A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF

ALTHOUGH

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Abstract

The extent to which semantic and pragmatic descriptions of linguistic phenomena should be based on naturally occurring language is subject to debate. In the case of discourse markers and connective expressions, most research remains at a theoretic level, despite the increasing interest in the use of corpora for linguistic analysis in the last decades. We undertake a corpus-based analysis of the meaning and function of although, drawing on previous descriptions of this unit formulated from different theoretical perspectives (discourse analysis, pragmatics, semantics). We aim to contribute empirical evidence for certain claims made in the literature, and to complement such descriptions with our findings. The study focuses on the type of contrast expressed by although, the elements of the contrast relation and the structure of the information. First, the theoretical background for the particular issues we study is presented. Then, the objectives and methodology are explained, and results discussed.

Key words: corpus-based, although, discourse marker, conjunction, semantic analysis, pragmatic analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

The debate on how pragmatic theory should consider language in use to reach advances in the description of linguistic phenomena is today an alive one. The deductive approach maintains that theory is attained without necessarily taking into account language samples, while the inductive approach relies on language samples to construct knowledge (Pons, 2008: 1353-54). The empirical approach to the study of discourse markers using corpora of naturally-occurring instances complements former, more formal descriptions of these units (cf. the special issue on empirical data and pragmatic theory by Journal of Pragmatics, 2008). It is in this trend that our study on the meaning and function of although is set out. We undertake a corpus-based analysis of several features of this conjunction that have been formulated from different analytic approaches, for which empirical evidence has not been provided. We aim to check the applicability of theoretical descriptions of although (notably Iten, 1998; Iten, 2000; Fraser, 1998) against naturally-occurring examples, so as to complete them with a quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis. First, the theoretical background for the particular issues we study is presented. Then, the objectives and methodology are explained, and results discussed.
II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Descriptions of *although* in the literature from traditional grammar to pragmatics provide a range of approaches to explain its function in language and discourse. In general, theoretical descriptions are based on created examples (cf. Iten, 2000; König, 1985; Quirk *et al.*, 1985). Syntactically, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 998) describe *although* as a simple subordinator which introduces a concessive clause. In the sentence-final position, it can imply “some claim of the speaker” (Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 642 footnote), and it is, together with *though*, the most versatile among concessive subordinators: it can relate clauses in which the situations are similar (*Although Sam had told the children a bedtime story, June told them one too (anyway)*). Also, “concessive clauses indicate that the situation in the matrix clause is contrary to expectation in the light of what is said in the concessive clause” (Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 1098). Such characterization remains too simple: the semantic description of the clauses related is too general, and the distinction between 'subordination' and 'coordination' has since long been questioned (cf. Haiman & Thompson, 1984, but Iten, 2000), also with respect to concessives (cf. Harris, 1988: 91).

Semantically, Harris (1988: 76-77) describes *although* as a conjunction that in contemporary English has a narrowly limited semantic range, being limited to the concessive value. Diachronically, however, *although* results from a conditional conjunction which developed a conditional concessive value, from which a more narrowly concessive value developed. König (1985) describes *although* by contrast with *but*. These connectives typically express concessivity ('Q although P' / 'although P, Q') and adversativeness ('P but Q'), respectively. The main difference between them is that their non-logic implications are different: in 'although P, Q', the non-logic implication is that 'normally if P, then no-Q', while in the 'P but Q' structure Q carries more weight (König, 1985: 6). To him, concessives are a special kind of adversatives, and *but* and *although* can express both relations. However, he does not elaborate on their differences.

From a synchronic perspective, the distinction between adversative and concessive values is an issue addressed in numerous studies but seldom clearly resolved. Sidiropoulou (1992: 204-206) explains that *although* can be analysed according to two interpretations: in 'Although P, Q' we may interpret a “Shared implicature Concession” or a “Speaker's Attitude Concession”. The first interpretation is equivalent to König's concession (Q although P/Although P, Q) and the second one corresponds to the adversative “P but Q”. The second interpretation signals a change in the speaker's attitude with respect to what follows or precedes the *although* conjunct. That is, *although* can signal what attitude (positive or negative) the speaker has on what he/she says. However, although this distinction explains cases like “Your job is well paid although it's exhausting” (negative attitude) vs. “Although your job is exhausting, it is well paid” (positive attitude), it does not satisfactorily explain other cases: “This way is longer although it's nicer” conveys a positive attitude (I'll take it). Rather, it seems that the speaker's attitude may depend on the contents of the propositions.
Similarly, Winter and Rimon (1994) also consider the issue of adversative vs. concessive although, but they do not carry out a detailed analysis of its meaning.

The discourse-pragmatic perspective has not provided a detailed description of although either. Fraser (1998: 313-314) considers it to be a discourse marker, that is, a pragmatic marker: a linguistically encoded cue which signals the speaker's potential communicative intentions. More specifically, discourse markers signal how the speaker intends the basic message that follows to relate to the prior discourse, and their meaning does not contribute to the representative sentence meaning (Fraser, 1990: 387); it is procedural, not conceptual (Fraser, 1998: 302). Fraser (1998) describes although by comparing it with however: he affirms that although is equivalent to however, and in 'S1. However S2' and 'S1, although S2' however signals that the first segment is being emphasized, whereas although places priority on the second segment (Fraser, 1998: 313-314). The features distinguishing them in other positions such as sentence-initial although are not specified. From a textual approach an interesting study is Noordman's (2001), which focuses on the types of semantic and textual relations expressed by although.

The most comprehensive account of although comes from the Relevance Theory framework. Iten (1997, 1998, 2000) maintains that this concessive connective has a meaning which is difficult to capture, as it lacks a reference and it does not contribute to the truth conditions of the utterances in which it occurs (that is, its suppression does not affect the truth of the utterances that contain it, nor alters the meaning of the sentence where it appears). Iten examines the syntactic and semantic differences between although and but. First, in order to achieve the same interpretation for Q although P/Although P, Q and P but Q, but must introduce Q, while although introduces P (Iten, 2000: 2-3). Second, but is a coordinating conjunction and although a subordinating conjunction, so their syntactic restrictions are different. This explains that although can replace but only in a relatively restricted subset of examples: those in which the intended interpretation is one of denial of expectation, that is cases where the but clause (direct denial) or an implication of the but clause (indirect denial) is the negation of an implication derived from the first clause (Iten, 2000: 4-5). Her main contribution is a definition of the meaning of although in terms of procedure (it does not encode conceptual information): “although, in utterances of the form Q although P / Although P, Q, encodes a procedure along the lines [...] Suspend an inference from what follows (i.e. P) which would result in an unresolvable contradiction” (Iten, 2000: 25). Iten explains this in the following example (2000: 25-26):

(1a) Peter went out although it was raining. Q although P
(1b) Although it was raining, Peter went out. Although P, Q

In (1a) the hearer processes Q (Peter went out) and then although indicates that there is an inference from P that s/he has to suspend because it would result in a contradiction. When reading P (it was raining) the assumption that people do not usually go out if it's raining becomes immediately accessible. This assumption licenses an inference from it was raining to Peter didn't go out, which would contradict the proposition expressed by Q (i.e. Peter went
out). One last interesting observation in this account is the difference in acceptability or ease of processing between utterances of the form $Q$ although $P$ and Although $P$, $Q$. According to Iten (2000: 29-30), there is a tendency to prefer utterances of the form Although $P$, $Q$, which is explained in processing terms. The same processing effort is required to process these structures with concessive although (in the sense described by König earlier in this section; (1a) and (1b)) and there is no difference in acceptability. However, when although has an 'adversative' meaning (as used by König; illustrated by Iten (2000) in (2a) and (2b)), where the suspended inference is from $P$ to the negation of an implicature of $Q$ (He is a good runner), more processing effort is required.

(2a) He has long legs although he is a bit short of breath. Q although $P$
(2b) Although he is a bit short of breath, he has long legs. Although $P$, $Q$
(the implicature of $Q$: He is a good runner)
(the assumption that combines with $P$ to license the suspended inference: If $X$ is short of breath, $X$ is not a good runner).

Apart from these formal syntactic and semantic-pragmatic descriptions of although, other aspects of its meaning have been dealt with in the literature. Iten (1997), König and Siemund (2000) and Noordman (2001) focus on the link between concessivity and causality, which means, broadly speaking, that the concessive relation contains an underlying causal relation. Noordman's study (2001) considers the order of the underlying causal relation (default: cause-consequence, vs. reversed: consequence-cause) and its effects in the processing effort involved in reasoning.

These descriptions of although constitute the main framework for our study. Some other theoretical distinctions and formalizations we use are presented in the next section.

III. OUR STUDY

The point of departure of our analysis of although is the study of the type of contrast it expresses in our corpus. The expression “type of contrast” that we use reflects the elements involved in the CR. The first type of contrast we consider is called “denial of expectation”. It applies to those cases in which an underlying expectation from the first element of the CR (an inference derived from it, an implicature) is negated in the second element. This type of contrast includes the types of relation with although that Noordman (2001) names semantic, pragmatic and speech act relations, following Sweetser's (1990) three domains of interpretation for although. We distinguish, however, between the cases in which the second element of the CR is the exact negation of the C implicature of the first element (contrast type 1), and those cases where the element that negates the C implicature is an implicature of the second element (contrast type 2). Thus, we use the distinction between the two ways the implicature is negated pointed out by Blakemore (direct denial and indirect denial, 1989), and also mentioned by Iten (2000). Type 3 is equivalent to Noordman's (2001: 159) “concessive
opposition”: there is no negated expectation but the elements connected by *although* express opposed arguments (cf. example (3))

(3) Although that fiscal regulation yields much money, it is not fair (context: a discussion on whether to maintain or not a fiscal regulation) (example from Noordman, 2001: 159).

Even if it can be claimed that in this type of CR (contrast type 3) it is always possible to find an implicit expectation (*I am for the regulation*) negated by the second element (*I am not for the regulation*), some cases in the corpus seem to be more adequately described in terms of two opposed arguments. Type of contrast 4 in our analysis refers to “mere contrast”: the speaker only expresses the difference between the facts or events described in the propositions. Although this type of contrast is more typical of other connectives, like *while*, we find that in some cases the writer does not seem to say “more” than merely stating the contrast (without any contrasting inferences). Ford (2000: 282) describes the meaning of *while* as “neutral contrast” in the following example:

(4) In our recordings, men produced 10 instances of irony, while women produced 11.

The analysis of naturally-occurring sentences reveals difficulties in assigning a single interpretation of type of contrast in a considerable number of cases. We have then used the notation of 1/4, 2/3, etc. to mark the cases where two types of contrast could be interpreted.

We borrow Grote *et al.*’s (1997: 95) formalization of the concessive relation to study its elements in our corpus, namely some aspects of their occurrence:

On the one hand, A holds, implying the expectation of C. On the other hand, B holds, which implies Not-C, contrary to the expectation induced by A.

To be more illustrative, one can think of A as the “although”-part, B as the “because”-part, and Not-C as the “nevertheless”-part. The situation corresponds to what Lakoff (1971) described as “denial of expectation”.

[...]

\[ A \Rightarrow C \text{ (‘default rule’)} \]
\[ B \Rightarrow \text{Not-C} \]

This formulation is adequate to describe the types of contrast 1 and 2 (expectation negated by a proposition or by an implicature). However, we have adapted this formulation to describe those cases where *although* introduces the second element of the CR. With the ordering main-subordinate, we call the first element (initial main clause) “Fact” instead of Not C, as C has not been derived yet (A is stated last). “Fact” generates the expectation C, and A, the *although*-part, negates this expectation (it is equivalent to the Not C element in the
subordinate-main ordering). With the type of contrast “two opposed arguments”, with no negated expectation, Grote et al.’s formulation is not suitable. We then call the elements of the CR “argument 1” and “argument 2”. The elements of the “mere contrast” cases are referred to as “main” and “subordinate”.

In studying the type of information introduced by the marker, we use the known vs. new information distinction, equivalent to Dik's (1997: 311-312) “given/new distinction”, as well as the cognitive distinction background vs. foreground (cf. Chen, 1991).

To explore the structure of the underlying causal relation in our although sentences we follow Noordman (2001). We consider the link between the kind of information although introduces (new vs. known/given) and the structure of the underlying cause-consequence relation.

### IV. OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to identify the most salient features of the expression of contrast with although in a corpus of research articles. We aim to assess the degree of explicitness/implicitness of contrast relations (CRs) signalled by this connective, and to understand its meaning and function in the corpus, for which purpose we will apply a suppression test. Also, we aim to determine the types of contrast (the type of opposition) expressed by this connective in the corpus articles, and their frequency. The second major objective is to characterize the way in which this connective contributes to the organization/presentation of information, and its role in the creation of meaning. To this end, we will study the ordering of the concession parts, and observe which of the basic elements of the CR appear explicitly expressed and in what position; we will analyse the type of information although introduces along the distinction new/known information and we will try to recognise contents or types of information that tend to appear as new information and as known information. Finally, we seek to identify the causal relation underlying the contrast relation, to assess how the causal order (cause-consequence vs. consequence-cause) interacts with related to the expression of contrast in the CR and how it affects its comprehension.

### V. METHODOLOGY

The corpus contains approximately 250000 words, from which 100 instances of although are collected. It is drawn from 22 linguistics articles from Journal of Pragmatics (from January 2000 to January 2003), all presumably written by native speakers of English. The instances were introduced in a database (Microsoft Access) and analyzed according to the aspects mentioned in previous sections. The data of the analysis were also introduced in the database. This tool enabled us to consult and manipulate data quickly and efficiently, especially as it allowed for the combination of fields or parameters of the analysis to extract complex results. The automatic treatment of data seemed suitable for the amount of
information used, and allowed us to obtain results from a different perspective than that found on the literature on although.

VI. RESULTS

VI.1. Meaning of although

VI.1.1. Types of contrast expressed by although

Although expresses in the corpus the four types of contrast that we have distinguished. Predominantly although expresses a contrast involving denial of expectation: an expectation generated from the first element of the CR is negated in the second element (69 instances, discounting the cases with overlapping types of contrast, or 73.4% of the occurrences of although). The denial of expectation is carried out in a similar number of cases through an explicit proposition (the second element of the CR negates the C implicature) and through an implicature derived from the second element. Although indicates a contrast between two opposed arguments (argumentative contrast) in 22 occurrences, but another type of contrast can also be interpreted in all of these cases. It seems that these two types of contrast are not exclusive, but rather that the denial of expectation is possible when two arguments are opposed. Mere contrast is rarely expressed (3 cases), and it is in every instance compatible with another type of contrast. Mere contrast seems rather exceptional for although.

VI.1.2. Meaning

The distinction between concessive and adversative although is not studied in our corpus. However, the procedural meaning encoded by although defined by Iten (2000) adequately describes all the instances in our corpus. We find that this marker can always express a contrast by means of a denied expectation, even in those cases where mere contrast and an argumentative interpretation seemed clear. In conclusion, if although can express in every case in our corpus a contrast with a denied expectation, it is because the procedure that it codifies refers to an inference that leads to an unresolvable contradiction.

VI.1.3. Suppression of the marker and procedural meaning

By suppressing although we seek to better understand its function as a device used to cancel other possible semantic or discourse relations that may hold between statements or text segments, and thus to determine its contribution to the interpretation of the CR. We may also assess the degree of difficulty in the interpretation of the statements without the marker. In the majority of cases its suppression yields a syntactically incorrect structure, as was expected
from a subordinator. The marker facilitates the processing of the CR, even though the CR could be identified without the marker (for example semantic opposition or a comparative structure may indicate contrast). In a minority of cases among those syntactically incorrect, the CR would be difficult to process without although. The cases where the marker is necessary to signal the CR because it excludes other possible relations constitute a minority. We conclude that although tends to be syntactically required but it is often semantically unnecessary. Nevertheless, its instructions for the interpretation of the preceding or the following proposition clearly guide the reader towards the correct interpretation by reducing his/her cognitive effort to process the intended discourse relation.

The suppression of although must also be considered in the wider textual context. This marker often appears in a context where multiple markers signal different discourse relations (other CRs, causal relations, reformulations, etc.), reflecting the informative density and argumentative complexity of the RA in linguistics. The omission of the marker entails increased cognitive difficulty when interpreting the meaning of the fragment, which again points to its function as guide to the reader mentioned by Fraser (1998) and Iten (2000).

We now observe whether there exists a connection between the marker suppression and the order of the elements in the CR. Table 1 shows the results of the suppression test (90 cases considered):

**Table 1. Suppression test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of suppression on CR</th>
<th>Although + first element (number of cases)</th>
<th>Although + second element (number of cases)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The marker is necessary to indicate contrast: other (unintended) discourse relations are possible</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactically correct and easy to process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct but difficult to process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect but easy to process</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect and difficult to process</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Without the marker the CR is still easy to process in 67% of the cases (35 out of 52) where although introduces the first element, and in 59% of the cases (22 out of 38) in which it introduces the second element. In 8 cases the marker is required to preclude the interpretation of other discourse relations, so it 'cannot' be omitted.

We conclude that although can be suppressed with a lower incidence on syntactic correctness when it introduces the second element, and that the difficulty of processing upon the suppression of the marker is also higher when although introduces this element. These findings may point to its closer nature to coordination conjunctions in this position.

**VI.2. The structure of information with although**

**VI.2.1. The elements of the CR**
As discussed above, the two orders of clauses generally mentioned in theoretical descriptions of although (main clause-subordinate clause, subordinate clause-main clause):

[1] although p, q [A (>C), Not C]
[2] q, although p [Fact (>C), A (Not C)]

do not adequately describe the totality of cases in our corpus. We require formalizations accounting for other, hybrid orderings. We propose the following:

[4] Subject Not C – A (>C) – Not C

Unlike [2], where no implicature seems available in the “Fact” element until it is cancelled in A, in [3], the fact statement in the first element contains some word or expression that suggests that an information from this element contrasts with another information not yet available. It is generally some type of negation in the first element that triggers this suspicion (hence C2). For example, a negated verb, as in (5), suggests that the action or the contrary case are or were possible (“does not convey” suggests the possibility that it 'might as well convey').

(5) [“… does not convey …, nor does … convey…”]
ALTHOUGH thumbs are fingers [...], the use of finger may convey ‘non-thumb’ given the existence of thumb as a functional alternative to finger [...]. But the use of finger does not convey 'non-pinky (finger)', nor does the use of toe convey 'toe other than the big toe', *ALTHOUGH* the big toe, qua plump inside digit, is the structural analogue of the thumb. [Journal of Pragmatics. February 2000. Laurence R. Horn. “From if to iff: Conditional perfection as pragmatic strengthening.”]

Ford (2000: 288) refers to these cases as “cases where a negative clause implicitly [indexes] a corresponding affirmative”, since “Cases of negation can be understood as responding to or constructing a context in which the corresponding affirmative is relevant or assumed.”

The formalization in [4] accounts for the possibility of although to appear in apposition, in between the subject of Not C and its predicate. Although introduces an atypical clause, subjectless and often verbless. With although the writer refers to something in a shortened form to immediately deny the expectation C derived from the although clause. With this pattern, although expresses a contrast in the background, since the Not C part constitutes the frame of the sentence.

VI.2.2. Frequency of the patterns
Table 2 shows the number of cases in which each pattern is used in our corpus. The most frequent ordering is that beginning with the although part (patterns [1], [6] and [7] —the latter represent those cases in which two kinds of contrast can be interpreted: denial of expectation and two opposed arguments or mere contrast): 52 cases out of 94. The ordering with although introducing the second part appears in 37 cases (patterns [2], [3], [2/5] and [8]), while the ordering with the although part in apposition ([4]) is recorded in 5 cases.

### Table 2. Order of the elements of the CR with although

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order of the elements</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[1] A (&gt; C) - Not C</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2] Fact (&gt; C), although Not C</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3] Fact (&gt; C1 and C2) - A (&gt; Not C1)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4] Subject of Not C - A (&gt; C) - Not C</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[7] 1/6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[8] 2/5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note 2: among the 6 cases discarded for the analysis, although introduces the first element in 4 cases and the second in 2)

In the corpus although presents the prototypical ordering of subordinate clauses, preceding the main clause, as mentioned by Mann and Thompson (1988), Noordman (2001), Iten (1998, 2000), in 56 cases (59.6% of the total cases analyzed). The orderings with the although clause as the second element of the CR and although in apposition represent 39% and 5.2% of cases, respectively. It is thus empirically confirmed that the cognitively more natural ordering of the concession parts is the most frequent one in our corpus. However, the ordering that involves more processing effort (the although part as the second element) presents a high percentage of cases, suggesting that this way of presenting information, with the new or rhematic information in the although element, is useful for the writer for some reason, as is explained in section 3.1 below.

In trying to determine if there is a relation between one particular ordering and a specific type of contrast, we find that the initial although part is clearly associated with the type contrast “denial of expectation” (all the cases can be interpreted as denial of expectation). Type of contrast [3] (“two opposed arguments”) is also found with this ordering, but it is proportionally more frequent with the although part as the second element of the CR. With although introducing the second element, “denial of expectation” is also the type of contrast that can be interpreted in all the cases. “Two opposed arguments” ([3]) and “mere contrast” ([4]) are mainly associated with this ordering (“mere contrast” occurs only with this ordering). As there are few cases of although in apposition, we can just state that all four types of contrast can be expressed with this ordering.

### VI.2.3. Expression of the elements of the CR
The elements A, Fact and Not C are always explicit, while B and C may also be implicit. We associate their appearance with greater ease of processing of the CR. According to Grote et al. (1997: 96), C may be presupposed. Since it encodes general world knowledge (a rule of cause and effect, a customary expectation, or some reason which is mutually known), it may not be explicitly communicated. Likewise, B can be unverbalized when it is irrelevant or unknown. We investigate whether these elements are explicitly communicated in research articles. Due to the density and complexity of the information and argumentation presented in them, we expect to find these non-obligatory elements explicit in a number of cases.

The analysis clearly indicates a tendency not to state B: it is explicit in 22 cases (23.4% of the cases) and unverbalized in 72 cases (76.6% of the cases). Sometimes the writer uses a contrast that does not seem to require an explanation, for instance when introducing new information or a new topic.

When B is explicit, it helps to understand the CR. B generally presents a more elaborated idea, an argument or an explanation to something new or contradictory. In (6) B (italized) offers an explanation to the contradiction. In (5) above, the presence of B (given the existence of thumb as a functional alternative to finger) makes it easier for the reader to process an argumentation that may seem confusing, sparing him/her the effort to derive this element from his/her world knowledge.

(6) When applied to the individual strategies, the model of main effects for speaker sex and group composition is significantly better than any other variations on the model, although the model is marginally off reaching significance itself. This is primarily because the expanded contingency table is much sparser than the table in which all the functions are collapsed into four overall categories. [Journal of Pragmatics. May 2000. Jennifer Hay. “Functions of humor in the conversations of men and women.”]

Where B appears in the CR is another interesting aspect of the expression of the CR. B is found before A (or Fact) and Not C, in between them, or following them. The medial position is justified from a cognitive viewpoint: the reader might have derived the C expectation from the first element, and then B informs about a new element at stake that might interfere with C. The final position is also a motivated one because B resolves the expectation contravention: first the contrast is expressed, next it is justified.

Table 3. The B element and the order of the elements of the CR with although

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appearance of B</th>
<th>Order of the elements</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A - Not C - B</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contained in Not C (subject of Not C) / Fact - Not C/B</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

951
Table 3 shows that the final position in the CR is the most frequent one among the 22 cases where B appears. In contrast, there is only one case in which B is found medially, between A and Not C. The ordering of A, Not C and Fact does not affect the position of B.

In a few cases B is contained in Not C, being part of the meaning of Not C. This is illustrated in (7), where Not C contains the reason why the contrast is established (B would be something like “literal meaning should be included in a theory of utterance interpretation because speakers analyze it as part of their understanding of what the speakers imply”).

(7) ALTHOUGH I see no reason to posit a level of literal analysis in a theory of utterance interpretation, I now agree that people distinguish between what speakers say and implicate, that both aspects of speaker meaning involve substantial pragmatic knowledge, and that people may analyze what speakers pragmatically say as part of their understanding of what speakers imply. [Journal of Pragmatics. Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. April 2002. “A new look at literal meaning in understanding what is said and implicated.”]

Now, how clearly B is cognitively made available to the reader in terms of explicit signalling, thus contributing to ease of processing? Only in 5 out of 22 cases of explicit B this element is introduced by a causal preposition or a causal conjunction (as, because, due to, since). Other means to mark B quite clearly are certain verbs (given, to make, use of the gerund with a causal meaning) and several markers that are typically used to signal other discourse relations, such as e.g., for example, to illustrate, and as such, with regard to, in effect. In 6 cases juxtaposition of sentences makes for the transition to the B element. We conclude that B is usually difficult to identify due to the diversity of ways (if any) in which writers introduce and express it.

As for the C element (the implicature derived from the first part and cancelled in the second part), we have not found any explicit case in our corpus. Thus the possibility of C being unverbalized mentioned by Grote et al.'s (1997: 95-96) turns out to be the only situation in our corpus. This corroborates Di Meola's (1998, in König and Siemund, 2000: 348) statement that the cause explaining that what is expected to occur does not in fact occur is hardly ever linguistically codified.

The C expectation is often difficult to extract as the contents of the CR in our examples refer overwhelmingly to abstract relations, notions and events that can only be observed in our minds. It is easy to derive C from “Although it's raining I will go out” (Generally one


*does not goes out when it rains*), as the events in this sentence are observable in the world. Example 8 illustrates the abstract nature of this implicature in our corpus:

(8) He also notes that ‘action’ results when people are invited to participate in and eventually decode an advertisement. This decoding seems somewhat akin to the pleasing satisfaction of completing a crossword or the getting to grips with a complex literary work, ALTHOUGH Bernstein’s lack of precision about what products need to be marketed through tickle advertising suggests that [...] [Journal of Pragmatics. April 2001. Paul Simpson. “‘Reason’ and ‘tickle’ as pragmatic constructs in the discourse of advertising.”]

C: how these ads work is well-known

We experience the difficulty in identifying C especially when although introduces the second element of the CR (cf. Iten, 2000: 29-30). From the reader viewpoint, the implicature C of the initial Fact element is usually derived only after the second element (with although) is read. Thus the yet underived C is cancelled when reading the second element, increasing the difficulty of processing the CR. When reading the first element, the reader generally does not suspect that an implicature is going to be cancelled: s/he may not have derived any implicature, or may be anticipating a different turn in the exposition or argumentation.

In summary, the difficulty of deriving the C implicature is not linked to the position of the although element in the CR, but to the understanding of the contents of the text and its argumentation. It is determined by the access to the shared knowledge the author assumes on the part of the reader and thus by the reader’s capacity to derive appropriate inferences from abstract contents. We can then consider the implicitness of C to be a feature of the disciplinary genre studied.

**VI.3. The presentation of the information with although**

**VI.3.1. Background and foreground information**

*Although* presents information as known/given in the thematic position when it introduces the first part of the CR, and presents information as new in the rhematic position when it occurs in the second part. In our corpus although tends to introduce the first part of the CR, so it usually sets information to the background position, as given/known. We observe that the information in the background is rhetorically less prominent or interesting than that presented in the new or foreground position. In some cases, although introduces in the background some information that readers may already have, and in the foreground or new information position the view on the topic that s/he defends in his/her work.

Where although introduces new information, this is often an opinion, a thesis, position or claim of the author, while those of other authors or studies are presented in the first part (given/known). Thus the distribution of information according to the distinction given/known/background vs. new/foreground allows the writer to highlight the information
that is directly related to him/her in the eyes of the reader. In (9) the CR opposes the use of a concept by some authors and the writer's own definition:

(9) Ervin-Tripp and Lampert (1992) found women more likely to use humor as a coping strategy, ALTHOUGH the definition I have used of coping has much wider scope than theirs [...] . [Journal of Pragmatics. May 2000. Jennifer Hay. “Functions of humor in the conversations of men and women.”]

In other cases, the new information position is reserved by the author to present information that in general backs his/her study, makes it relevant or underpins his/her position or argument. This position is also used by the writer to present his/her opinion, a claim or a statement of his/her position. When data are obtained from empirical studies, the background position is used to present data while a specific datum, an observation or a comment is highlighted in the new information position.

In short, although is used by the writers to exploit the background and foreground perspective in the presentation of information with rhetorical or argumentative purposes. The position of foreground is used to present new information related to the author, his/her contributions, results, opinions and claims. In this way s/he leads the reader from one topic to another, facilitating the understanding of his argumentation.

VI.3.2. New and known information and type of contrast

We observe the following tendency: when the contrast expressed with although involves a failed expectation, whether negated explicitly or through an implicature, the information it introduces is “known”, that is, it introduces the first element of the CR.

VII. CONCLUSION

The starting point of this study was the assumption that a corpus-based approach can provide empirical evidence for a semantic/pragmatic theoretical description of although. We have undertaken to study how this conjunction functions in naturally-occurring examples by focusing on different aspects of its meaning. Some of these aspect have been dealt with in the literature (type of contrast, order of the clauses), some have not (appearance of the elements of the CR, description of their function in presenting information, the combined study of different parameters to obtain a different viewpoint on the function of although). Our first contribution to the description of although has consisted in an adaptation of the existing theoretical framework to adequately account for the CRs in our corpus, namely the specification of the types of contrast expressed by although, and the formulation of the various orderings the concessive relation displays in the corpus. Our other contributions lie in the analytical evidence supporting Iten's procedural description and in a series of tendencies observed on different semantic/pragmatic aspects not empirically studied before.

Although is used to signal the four types of contrast that we have distinguished, but it
is principally used to express denial of expectation. It is noteworthy that this interpretation is always possible even when another type of contrast may be intended (including “mere contrast”). This feature suggests that although is linked intrinsically to the subjectivity of the author. With reference to the distinction between concessivity and adversativeness, we associate the type of contrast “denial of expectation” with the value of “expectation contravention” and “unexpectedness” of concessivity defined by Lakoff (1971) and Quirk et al. (1985). Thus, the procedural meaning defined by Iten (2000) for although as an instruction to suspend an inference that would lead to an unresolvable contradiction adequately describes although in our corpus.

We have also found evidence that the association of although with concessivity is related to a certain unbalance between the parts of the relation, mentioned by Fraser (1998). This is manifested syntactically and cognitively, in the way although distributes the information in contrast in the foreground and in the background for rhetorical purposes. The study of its meaning has been approached as well by studying how it contributes to the processing of the CR. Although typically favours the identification of the CR and undoubtedly contributes to facilitate its cognitive processing, but it is seldom required for the reader to recognize it. It is rather one more signal of the contrast, among other means to signal it (lexical, morphosyntactic).

As for the ordering of the clauses, writers tend to adopt the prototypical ordering of subordinate clauses, which favours ease of processing. However, although introduces the second element of the CR more often than expected. This can be explained as a rhetorical strategy used by writers to situate in the foreground new information dealing with their own opinion, position or data, thus highlighting it. Finally, although is involved in CRs presenting a high amount of implicit information, particularly manifested in the scarce number of explicit instances of the elements B and C.

References

Benjamins, pp. 301-326.