Argumentative Text as Rhetorical Structure: An Application of Rhetorical Structure Theory

M. AZAR

University of Haifa
Hebrew Language Department
31905 Haifa, Israel

ABSRACT: Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST), as a tool for analyzing written texts, is particularly appropriate for analyzing argumentative texts. The distinction that RST makes between the part of a text that realizes the primary goal of the writer, termed *nucleus*, and the part that provides supplementary material, termed satellite, is crucial for the analysis of argumentative texts.

The paper commences by determining the concept of *argument relation* (argument + conclusion) and by briefly presenting RST. It continues by identifying five of RST's rhetorical relations of the satellite/nucleus schema (Evidence, Motivation, Justify, Antithesis, Concession) as five argument relations, each being, logically or pragmatically, a special kind of argument: Evidence being a *supportive* argument, Motivation an *incentive* argument, Justify a *justifier* argument, and Antithesis and Concession *persuader* arguments. To illustrate, an analysis of three short texts concludes the paper.

KEY WORDS: Argument relation, argumentative text, persuasion, rhetorical relation, rhetorical structure, text analysis, writer's intention

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on argumentative text structure refer predominantly, directly or indirectly, to Toulmin's work (Toulmin, 1958). Toulmin's model in its reduced relationship form of *Datum* or *Argument* → *Conclusion* authorized by a *Warrant* or *Topos* was considered the 'prototypical argumentative schema' and used to define a minimal formalization of argumentative text. Doubts, however, have recently been raised regarding the relevancy of any prototypical argumentative text schema and especially Toulmin's schema (Brassart, 1996a; 1996b). I share these doubts, and think that argumentative text should be analyzed first of all according to a general theory of text analysis, and also be recognized as argumentative by criteria pertaining to that theory. All other examinations concerning the specifics of the argumentation found in the text are theory-dependent, and may find their place in addition to the text analysis, which is (or should be) independent of any specific argumentation theory. The text theory I recommend for a preliminary analysis, which can be followed by a more specific argumentation analysis and theory dependent, is Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST).

RST was conceived originally for a text generation program, and was

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used in a large number of natural language generation systems (for example, Hovy, 1991; Knott, 1991; Moore and Paris, 1989; Rosner and Stede, 1992). It was also used in many descriptive studies of discourse (Fox, 1987; Linden et al., 1992; Matthiessen and Thompson, 1988; Abelen, Redeker and Thompson, 1993), as well as in a case-study to facilitate textlinguistic comparison of two texts and accurate diagnosis of the sources of the incoherence of one of them (O'Brient, 1995).

Mann and Matthiessen (1991, p. 235) state that distinguishing between the nucleus part of a statement, i.e., the part that relates to the primary goal of the writer, and the satellite part, which realizes the writer's goal and provides supplementary material, is 'crucial to a study of persuasion texts', and therefore, RST is a useful tool for the analysis of persuasive texts. Abelen, Redeker and Thompson (1993, p. 333) also see RST as 'especially useful for the analysis of persuasive language, because it allows, and even forces, the analyst to consider the intended communicative effects expressed in, or plausibly inferable, from the text.'

It is true that certain difficulties are encountered at times in making a distinction between a nucleus and a satellite (see Martin, 1992, pp. 253–265), and no fixed, one-to-one mapping between *intentional* and *informational* levels exists (see Moore and Pollack, 1992), but these critics are less relevant for the analysis of texts which intend to persuade by using the form of argument relations, (i.e., a reason or some other kind of argument and a conclusion), because these argument relations, which are, as we will see, nothing else than certain types of satellite/nucleus relations, are recognized as such independently of the difficulties that may exist in identifying other satellite/nucleus relations that may take place in the text. The first kind of satellite/nucleus relations, the one which is of our interest here, is by definition intentional (or *presentational* in RST's terminology), and as such, the distinction between nucleus and satellite is indispensable, and no difficulties are encountered in making the distinction. The mapping between intentional and informational (*subject matter* in RST's terminology) should not concern us, because all the intentional relations are, by definition, independent of any specific type of informational relation.[1]

In a previous paper (Azar, 1995) I contended that five of RST's rhetorical relations – Evidence, Justify, Motivation, Antithesis and Concession – are congruent with the concept of argument relation, and revealed that Evidence, Antithesis and Concession are often found in newspapers in the form of texts (or parts of texts) built in two hierarchical levels, each containing two units connected by one of the three relations, all the six theoretically possible combinations have been found and exposed. My aim in the present paper is twofold. Firstly, there is a need to clarify what is exactly meant by *argument relation*, and to justify why the five RST relations mentioned above should be considered as argument relations. Secondly, and this is my principal task, to demonstrate how RST can be useful in iden-

tifying and analyzing argumentative texts and differentiating them from explanative texts.

Firstly, I will explain my conception of argument relation, and will then briefly introduce RST, quoting the five RST definitions of the five relations that I consider as argument relations. Secondly, I shall discuss the justification of seeing them congruent with the notion of argument relation, and give some examples of analysis.

2. WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT RELATION?

I entirely agree with Connor and Lauer (1985), who are in sharp contradiction to Ducrot (1992), in maintaining that argumentation is a type of *persuasive* activity, which, in accordance with long rhetoric tradition, integrates the rational, credibility, and affective appeals corresponding to logos, ethos, and pathos. Understanding argumentation as a persuasive activity is congruent with the view of Chittleborough and Newman (1993, p. 202) who contend that

> An argument has been put forward where there has been an intention to either establish a proposition, or persuade one or more people to accept a proposition (where such an acceptance would involve a change in belief, strength of belief, or a change in behaviour).

Chittleborough and Newman add that the object-matter of an argument's intention (to establish or persuade) is its conclusion, which can be a prescribed action or an assertion, and this attempt to achieve an argument's intention will involve the use of at least one *supportive* and/or at least one *persuader*. A supportive is defined (p. 196) as being a reason or item of information presented in an argument which is intended to provide 'support for a conclusion,' and a persuader as 'a psychologically manipulative technique used by an arguer with the intention or hope of increasing the chances of the conclusion being accepted by a recipient.' An 'item of information' may include visual images such as charts, diagrams, graphs, symbols, pictures, photos, etc.

Knowing now what is meant by *argument*, *supportive*, *persuader*, and *conclusion*, we may formulate a (first) definition of the term *argument relation*:

> An argument relation is the relationship that exists between two parts of a monologue, one being an argument (i.e., a supportive or a persuader), the other a conclusion (i.e., a prescribed action or an assertion).

This definition of argument relation is compatible with most contemporary argumentation scholars, for example, Van Eemeren et al. (1987), Brockriede (1990), Crosswhite (1996) – to mention just a few. Perelman (1982, p. 47), in particular, makes a very clear distinction between 'argumentation' (i.e., our argument relation) and 'demonstration':

> Argumentation differs from formal demonstration in three important respects. First demonstration is possible only within a formal system of axioms and rules of inference. Argumentation does not start from axioms but from opinion, values, or contestable viewpoints; it makes use of logical inferences but is not exhausted in deductive systems of formal statements. Second, a demonstration is designed to convince anybody who has the requisite technical knowledge, while argumentation is always directed to a particular audience and attempts to elicit or increase the adherence of the members of the audience to the theses that are presented for their consent. Finally, argumentation does not aim at gaining purely intellectual agreement but at inciting action, or at least at creating a disposition to act at the appropriate moment.

Perelman's 'demonstration' does not correspond to Chittleborough and Newman's 'establishing a proposition', because the latter does not need 'a formal system of axioms and rules of inference'. It needs only a supportive, which is a rational persuasion argument as defined by Blair (1992, p. 258):

> In general terms, argumentative discourse is considered rational persuasion if it consists of a (set of) proposition(s), advanced as a reason for accepting another proposition or for performing an action which are intended to be so related to it that it would be inconsistent (in some sense) to accept the (set of) reason(s) but not accept the proposition or endorse the performance of the action in question.

A persuader, on the other hand, is the kind of argument that can be accepted without being inconsistent if the conclusion is not acceptable. Indeed, in real discourse, people often use non-reason persuader arguments, which are not intended to be, nor intended to appear as, reasons or a rational arguments, but are nevertheless put forward with the intention or hope of increasing the chances of the conclusion being accepted by a recipient. In Azar (1995) and in the present paper, it is shown that antithesis and concession expressions can be used as argument relations of the persuader type. We will also see that taking RST's definitions in consideration, will force us to enlarge the notions of argument (or persuader).

3. RHETORICAL STRUCTURE THEORY (RST) AND ARGUMENT RELATIONS

Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) is a theory of text organization. It describes the kinds of parts a text can have, how they can be arranged and connected to form a whole text. The authors of RST (Mann and Thompson, 1986; Mann and Thompson, 1987; Thompson and Mann, 1987; Mann and Thompson, 1988; Mann et al., 1992), assert that except for certain types of text, such as laws, contracts, reports and various kinds of language-as-art (poetry), virtually every coherent text has an RST analysis. Relationships between parts of a text, they maintain, are crucial to make the text function as a single unit. The theory maintains that consecutive discourse elements, termed *text spans*, which can be in the form of clauses, sentences, or units larger than sentences, are related by a relatively small set (20–25) of *rhetorical relations*. Mann and Thompson (1988) present a list (not exhaustive) of these relations with their definitions. According to RST, a text can

generally be described by breaking it down into two spans, and the relationship, termed schema, between them is mostly asymmetric: the one, termed *nucleus*, is usually more essential to the text than the other, termed *satellite*. Mann and Thompson (1988) maintain that the removal of text spans which function only as satellites, and never as nuclei, will leave a coherent text with a message resembling that of the original, whereas the same operation exercised on the nuclei will result in an incoherent text whose central message is difficult or impossible to comprehend.

The definitions of the relations is made with reference to two *fields*, specifying a particular judgment the text analyst must make in building the RST structure. The first field includes *constraints* on each one of the two text spans and on their combination, the second specifies the plausible *effect* that the writer attempts to achieve on the reader's belief, inclination, or understanding. The *locus* of the effect, derived from the effect field, is identified as either the nucleus alone or the nucleus-satellite combination. Thus RST provides a set of the writer's intentions and the conditions which enable the reader or analyst to identify those intentions. The task of the analyst is to break the text down into text spans and to find a RST relation that connects each pair of spans until all pairs are accounted for. To determine whether or not a relation holds between two spans of text, the analyst examines whether the constraints on the nucleus and satellite hold and if it is plausible that the writer's point has the desired effect on the reader.

Mann and Thompson (1988, p. 257) divide RST relations into two classes: *subject matter* and *presentational*. Subject matter relations are those whose intended effect is that the reader *recognizes* the relation in question: presentational relations are those whose intended effect is to *increase* some inclination in the reader, and the locus of the effect is the nucleus alone. Mann and Thompson (1988) list sixteen subject matter relations and seven presentational relations as shown below:

> *Subject Matter*: Elaboration, Circumstance, Solutionhood, Volitional Cause, Volitional Result, Non-Volitional Cause, Non-Volitional Result, Purpose, Condition, Otherwise, Interpretation, Evaluation, Restatement, Summary, Sequence, Contrast.
>
> *Presentational*: Motivation (increases desire), Antithesis (increases positive regard), Background (increases ability), Enablement (increases ability), Evidence (increases belief), Justify (increases acceptance), Concession[2] (increases positive regard).[3]

The most important difference between the two groups of relations is that in presentational relations, 'the mapping between intention and rhetorical relations is a one-to-one mapping' (Moore and Paris, 1993, p. 667). For example, if the writer's goal is to increase the reader's desire to perform the action presented in the nucleus, then whatever text is used to achieve this goal, it stands in a Motivation relation to the nucleus (see below (b) the definition of Motivation). On the other hand, if the writer's goal is only to inform the reader of what has happened, without intending to affect his

belief or acts, then the relation must be chosen according to the informational link that holds between the text spans. For example, if the writer's goal is to inform the reader that a scheduled soccer game will not take place if it rains, this information will be presented by using the relation called Condition, and not by any other relation. However, not every conditional sentence, in the syntactical sense of the term, is a Condition relation in RST sense; it can also be, for example, a Motivation relation. Thus, the sentence

If you decide to buy it now, you'll get a reduction of 25 percent

(which can be found in advertising) may well be analyzed according to RST as a text composed of two minimal text spans associated by the relation called Motivation.; the subordinate if-clause being the nucleus, and the consequent (main) clause the satellite. Figure 1 below shows this analysis by using a RST diagram:

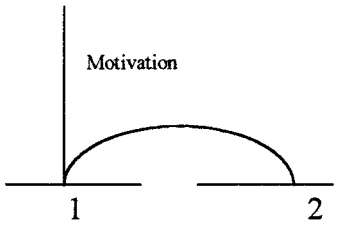

Figure 1. RST Diagram of the text (1) *If you decide to buy it now,* (2) *you'll get a reduction*. (The vertical line indicates that the text span below is the nucleus; the curved line indicates the existence of a nucleus/satellite relation between the two text spans.)

This analysis accounts not for the *information* (that is, RST's subject matter) conveyed by the clausal components of the discourse, but for what is inferred, namely, the writer's *intention* to increase (to 'motivate') the reader's desire to buy the merchandise by offering him or her a price reduction. The analyst, it must be emphasized, cannot identify the rhetorical relations in a text by relying on forms, connectives or discourse markers; he/she must essentially rely on context and situation in order to grasp the writer's intention. Unfortunately, RST does not provide a theory or a methodology to make the 'correct' RST analysis, but the authors of RST insist (see specifically Mann and Thompson, 1986) that as a simple matter of fact, we do recognize the relation holding between two text segments independently of any specific signal of its existence. In their view, with whom I entirely agree, the linguistic signals do not actually 'signal' relations in any direct way. A more appropriate description of their function would be that they constrain the interpretation of the relations between text spans in a rather loosely way, since the relationship between those 'signals' and semantic/rhetorical relations is not one-to-one, but many-to-many. The

authors' conclusion is (Mann and Thompson, 1986, pp. 71–72): 'but we do not believe that there are undiscovered signal forms, and we do not believe that text form can ever provide a definitive base for describing how relational propositions can be discerned.' Only functional, i.e., semantic/pragmatic characterization, can be definitive, albeit depending on an interpretation which is not necessarily exclusive.

We will now examine which of the seven presentational relations listed above can be considered argument relations, i.e., the satellite being an argument, and the nucleus an opinion/conclusion. It is perfectly clear that since any argument, by definition, is always intended to increase belief or disposition to act, no subject matter relation can be considered an argument relation because their intended effect is to *recognize*, not to *increase*. Also, the *raison d'être* of an argument is to advance something other than itself, namely, a conclusion, therefore, only those relations whose locus of effect is the nucleus alone should be considered as possible argument relations, and all the seven presentational relations have this property.

Of the seven relations that are intended to increase, that is, to increase (a) desire to act (Motivation), (b) positive regard (Antithesis and Concession), (c) ability to understand (Background), (d) ability to act (Enablement), (e) belief (Evidence), and (f) readiness to accept (Justify) – two have not the kind of effects that are congruent with those expected from an argument relation: increasing ability to understand (c) and increasing ability to act (d). Increasing ability to understand can be considered as an explanation relation, but not as an argument relation, and increasing ability to act is not the same as increasing the desire to act. Background and Enablement, then, which increase ability, but not desire, should be omitted from our list of possible argument relations. We are left with five RST relations, whose definitions will be examined in order to decide their status as argument relations. The five definitions below are taken from Mann and Thompson (1988), but the examples are chiefly mine (N = Nuclear; S = Satellite; R = Reader; W = Writer).[4]

a) Evidence:

Constraints on N: R might not believe N to a degree satisfactory to W.
Constraints on S: The reader believes S or will find it credible.
Constraints on the N + S combination: R's comprehending S increases R's belief of N.
The effect: R's belief of N is increased.
Locus of the effect: N.

Example:

1. The program as published for the calendar year 1980 really does work.
2. In only a few minutes, I entered all the figures from my1980 tax return and got a result which agreed with my manual calculation to the penny.

Evidence is surely an argument relation, since the intended effect is to increase belief in what is said in N (the conclusion), and the way to do it is to put forward an S (an argument) acceptable by the reader (constraints

on S). This is exactly what argumentation is all about: to present an argument (unit 2 in our example) in order to evidence the truthfulness of the opinion/conclusion (unit 1) so that the addressee's (R's) belief of it increases. The S of Evidence must be a *supportive* (not a *persuader*), since the constraints on S + N say that 'R's comprehending S increases R's belief of N', meaning that if R is considered as a rational person, it is reasonable for W to believe that if S is presented before R and R understands its content, he/she will be inclined to accept the truthfulness of N.

b) Motivation:

Constraints on N: Presents an action in which R is the actor (including accepting an offer), unrealized with respect to the context of N.
Constraints on the N + S combination: Comprehending S increases R's desire to perform an action presented in N.
The effect: R's desire to perform the action presented in N is increased.
Locus of the effect: N.

Example:

1. Invest $100,000 U.S.
2. and get the Green Card Guaranteed.

The difference between Evidence and Motivation is clear: The authors of RST think that the goal of increasing R's desire to perform a certain action is different from the goal of increasing belief and decided to see them as two different rhetorical relations deserved to have two different definitions. The difference does not concern only the goal (N, the conclusion) but also the means to achieve it (S). The absence of constraints on S in the above definition of Motivation indicates that unlike Evidence, everything goes for achieving the goal of increasing R's desire to perform the action. In our example, the second clause is the satellite, and it is more of an incentive than a reason (a supportive) or a psychological manipulation (a persuader). The term Motivation is appropriate because it excludes intimidation and threat, which are not intended to increase desire, and therefore, should not be considered as satellite of Motivation.

Considered from the practice of argumentation, one can say that through Motivation relation (found most of time in commercial advertising), a writer acts on the concrete actions (such as buying something) of an addressee by means of an incentive. If I am right in considering an incentive as a special kind of a persuader, we may add a third kind of argument to supportive and persuader: *incentive*.

c) Justify:

Constraints on N: None.
Constraints on S: None.
Constraints on the N + S combination: R's comprehending S increases R's readiness to accept W's right to present N.
The effect: R's readiness to accept W's right to present N is increased.
Locus of the effect: N.

Example:

1. I am Officer Morgan.
2. Please show me your ID.

Increasing readiness to accept the right to present N means nothing else than increasing readiness to accept the right to perform the speech act of N. Since no constraints are imposed on S or N, the speech act involved in Justify can be any speech act. In our example, the speech act of the nucleus 2 is a demand or incitement to perform an action, which could have been, in another context, a nucleus of Motivation, but in our example, sentence 2 is the nucleus of a Justify relation because sentence 1 is understood as justifying the unusual specific demand. In another context, the same sentence 1 can be used to justify the presentation of an assertion:

1. I am officer Morgan.
2. I saw this man putting something in his pocket.

The satellite intended to increase readiness to accept the right to perform the speech act of N must be considered as an argument, since its ultimate *raison d'être* is to convince the addressee to perform the requested act, to pay attention to the assertion, etc. Therefore, it should be considered as a fourth kind of argument, which may termed *justifier*.

d) Antithesis:

Constraints on N: W has positive regard for the situation presented in N.
Constraints on S: None.
Constraints on the N + S combination: The situation presented in N and S are contrasting (i.e., are (a) comprehended as the same in many respects, (b) comprehended as different in a few respects and (c) 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.
The effect: R's positive regard for N is increased.
Locus of the effect: N.

Example:

1. When on the road, don't be right,
2. be wise.

e) 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 that 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 N is increased .
Locus of the effect: N.[5]

Example:

1. Although it is toxic to certain animals,
2. evidence is lacking that it has any serious long-term effect on human beings.

One common characteristic of the three first RST relations is that each one has a very specific intended effect (to increase belief, to increase desire to act, and to increase readiness to accept the writer's right to present N). In order for the writer to achieve those effects, he/she must use a specific kind of argument (satellite): a supportive for Evidence, an incentive for Motivation, and a justifier for Justify. Antithesis and Concession , by contrast, have a vague intended effect of increasing *positive regard*, and in order for the writer to achieve this effect, no specific kind of argument with a special content is needed. What is even more unusual about these two rhetorical relations is that before being recognized as rhetorical (RST) relations they must be first recognized as *semantic* (if not syntactic) relations, and only after accomplishing this task the analyst may go further and see if all the conditions of the *rhetorical* relations take place. In the case of Antithesis, a contrastive relation must hold, and the incompatibility existing between N (a denied *thesis*) and S (the asserted *anti-thesis*) rhetorically functions as a means to increase positive regard toward the nucleus, provided that R understands that W has positive regard toward N. In the case of Concession also, R must not only recognize the apparent incompatibility existing between N and S, but also the positive regard that W has toward N.

The satellite parts of Concession and Antithesis are certainly not supportive (let alone incentives and justifiers); they are persuaders. One should not be surprised to find these two relations serving in argumentative texts.[6] According to Robrieux (1993, p. 73) the effectiveness of a concession, known in classical rhetoric as *argumentative* (or *rhetorical*) *prolepsis*, lies in the writer's presentation of a counter-argument: when using a concession, the writer states in advance what may be seen as an unfavorable argument for his belief; by such a maneuver he/she eliminates a possible unfavorable intervention and also reinforces the credibility of the nucleus, because the readers are led to understand that the writer has already considered all the possible objections, or at least the important ones, and rejected them all as valid counter-arguments. The effectiveness of an antithesis may result from thinking along the same lines: if the writer rejects a thesis and replaces it by an antithesis, it is reasonable to expect that he/she has arrived at this point after having examined all possible alternatives and rejected all of them. These persuasive techniques are certainly psychologically manipulative techniques, i.e., the two relations are argument relations, and their argument parts are *persuaders*.[7]

We may now reformulate our definition for argument relation:

> An argument relation is the relationship that exist between two parts of a monologue, one being an argument (i.e., a supportive, an incentive, a justifier, or a persuader), the other a conclusion (i.e., a prescribed action or an assertion).

It is perhaps difficult to accept the idea of viewing incentives (Motivation satellites), justifiers (Justify satellites) and/or persuaders (Antithesis and Concession satellites) as arguments, but the point is that these satellites share something very significant with supportive satellites (i.e., 'real' arguments): they all intend to create or to increase positive regard (see Thompson and Mann, 1987, p. 365), in other words, through them, a writer acts on the opinions, attitudes, or behaviors of an addressee or audience by lending credibility or acceptability to a conclusion (nucleus). The intention to increase positive regard is, in my opinion, a necessary and sufficient condition to consider the five rhetorical relations as argument relations.

We are now in a position to illustrate the usefulness of RST in analyzing some small texts and decide if they are argumentative texts and, if so, what kinds of argument relations they are exhibiting.

4. RST ANALYSIS FROM AN ARGUMENTATION PERSPECTIVE

The first two texts are 'To-the-Editor Letters', which appeared in Newsweek, May 20, 1996, p. 16. Both letters dealt with the same subject: the high cost of college education. I consider one letter to be a non-argumentative text despite its argumentative appearance, whilst the other I consider to be an argumentative text in spite of its non-argumentative appearance.

Text 1 (broken into minimal (i.e., clauses), or nearly minimal text spans):[8]

1. Newsweek's otherwise fair and balanced story of the cost of college education is marred by sensationalism of the cover, which proclaims '$1,000 a week: The Scary Cost of College' ('Those Scary College Costs', Society, April 29).
2. Although you point out in your story that the actual cost at the average college is far lower than $1,000 a week,
3. public-opinion polls show that the Americans think college costs more than it really does.

4a. They think this because the media,

5. in their quest for the dramatic and startling,

4b. always focus on the most expensive colleges.

6. By doing so, they mislead the public and distort the situation facing the majority of students and their families.

Terry W. Hartle
Vice President, American Council on Education
Washington, D.C.

Judging by the general tone of the letter which expresses disagreement with the magazine's *sensationalism* on its cover presentation of the subject, and the use of connectives which may be found in argumentation (*although, because, in their quest, by doing so*) one may think that this text is argumentative, i.e., it contains some argument relations, if not at its top hierarchical level, at least in a lower level of the structure. However, if we

ask ourselves which text span should be considered as the nucleus of the text, i.e. the principal message which the remainder of the text depends on communicatively, our answer should be: text span 1, with the remaining text spans 2–6 being its satellite. Our second question, as argumentation analysts, is: is the RST relation holding between the two text spans one of the five relation that have been recognized (in the previous section) as argument relations? For obvious reasons, it is not Antithesis, Concession or Motivation. It is also not Justify, since the writer surely does not think that he/she must increase the readers' readiness to accept his right to present what he/she wants to say: in Western context of writing letters to the Editor, it is taken for granted that the writer has the right to present what he/she has to say. Neither is the relation Evidence, because the writer's purpose is not to make the magazine's Editor or the readers *believe* that the 'story of the cost of college education is marred by sensationalism of the cover.' Saying that something is 'marred by sensationalism' is not an opinion/conclusion, which the writer wants the readers to be convinced of its *truthfulness*, but rather a blame, a criticism,[9] which needed to be *explained* in order to make the readers *understand* the causes that brought this blame. In my opinion, it is an Elaboration relation, because the primary goal of this satellite part of the text is to explain, or to make understand, the blame expressed in the nucleus by providing more details. According to Wyatt and Badger (1993), an *expositional* composition operates mainly through logical and explanatory devices to provide understanding of its subjects. Indeed, text span 2–6 aims at explaining in a rational way the writer's assertion that the headline '$1,000 a week: The Scary Cost of College' is sensationalism.

Text span 2–6 can also be broken down into two parts: 2–3 (N) and 4a–6 (S). The relation between 2-3 and 4a-6 is Non-volitional cause,[10] which in our text, serves as an explanation to the fact presented in 3. Within 2–3, the syntactic and semantic relation between the two units is concession, but, as has already been said, RST analysis is not equal to syntactical analysis. The relation is not RST Concession, because the intended effect of satellite 2 is not to increase the reader's positive regard toward nucleus 3, since 3 states an incontestable fact, and facts, if accepted as such, need no support or 'positive regard' of any kind, only explanation. If, despite its formal appearance, the relation is not Concession,[11] it can be Circumstance, which its effect is that 'R recognizes that the situation presented in S provides the framework for interpreting N' (Mann and Thompson, 1988, p. 272). In our text, 2 provides the framework for interpreting N as standing in opposition against something else: public-opinion concerning college costs against actual college costs, and this is the reason of using 'Although', to point at the incompatibility between what 'you point out in your story' and, in spite of that, what 'the Americans think.' By adding the concessive clause, the writer gains a more relevant, interesting, and surprising effect of the information presented in N.

Text span 4a–6 can be split into 4a–4b (N) and 6 (S), exhibiting a Non-volitional result relation.[12] Finally, 4a–4b breaks into 4a + 4b (N) and 5 (S), and this is a Volitional cause relation.[13] We can now present the rhetorical structure of text 1 (Figure 2 below) using a RST diagram.

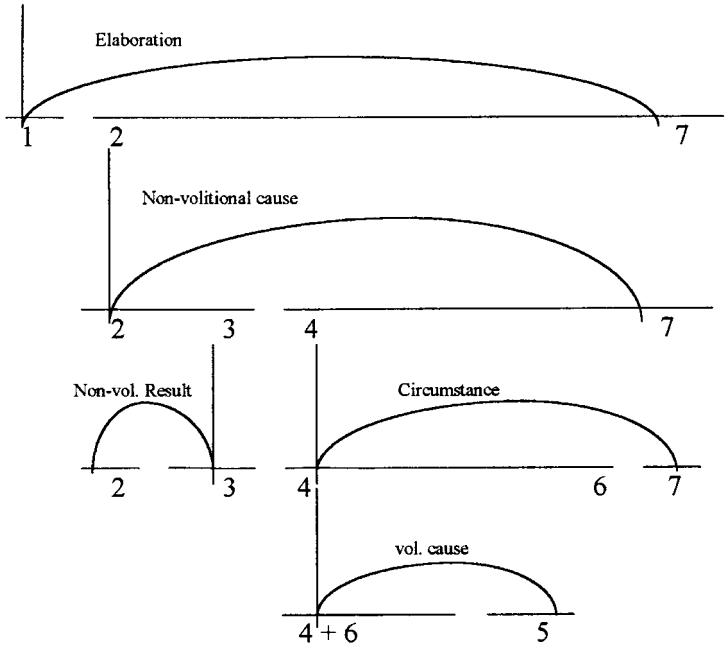

Figure 2. RST diagram of Text 1.

The diagram of Text 1 illustrates, among other things, that the text contains no argument relation. I have taken the trouble to analyze this text because I believe it is important for an argumentation analyst to recognize a text as non-argumentative despite its much resemblance to argumentative texts.

The second text presented here contains characteristics of a narration, but its real intention is to persuade.

Text 2

1. I come from a middle-class family,
2. and neither of my parents attended college.
3. I also have a younger sister who will be attending college in a couple of years.
4. So when it came down to chose between the Ivy League and affordability,
5. I made a choice that, for me, was obvious - I went to Tulane University,
6. which offered me a full four-year scholarship.
7. Shouldn't students go to the college that offers the best chance to study,
8. and not to work three jobs,
9. lose sleep,
10. over growing debts
11. and force their family into hardship?
12. I have absolutely no regrets.

13. There are plenty of opportunities available at every school for strong students who have the ambition, self-confidence and drive to succeed.
14. After all, in four years, when you graduate, what you have achieved will reflect far more about you than where you achieved it.

Marissa Caudll
New Orleans, LA.

With regard to Text 2, I prefer to concentrate on what I consider to be argument relations and the place they occupy in the hierarchical structure of the text, paying less attention on the RST analysis as such.

The text should be split into two parts: 1–6 is only a Background satellite intended to increase 'R's ability to comprehend N' (Mann and Thompson, 1988, p. 273), and 7–14 is the nucleus. The nucleus contains an argument relation: its conclusion/opinion (i.e., N) is presented in 7 + 12 (as it is explained bellow, 7 and 12 present the same opinion: they both contend, in different ways, that it is preferable for students to go to the college that offers the best chance to study), and it has six independent supportive arguments (six Evidence satellites): 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14. It is important to realize that the apparent question and answer (7–11 and 12, respectively) are not actually a real question/answer (corresponding to RST Solutionhood relation). The question in unit 7–11 is a rhetorical question and, in fact, provides four reasons (8 through 11) for the conclusion stated in 7, which really means that students should go to the college that offers the best chance to study. This same conclusion is also presented, in another way, in unit 12.

Text 2 is, therefore, a strong and concentrated supportive argumentative text, in the sense that all the rhetorical relations in the nuclear part of the text (7–14) are Evidence relations , i.e., supportive argument relations. The Background relation in the top level of the hierarchical structure serves only as a precondition to the comprehension of the argumentative part. Figure 3 below shows this structure very clearly.

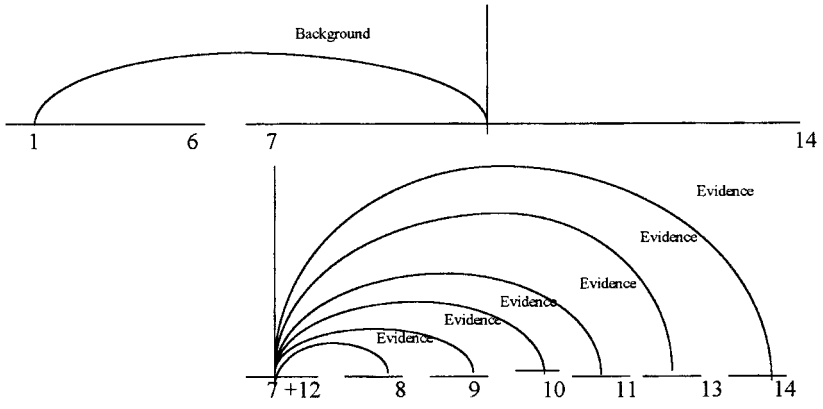

Figure 3. A partial RST diagram of Text 2.

One can see, in passing, how the roles of connectives and syntactical forms are small for rhetorical structure, i.e., the ways in which parts of a text work together to produce communicative end. Text 2 is a good example of a linguistic packaging having an appearance of something different than its real goal.

The next text is also argumentative, but in a complete different way. Figure 4 presents its rhetorical structure.

Text 3

1. Surely, the removal of the idol as a concrete symbol of religious worship was a considerable achievement in the age in which it occurred.
2. But this achievement is mistakenly considered as comprehensive,
3. whilst it was only partial.

(translated from a Hebrew newspaper)

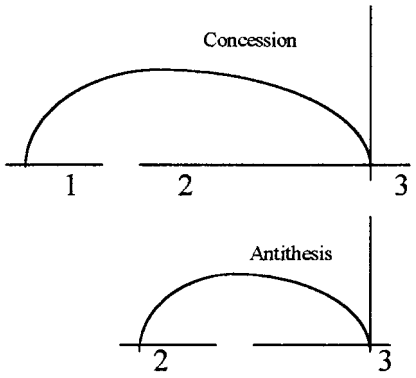

Figure 4. RST diagram of Text 3.

The diagram shows that text 3 is an argumentative text, since its two rhetorical relations are argument relations. The arguments (the satellites) may be considered as not convincing because no reason at all was given to support the conclusion (unit 3), but the writer's intention to use them to increase the readers' positive regard of the conclusion renders them persuaders. These two persuaders are not completely lacking persuasion force. In our text, the conclusion does not present the kind of a disputed opinion, which has its protagonists and its antagonists, and the writer places him/herself with the former trying to convince the latter or the non-committed. Rather, the writer came with something new, something the addressee or readers were not aware of, a new idea, and he/she introduced that new idea by, first, 'making a concession', and acknowledging the considerable achievement, and, second, by rejection the thesis that contradicts his/her antithesis. In a case like this, the two persuaders seem to add credibility to the writer.[14]

To conclude, I would say, first, that the question what is an argumentative text receives now a precise answer: a text which its nucleus (or nucleus

of nucleus, or nucleus of nucleus of nucleus . . .) is a conclusion and its satellite (by definition) an argument. Secondly, RST with its five rhetorical relations that have been recognized as argument relations and the four types of argument that have been distinguished (supportive, incentive, justifier, persuader) gives effective tools for describing, analyzing and comparing argumentative texts.

NOTES

[1] Moore and Pollack (1992) and Elhadad (1995) point out difficulties when using RST for text generation and for interactive dialogues, but RST should be considered first of all as a tool for analyzing monologue written texts.

[2] In Mann and Thompson (1988, p. 255), the locus of Concession is the satellite and the nucleus, but in Mann and Matthiesen (1991), the locus is, like all the other presentational relations the nucleus alone.

[3] Abelen et al. (1993, p. 334) consider Restatement and Summary as two textual relations. They also view Solutionhood, Interpretation and Evaluation as interpersonal (that is, presentational).

[4] RST was created only for written texts, and, therefore, only writer and reader are used in RST.

[5] See footnote 2. I do not see any reason why Concession should differ from Antithesis in matter of locus of effect, since both intend to increase positive regard.

[6] Barton (1995) sees the two contrastive relations, antithesis and concession, as typical to academic argumentative discourse. Ducrot (1992, p. 155), says that reading Le Monde is fascinating from the point of view of the 'incredible cascade of concessions.'

[7] See Azar (1997) for a more detailed discussion of the complexity of concession relations, and their use as argumentation.

[8] One of the advantages of RST over other methods of text analysis is that it allows the analyst to decide which parts of the text will be broken into its minimal text spans and which will be broken into larger text spans. The aim of the analysis should determine the length of the spans, and our aim is to decide if the text, or part of it, is argumentative or not. One should also remember, when judging a proposed analysis of a text, that there is often more then one interpretation of a given text. The real important question is: Is the suggested interpretation a likely one?

[9] Wyatt and Badger (1993) convincingly make a distinction between argumentation and criticism, a distinction usually not found in argumentation literature.

[10] The effect of Non-volitional cause is (Mann and Thompson, 1988, p. 275): 'R recognizes the situation presented in S as a cause of the situation presented in N.'

[11] In Azar, 1997, three types of concession relations have been distinguished: a non-argumentative, a persuader and a supportive.

[12] The effect of Non-volitional result is (Mann and Thompson, 1988, p. 276): 'R recognizes that the situation presented in N could have cause the situation presented in S.'

[13] The effect of Volitional cause is (Mann and Thompson, 1988, p. 274): 'R recognizes the situation presented in S as a cause for the volitional action presented in N.'

[14] Of course, only meticulous empirical researches can provide answers concerning the usage of concession and antithesis relations in argumentative texts.

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