawcett and Davies (1992) on turns in dialogues or more recently Taboada and Lavid (2003) on appointment-scheduling dialogues, are in a minority.

RST is a theory of text organisation that attempts to identify recurring relations holding between minimally two parts (spans) described as '[...] uninterrupted linear

interval[s] of text' (Mann and Thompson 1987:4). The size of the intervals ranges from a clause to units above the clause level such as groups and paragraphs. In this way, i.e., by assuming that there is a hierarchy of texts parts whose nature is not precisely specified, RST dissociates itself from the assumption that other text structure patterns, e.g. chains of clauses, are also present. Still RST recognizes two other kinds of text structure: the holistic one, which is related to the genre of text, and the syntactic one understood in the traditional way.

A further assumption underlying RST states that patterns of text organisation are independent of the level and the size of text units. In other words they form one set of scale- or genre-non-specific schemas, yet realised with varying frequency by different text types, genres etc. The main pattern is relational in the sense that two spans are linked together by a set of relations, most of which are asymmetrical nucleus-satellite ones. The distinction *nucleus* vs. *satellite* can be seen as an instance of *central* vs. *peripheral* relation. The relations are defined in terms of their function, the function being viewed as purposes of the text author or intended effects on the text recipients. Relation definitions consist of a full specification of constraints imposed on the text spans (nucleus and satellite) as well as a statement on the expected effect as intended by the writer.

2.2. Concession in RST

Among the set of twenty-four relations, there can be found the relation of CONCESSION, as distinct from such relations as ANTITHESIS and CONTRAST. It is defined as a nucleus-satellite relation between *two* spans of texts, whose size ranges from a clause to units above the clause. The essence of the relation lies in the speaker's acknowledgement of 'apparently incompatible' information followed by the nucleus span. The definition below emphasises the fact of dual simultaneous perception of the nucleus and satellite situations, regarded as apparently incompatible but actually *compatible*:

CONCESSION

constraints on N: W has positive regard for the situation presented in N

constraints on S: W is not claiming that the situation presented in S doesn't hold

constraints on the N + S combination:

W acknowledges a potential or apparent incompatibility between the situations presented in N and S; W regards the situations presented in N and S as compatible; recognizing the compatibility between the situations presented in N and S increases R's positive regard for the situation presented in N

the effect: R's positive regard for the situation presented in N is increased locus of the effect: N and S

This is exemplified in Fig. 4

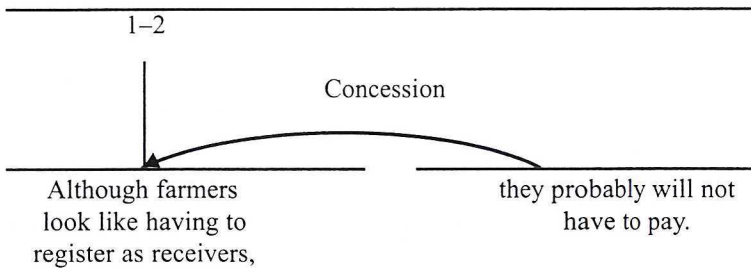


Fig. 4. RST diagram of the CONCESSION relation

Although the sentence represented in Fig. 4 contains the conjunction *although*, the identification of the rhetorical relation of CONCESSION is not conditioned by the presence of any overt markers (Mann, Matthiessen and Thompson 1992:65). Their presence in either span is possible yet not obligatory. Less common as they are, asyndetic subordination⁶ links serve the W(riter)'s intention to bring about the same effect of increasing R(eader)'s positive regard for N as effectively as *although*-satellites or paratactic *but*-nuclei. This disentanglement of Concession from constraints of previous definitions of the concept demanding clear conjunctive signals of subordination is what marks out RST approach to the problem.

Finally, the intended perlocution, namely, the effects that the W wants to achieve in RST consists in the W's attempt to bring about a change in the R's attitude by increasing R's positive regard for N, where *positive regard* in the above explication is used by Mann (www.sil.org/~mannb/rst/reldefs.htm) as '[...] a broad attitudinal term that ranges over belief, approval of ideas, desire to act, and approval for another to act, all identifiably positive'.

Defined in this way, CONCESSION differs from another relation within the same class of Presentational Relations, i.e. the relation of ANTITHESIS. Like CONCESSION, ANTITHESIS is also a nucleus-satellite relation intended to produce exactly the same effect of increasing R's positive regard for N (through R's comprehension of the incompatibility of the situations presented in N and S.) (Mann and Thompson 1987:12). In spite of that similarity as well as the identity of constraints put on N, it was only ANTITHESIS that was originally incorporated into the group of CONTRAST relations, CONCESSION being relegated from the group. The decision to separate these two relations follows from the difference in the sets of constraints N + S is subject to.

⁶ RST proposes that the traditional term subordination be replaced by *hypotaxis* and *embedding* (Mann, Matthiessen and Thompson 1992:66).

ANTITHESIS

Constraints on the N+S combination: the situations presented in N and S are in contrast

cf. CONTRAST, i.e., are (a) comprehended as the same in many respects (b) comprehended as differing in a few respects and (c) are compared with respect to one or more of these differences); because of an incompatibility that arises from the contrast, one cannot have positive regard for both the situations presented in N and S; comprehending S and the incompatibility between the situations presented in N and S increases R's positive regard for the situation presented in N.

Whereas CONCESSION implies that it is possible for both N and S to be the case simultaneously, despite R's initial conviction of incompatibility, in the relation of ANTITHESIS a claim (thesis) is made to be dismissed by its antithesis, thus, demonstrating their absolute incompatibility. The rejection of the S becomes indicative of the positive regard for N.

Among the most common signals of the relation are negation, versatile connectives such as *but*, *yet* or *instead*, as in the classic example (Mann and Thompson 1987a):

(15) How I use my thumbs is not the problem, but heredity is.

but also *rather than* and *more than*, known in Quirk et al (1985:982) as quasi-coordinators.

(16) S: Rather than telling people they can't do certain things,
N: we're trying to deliver the same standard of living in different ways.

Finally, unlike the two relations discussed above the rhetorical relation of CONTRAST is multi-nuclear with the maximum number of two nuclei. The multi-nuclear status of the relation finds its explanation in the set of constraints placed on the combination of the nuclei spans and especially in the intended effect. If in CONCESSION and ANTITHESIS the intention of W was to increase R's positive regard for the situation in one of the spans, i.e., N, in the case of CONTRAST the essence of the relation lies in R's realisation of comparability of N and S as well as of differences resulting from the act of comparing them.

What is an important aspect of this approach to concession is the fact that RST questions one-to-one correspondence between conjunctive signals and the concessive relation: as could be seen above the same conjunctions could function as markers of CONCESSION or ANTITHESIS. Further, it does not take a restrictive view on the relation between syntactic structure and functional structure by allowing for structures above the clause to realize the same relation of concession. This shift from clausal structures to structures beyond the clause and from sentences to units-in-actual-language-use manifests itself most clearly in the third approach to concession, i.e. the approach taken by interactional linguistics.

3. Concession as an Interactional Sequence

3.1. Interactional linguistics: overview

The novelty of the ‘interactional’ view on Concession first presented in Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (1998, 1999)⁷ follows from basic assumptions and ways of understanding language by an approach recently referred to as Interactional Linguistics. These assumptions had been formulated within the growing literature in the field and were finally brought together and spelled out in Selting and Couper-Kuhlen (2000). The primary interest of ‘interactionists’ lies in the study of the interaction of language-users and language itself and the development and organisation of language through and as a result of this interaction. For Hayashi (2001:318) it is the case that ‘[...] inasmuch as grammar operates in the first place in actual language use in everyday interaction of members of the society, the very integrity of grammar’s organization may be bound up with the organization of social interaction’. A similar view is held by Selting and Couper-Kuhlen (2001:1), where what they call *the interactional linguistic enterprise* rests on investigating ‘how linguistic structures and patterns of use are shaped by, and themselves shape, interaction – be it conversational or institutional, adult or adult-child, with the language-unimpaired or the language impaired.’ This is then an idea of language situated in the context, continuously modified by its use and modifying the context itself that underlies all endeavours within Interactional Linguistics. Language is no longer a passive abstract system but a provider of resources – syntactic, phonological, morphological, semantic etc. for performing tasks and attaining goals within a social event. Thus, Interactional Linguistics attempts to discover and describe how speakers resort to these resources to participate in *practices* and perform actions. But at the same time it recognizes the mutual influence of language and these practices, which shape each other.

The relation of Concession is just one of the recurring actions observable in real speech and realised through a dyadic structural pattern or rather a number of such patterns, consisting of the initial claim (X) by speaker A, followed by an acknowledgement (X’) and a counterclaim (Y) produced by speaker B.

3.2. Concession as an interactional sequence: previous research

Concession as an interactional sequence has first been discussed under that name by Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (1998, 1999), however, the concept of concession as an action has not been alien to language studies before. The recognition of the structure in rhetoric was paralleled by occasional references to concessive sequences

⁷ I am grateful to Professor Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen for sending me a manuscript of *On Concession Relation in Conversational English* long before it was published in Fritz-Wilhelm Neumann & Sabine Schülting, eds., *Anglistentag Erfurt 1998*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 29–39.

in general grammars of English (see Barth-Weingarten 2003) and more recently a closely related category of *Einraumung* has been proposed in Hermodsson (1994). It is also worth noting Kotthoff's (1993) treatment of concession as a structure involving speakers' agreement with a certain proposition after they expressed their disagreement.

Also in Pomerantz (1984), it has been noted that one of the forms of organization of preferred actions in discourse is for speakers of English to mark a weak agreement only to produce a stronger disagreement.

The phenomenon that probably most closely corresponds to Concession in the sense proposed by Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (1998, 1999) is *show concession*, a three-part conversational structure consisting of *proposition*, *concession* and *reprise*, discussed by Antaki and Wetherell (1999). However, in spite of its potentially interactional character, *show concession* is predominantly monadic, i.e. the same speaker's action, although it may occasionally be initiated by another speaker's (alleged) proposition.

3.3. Cardinal Concessive Schema

The most common pattern of realisation of Concession is what Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (1998, 1999) call the Cardinal Concessive Scheme. The term stands both for the general pattern that is subject to various modifications and the most common pattern of realisation. The Cardinal Concessive Schema is a representation of a situation, involving two speakers A and B, engaged in an interaction. For this pair of speakers one can identify three different moves X, X' and Y, of which X' and Y are made by speaker B, whereas the prototypically initial move X is realised by speaker A:

A: X
B: X'
Y

The first of these moves X serves the purpose of making a claim, the validity of which is acknowledged in the second move X'. The third move Y counters this validity by asserting that another claim, incompatible with X, can hold.

This pattern is well instantiated in the following fictitious example of a discussion on the UK football scene.

X	A:	Norwich are a breath of fresh air.
X'	B:	True,
Y		but then so too are Villa.

Here the first speaker's claim on the innovative way Norwich play is accepted by speaker B by means of short *True* in line 2 to be countered by an equally true claim in line 3 *then so too are Villa*. These two claims are understood as potentially incompatible, so that Y contrasts with X but is not its contradiction. Actually, in the example above, Y is presented as holding in addition to a potentially incompatible proposition.

The degree of incompatibility between two propositions cannot be assessed with precision: in some cases it is an incompatibility between an entailment or an implicature of X on the one hand and the proposition expressed in Y on the other one. In other cases, the contrast holds directly between X and Y or parts of these propositions or even various aspects of the same entity predicated about, as in the dialogue below.

Excerpt 2. A and B are gossiping about who they fancy: Source: International Corpus of English GB

		A:	Well she always struck me with the exception of Linda as being one of the really
		B:	the only really kind people in the firm
			Kind as opposed to
	5		Uhm one of the few uhm
		A	Oh George was impossible
		B	Yes well I mean they
X		A:	Blake 's all right
X' Y		B:	Yes
	10		but even he 's a bit odd really

In this excerpt A makes a claim in line 8 that their colleague is *all right*. Having acknowledged its validity by means of short *Yes* in line 11, B counters the claim, pointing that there are aspects of Blake's personality, namely his oddness, that are not fully compatible with the overall positive evaluation.

An important point to recall in this context is that the Cardinal Concessive Schema, due to the presence of the acknowledging move, contrasts sharply with Contrast and Antithesis relations (cf. the discussion of RST above), here subsumed in a broader domain of Adversativity. Although moves X and Y may be almost identically worded as in the corresponding Concession Schema-based examples, the missing X' move disqualifies it as Concession, as in the following hypothetical example (cf. Barth-Weingarten 2003 on the relation between Concession and other relations):

		A	Oh George was impossible
		B	Yes well I mean they
X		A:	Blake 's all right
Y	4	B:	He 's a bit ODD really.

where B's move in line 4 counts again as a counterclaim but it remains unclear how what he is saying relates to *Blake's all right*, whether by opposition *all right: bit odd* he contrasts these two propositions as describing two incompatible situations to invalidate A's claim.

3.4. Variations in the Cardinal Concessive Schema

The composition of the three moves in terms of unit size has also been commented upon as its another distinctive characteristics (Couper-Kuhlen and Thomp-

son 2000:388–390). The schema does not constrain its constituents in respect the size of units realising these parts. Consequently a wide array of units can be encountered. They differ in terms of their size, ranging from single words to whole chunks of discourse. In the examples above, the acknowledgement moves were realised by short *True* and agreement marker *Yes*, respectively. However, in the example below the acknowledgement move is more substantial and corresponds to a complete clause *Well, in many departments it may not be*:

Excerpt 3. Source: Spoken Professional American English Corpus

	1	Fletcher	A lot to me would depend on what kind of a procedure comes out, and so if it's a true just bundling together of things that happen already, then maybe there's less need for a formal procedure. But it depends a lot on what happens.
	5	Lentz	Our, at least in my department, the existing yearly review procedure is nothing but an accounting process. I mean, this sounds like more of a process. What papers have you published, what courses have you taught, put one in column A, one in column B, and one in another column.
X	10	Mason	I'm not sure that's all it is in many departments.
X'Y		Lentz	Well, in many departments it may not be, but this sounds like a much more exhaustive procedure. It will be evaluative rather than just accounting. And if you disagree with the outcome of that, there ought to be some mechanism for a dialogue, at least for that discourse.
	15		

The realisation of Concession in this example is more complex than before. This is due to the fact that in the initial move of the Concessive pattern (line10) Mason expresses a view which is to be interpreted as incompatible with a possible inference from Lentz's claim in lines 6–7, namely that more painstaking review procedures might be observed in other departments. Acknowledging the contrasting claim, Lentz does not have to abort his earlier view, because of the counter-point that he makes in lines 13–15: whatever can be said about existing review procedures in whatever department (*Well ... it may not be*), the review to come is likely be qualitatively different.

In addition to the three-part structure, in which the size of the moves can be reduced or expanded, the third property of the Cardinal Concessive schema is connected with the type of marking of the contiguous parts of the concessive relation. Here let us note that, as signalled before, the traditional syntactico-semantic approach to concession recognised it on the basis of specific conjunctive signals, such as *although, though, in spite of* etc. For English, this view is expressed for example by Quirk et al. (1985:1097). Commenting on concessive subordinators of common

occurrence they claim that 'clauses of concession are introduced chiefly by *although* or its more informal variant *though*.' Among other conjunctions listed there we find: *if, even if, even though, when, whereas, while* and *whilst*. The authors also allow for concessive relation without a conjunction but with correlative conjuncts or prepositional phrases. However, the Cardinal Concessive schema does not specify any type of linkage between X' and Y. Actually, apart from syndetic means as those referred to above, it allows for asyndetic constructions, where the idea of concessivity results for example from the juxtaposition of claims, with the counterclaim making use of the same pattern or class of words as in the acknowledgment.

The Concessive schema has been proposed as a convenient pattern for the identification of the relation of Concession in conversational interaction. It must be understood, however, that due to the underspecification of the properties of the moves it refers to, the schema remains only a theoretical construct which becomes actualised in a real speaking situation involving concession. It is in real speech that the Cardinal Concessive schema develops into a sequence of units of a particular size related to each other by particular signals. It is also in real speech that the order of the three steps is established, the actual realisation reflecting the prototypical pattern X, X' and Y or as has been suggested in Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (1999, 2000) a variation on the pattern. The variations can concern the presence or absence of a move as well as their sequential ordering, both exerting a marked impact on the interaction and both being influenced by the interaction.

From a theoretical point of view, the number of combinations of three elements equals factorial three, which results in six individual patterns:

(1): X, X', Y (Cardinal Concessive); (2): X, Y, X' (Reversed Cardinal); (3): X', X, Y; (4): X', Y, X (5): Y, X', X; (6): Y, X, X'.

All these combinations are found in spoken language, although with various frequency the Cardinal and the Reversed Cardinal ranking highest (see for example Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson 2000; Barth-Weingarten (2003); Łyda (2005; and *in preparation*).

Apart from variations on the number of moves, the second type of the variation involves, however, not an increased number of constitutive moves, as an extension of the Cardinal Concessive schema, but fewer ones. What is even more striking is the fact that the reduction concerns the schema final move Y, which, as argued in Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (2000:397), is 'the thrust of speaker B's turn'. This reduction is effected by strong *projection* of the missing Y by the speaker(s) of X'. In other words, X' is constructed in such a way that it enforces an interpretation of the XX' sequence as implicating the presence of Y, which nevertheless remains only tacitly understood as present and thus, completing the concessive pattern.

Although the relation of Concession on the discourse level is predominantly interactional in the sense of at least two interlocutors engaged in a conversation, the Cardinal Concessive schema can be enacted by a single speaker. A similar discourse phenomenon has been observed and described by Antaki and Wetherell as so called *show concession*, which the authors present as 'a show, a piece of interactional busi-

ness' that 'fortifies the speaker's position against misunderstanding or attack, and, given extra fuel, goes on the offensive against the opposition' (Antaki and Wetherell 1999: 23). Thus, the monologic nature of the sequence production does not invalidate its interactional character, because it exerts an influence of further discourse development and because it is derived from the same interactional pattern.

The monologic variant can assume two different forms depending on the presence of X move: a) pseudo-dyadic form and b) a monadic form.

In the pseudo-dyadic form the general sequence of moves is identical with that of the dyadic Cardinal Concessive schema, the only difference lying in the fact of the production of the moves by a single speaker. To demonstrate the mechanism of the pseudo-dyadic variation, let us examine an example taken from Antaki and Wetherell (1999:21). This illustrates a subtype of *show concession*, which the authors named 'sting in the tail':

Excerpt 4. Source: Antaki and Wetherell (1991:21)

1	Resp:	(you know) they sort of go	
2		through and say ah .hh well it's not	
3		that Christ would have done	[proposition]
4		okay it's not what Christ would	
5		have done	[concession]
→ 6		but Christ wouldn't have been out	
→ 7		there protesting	[reprise slot ⁸]

The label 'sting in the tail' well defines the relation between the three moves. What is presented as a case of agreement in lines 4–5 is then 'annihilated' (in a scorpion-like manner) in the next two lines. The *concession* move amplifies the proposition asserted in lines 2–3, which is proved incompatible with the final proposition in lines 6–7. To use the terminology applied for the description of the Cardinal Concessive schema, the claim made in lines 2–3 is acknowledged in the same speaker's turn in lines 4–5, after which the speaker produces a counterclaim, which is targeted at the very presupposition of the original presupposition *Christ would be there*. Consequently, by putting *Christ's presence in some place* into questions, the speaker doubts the truth of *Christ would have done that*.

The pseudo-dyadic patterns are reported to have a significantly lower frequency of occurrence than the dyadic forms proper (Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson 1998, 1999, Łyda *in preparation*), yet they are more frequent than the last subtype, namely, the monadic one.

⁸ The labels provided to the right of turns 3,5 and 6 are original terminology of Antaki and Wetherell, whose understanding of concession is different from Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson's. Note that the acknowledgement move is termed here *concession*. The third of the moves *reprise* is sometimes referred to as the *rhetorical effect*.

The monadic type is a superficially reduced version of the Cardinal Concessive or the Reversed Cardinal Concessive schema for the lack of an explicitly marked X move. The major difference between monadic versions and the pseudo-dyadic one stems from the fact that in the latter one X is a part of the co-text whereas in the former type it has to be reconstructed from the context. In some cases the missing move belongs to a prior discourse and is activated intertextually; in other cases it is only envisaged as a possible claim, which is acknowledged and countered. Actually, the monadic pattern allows for a reversal of X' and Y moves, resulting in two monadic subtypes: 0X'Y and 0YX'

The monadic type is a particularly interesting case of realisation of the Cardinal Scheme, since as claimed by Barth-Weingarten (2003:75), it can be regarded as a 'missing link' between Concession as a spoken discourse relation and concession in writing. This is due to the fact that the dominant type of written concessive constructions is monadic, i.e., in sentences like *Although it rained, she went out*, the missing element of the tri-partite sequence is the Claim (X) that could have been made by an imaginary reader/partner in dialogue: *It rained*. What follows it (*Although it rained, she went out*) should be viewed as a realisation of moves X' and Y.

As a result, 'interactional' approach on concession should be considered a more comprehensive one, which predicts variations on the cardinal concessive pattern, monadic (written) concessives being only one of its possible realisations.

Summary

The present article aimed at a critical survey of major positions on concession. The relation has been presented as an object of study within three different methodological and conceptual paradigms: syntactic-semantic, rhetorical and, finally, interactional.

First, the discussion has been intended to demonstrate insufficiencies of the traditional syntactic-semantic approach, which has often reduced the scope of analyses to a set of clauses introduced by conjunctions deemed concessive *a priori*.

Secondly, the formal approach has been compared with the functional approach of the Rhetorical Structure Theory, in which CONCESSION is one of relations holding between two spans of text, mainly written one, and contributing to its coherence.

Finally, the discussion has focused on the interactional model proposed by Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (1999, 2000). This model, originating from the RST, considers Concession a discourse-rhetorical relation, or an action performed by language users in speech. Like RST it abandons the idea of intrinsically concessive conjunctions functioning as markers of concession. Instead, it views concession as an action, prototypically involving two speakers and three moves. While the Cardinal Concessive pattern is the most frequent one in spoken discourse, its realisations in writing are different, yet they can be subsumed under the same general category of Concession.

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