Discourse markers across English and Italian economic discourse: a cross-linguistic perspective on coherence relations.

Silvia Cacchiani
Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio e della Cultura
Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia

Abstract

Contrastive rhetoric has shown that L2 writers tend to reproduce L1 patterns of text organization. On the other hand, lexical research for translation has examined the treatment of specific words in monolingual learner's dictionaries and of their translation equivalents in bilingual dictionaries using corpus analysis to illustrate how type and amount of information do not always account for the differences in meaning and use of dictionary equivalents. To take one example, although many languages have similar sets of connective structures, they may be used differently across different languages and genres, and resorting to their dictionary equivalents may result in unusual writing, with overt errors and unusual frequency of occurrence of particular words. As such, connectives may indeed be characterized as a translation and learning problem.

In the light of this, in this study I present the preliminary results of a research which brings together previous studies in the field in order to differentiate meaning and functions of individual discourse markers. Reference is made to works on coherence relations (Knott and Dale 1994, Knott and Sanders 1998) and the cohesive role of bundles (e.g. Biber, Conrad and Cortes 2004), accounts of metadiscourse (e.g. Hyland 2004), and on Siepmann's (2005) taxonomy of second-level discourse markers, which integrates work on metadiscourse (Vande Kopple 1985, Hyland 2004) with studies in the pragmatics of discourse markers (Fraser 1988), contrastive linguistics and LSP teaching (Hutz 1997).

Specifically, I shall carry out a contrastive analysis of discourse markers in general and exemplifiers (English: *for instance*; Italian: *ad esempio*) inferrers (English: *It therefore comes as no surprise that*; Italian: *E' naturale quindi che*) and reformulators (English: *that is*; Italian: *cioè*) and resumers (English: To sum up; Italian: *Concludendo*) in particular (terms from Siepmann 2005) in order to investigate subtle differences (if any) in their meaning and use.

The study investigates English and Italian using a corpus of research articles in the field of economics. The tools of corpus analysis are used throughout (Scott 1997) in order to complement and examine in detail the treatment of discourse markers in learner's and bilingual dictionaries. Wordlists and concordances for clusters integrate wordlists and concordances for single words. After providing a preliminary list of discourse markers based on previous studies on metadiscourse, cohesion, coherence relations and discourse markers, the paper moves on to investigate in more detail their use within introductions and related 'openings' (i.e. all text up to the end of the second paragraph) in order to best analyze argumentational differences across the articles, journals (Bondi 2007) and languages and, in particular, different uses (if any) of discourse markers. The study concludes by briefly discussing its implications for lexicography, contrastive rhetoric and specialized translation.

References

Biber D., Conrad S. and Cortes V. (2004), "If you look at…:Lexical bundles in university teaching and textbooks", *Applied Linguistics*, 25 (3), 371-405.
Bondi M. (2007), "Historical research articles in English and Italian: a cross-cultural analysis of openings", in M. Bertuccelli Papi, G. Cappelli and S. Masi (eds) *Lexical Complexity: Theoretical Assessment and Translational Perspectives*, Edizioni Plus, Pisa University Press.
Fraser B. (1988), „Types of English discourse markers", *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*, 38, 19-33.
Hutz (1997), *Kontrastive Fachtextlinguistik für den fachbezogenen Fremdsprachenunterricht: Fachzeitschriftenartikel*

Hyland K. (2004) *Metadiscourse*, Continuum.

Knott A. and Dale R. (1994), "Using linguistic phenomena to motivate a set of coherence relations", *Discourse Processes*, 18(1), 35-62.

Knott A. and Sanders T. (1998), "The classification of coherence relations and their linguistic markers: An exploration of two languages", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 30, 135-175.

Scott M. (1997) *WordSmith Tools*, Oxford University Press.

Siepmann D. (2005), *Discourse Markers across Languages*, Routledge.

Vande Kopple W.J. (1985) "Some exploratory discourse on metadiscourse", *College Composition and Communication*, 36, 1, 82-93.