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# Arguing in economics and business discourse: phraseological tools in research articles

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Il ruolo centrale della riflessività è oggetto di grande interesse negli approcci cross-disciplinari al discorso accademico (Hyland & Bondi, 2006). La fraseologia meta-argomentativa e, in particolare, i segnali di organizzazione discorsiva (Sinclair & Mauranen, 2006) possono rivelarsi utili strumenti di indagine nell'individuazione delle strategie argomentative tipiche di una disciplina. Servendosi di strumenti di analisi che derivano tanto dalla linguistica dei corpora, quanto dall'analisi del discorso e dei generi comunicativi, questo studio si propone di analizzare i segnali di organizzazione discorsiva negli articoli di discipline economiche ed aziendali. L'indagine parte da dati quantitativi (liste di frequenza e di parole chiave) per tracciare un profilo fraseologico delle due aree di ricerca. Su questa base offre anche un esempio di analisi delle funzioni semantiche e pragmatiche di *on the other hand*. L'analisi quantitativa e qualitativa porta a sottolineare come la fraseologia ricorrente possa offrire spunti utili per una analisi delle culture argomentative di diverse comunità di discorso.

## **Parole chiave:**

Discorso accademico, fraseologia, espressioni meta-argomentative, integrazione di linguistica dei corpora e analisi del discorso

## **1. Purpose and Background**

American President Harry Truman once asked for a "one-handed economist", because all his economists kept saying *On the one hand... and then on the other hand*. The anecdote is based on a representation of economic reasoning as always weighing the different (or even contrasting) features of an issue, rather than providing decision-makers with conclusive answers. If it is probably misleading to simply define *on the other hand* as a contrastive connector, its typical use in economics is one associated with a feature that has long been considered central to its discourse – hypotheticality (Tadros, 1985). The expression is often used to acknowledge the existence of different or alternative scenarios, thus responding both to a general principle of dialogicity in argumentative writing and to forms of reasoning typically based on abstract logic.

As shown elsewhere (Bondi, 1999, 2005), the "rhetoric of economics" relies on persuasion, reasoning and argument. Economic reasoning is often presented in terms of possible worlds: discourse follows a logic of ramification determining the range of possibilities that emerge from a state of affairs. Economics as a science proceeds not only by representing what happens in the actual world, but also by exploring what could have or could not have

occurred. Scientific argument can hardly be based on laboratory experiment in economics: its domain lies rather in a comparative examination of situations taken from the world of fact or in forms of reasoning based on models of reality. Reference to the world of hypothesis is often made to provide support for a general claim about the real world by way of example or illustration.

The distinction between economics and business studies is clearly a matter of delicacy and it is not easy for outsiders and novices to understand where the line should be drawn between the two fields. The problem of defining 'business' from the point of view of academic discourse studies seems to lie in its basically inter-disciplinary nature, in its orientation to firm activity, organization and management. This does not exclude theoretical, speculative research, but strongly suggests empirical work. It also suggests a close link with the world of practitioners, which seems to favour research that is rich in professional applications. Applied linguistic research has often focused on economics discourse in general (Tadros, 1985; Henderson & Hewings, 1987; Dudley-Evans & Henderson, 1990; Henderson, Dudley-Evans & Backhouse, 1993; Bondi, 1999), but much less attention has been paid to the distinctive features of academic business discourse. Hemais (2001) is a noticeable exception, with a study of marketing journals along the cline between professional and academic writing. Useful elements can also be taken from Hyland's studies of metadiscourse, stance and engagement, including marketing in a wider range of disciplines (Hyland, 1998, 2000), as well as from Bondi (2006), showing how forms of narrative from the world of business are used as illustrations, examples or case studies in a peculiar interplay between narrative and argumentative structures in research articles.

The present paper looks at the representation of argument in the discourse of business and economics through the meta-argumentative phraseological elements that characterize research articles. Academic communities are communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and the representation of research and discourse procedures in text can offer interesting insights into their self-perception. The research article represents the most distinguished channel of knowledge dissemination within the community and plays a crucial role in the process of knowledge construction by providing a forum in which academics can set out their views in the form of arguments. How do scholars in the field of business and economics represent their own argument? Keeping in mind the basically dialogic and argumentative nature of academic discourse, the paper looks at the variety of phraseological tools employed.

The role played by reflexivity and argument in academic discourse has long been the object of increasing attention in applied linguistic approaches to academic discourse (Crismore, 1989; Mauranen, 1993; Hyland, 1998, 2000, 2005; Bondi, 1999). The lexicalization of argumentative processes (cf. Mauranen, 2003; Hyland, 2005; Dahl, 2003; Bondi, 2001, 2005) has often

been studied in relation to the question of citation (Hyland, 1998, 2000; Thompson, 2005; Dahl, 2003; Bondi & Silver, 2004; Charles, 2006; Diani, 2007), while paying particular attention to disciplinary specificity and variation. Exploring the role of reflexive language in business and economics research articles can also be seen to contribute to an exploration of the discipline specificity of "general academic language" (Hyland & Bondi, 2006). Disciplines are often characterized by their argumentative strategies as well as by their content, and phraseology can be a helpful signpost to discourse organization (Sinclair & Mauranen, 2006). Even closely related areas like economics and business studies can be shown to reflect different epistemologies and different rhetorical preferences.

Focusing on the extended unit of meaning (Sinclair, 1996), phraseology is identified on the basis of a combination of frequency-based information and semantics. Drawing in particular on phraseological studies in the field of EAP, we look at both quantitative and qualitative factors in order to identify our data. Quantitative analysis of repeated strings of words – whether referred to as n-grams, clusters or lexical bundles (Biber, 2004; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Hyland, 2008) – can be an excellent starting point, but this needs to be related to significant functions, such as for example discourse relations in work by Siepmann (2005) or Nesi & Basturkmen (2006). Mere lexical repetition, furthermore, does not account for repeated patterns involving a range of semantically related lexical items, as shown in Groom (2005) and Charles (2006). The focus here is on organizational discourse units (Sinclair & Mauranen, 2006) and meta-argumentative phraseology in particular. Sinclair & Mauranen (2006: 70) look at phraseology as a signpost to discourse organization, i.e. "elements which organize unfolding discourse", whether addressed at interpreting the interactive moves at play or signaling textual coherence and cohesion.

The next section provides a brief presentation of the materials used for the study – the corpora and the dimensions of comparison they allow – as well as of the methodology adopted, ranging from comparison of frequency data to contextual analysis of phraseological units. The analysis offers an overview of variation in phraseology across business and economics, before focusing on one of the most typical phraseological items of the two corpora: *on the other hand*. The discussion of the data will focus on disciplines and their variety of languages.

## **2. Methods and materials**

The study is based on two comparable corpora of academic journal articles, which were designed to study academic writing in English across disciplines. The corpora consist of about 2.5 million words each and include articles published in a given time period (1999-2000) in a set of mostly international

journals covering a range of sub-disciplines in the two fields of business and economics. The economics corpus comprises 370 journal articles published in the following journals: *European Economic Review (EER)*, *European Journal of Political Economy (EJOPE)*, *International Journal of Industrial Organization (IJOIO)*, *International Review of Economics and Finance (IREF)*, *Journal of Corporate Finance (JOCF)*, *Journal of Development Economics (JODE)*, *Journal of Socio-Economics (JOSE)*, *The North American Journal of Economics and Finance (NAJEF)*. The business corpus comprises 436 articles published in the following journals: *Journal of World Business (JOWB)*, *Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)*, *Marketing Science (MS)*, *Journal of Marketing Research (JOMR)*, *Business Economics (BE)*, *Business & Society Review (BASR)*, *Business Strategy Review (BSR)*.

The methodology adopted combines a corpus and a discourse perspective (Bondi, 2007b). Discourse analysis contributes to the definition of pragmatic functions of discourse units and meta-argumentative expressions under investigation, whereas corpus linguistics offers ways of looking at lexical patterns. The analysis carried out focuses on cross-disciplinary variation in the presence of lexical tools of reflexivity in economics and business research articles.

A preliminary analysis of frequency data (frequency wordlists and statistical keywords) offers an overview of quantitative variation. Using the wordlist and keyword function of *Wordsmith tools 5.0* (Scott, 2007), the two corpora are compared to each other, in order to identify what lexical features are signalled as having significantly higher or lower frequency in each corpus as against the neighbouring disciplinary area. Special attention is paid to clusters (i.e. repeated strings of words, irrespective of structural units; see also Biber *et al.*, 2004) and key-clusters (especially 4- and 5-word key clusters), revealing statistically significant divergences in expected frequencies of multi-word units. Reference is also made to the academic component of the BNC, so as to illuminate peculiarities against the background of a "general academic language".

The analytic focus is on a range of organizational units, including both general discourse markers (*on the other hand, in the case of, on the basis of*) and meta-argumentative and self-reflexive items (*it is shown that, the purpose of this paper, the results of this study, is organized as follows, it is important to note*). The analysis of concordances looks at the extended lexical unit (Sinclair, 1996), with its corollary of semantic preference and semantic prosody. It also takes into consideration textual patterns and discourse function. Starting from the frequencies of word forms and multi-word-units, this paper looks at semantic associations between otherwise different forms and the association of the unit with further semantic or textual-pragmatic meanings, thus looking at semantic fields and semantic sequences (Hunston,

2008). The co-text of the nodes is analyzed with a view to their textual patterns, so as to bring out the evaluative implications of many organizational units, as well as their textual and discourse function. Special attention is paid to the ways in which the generic and argumentative structure of discourse is represented across the whole field, highlighting convergences and divergences between business and economics.

### 3. Reflexive Phraseology across disciplines: frequency data

Clusters provide a useful starting point for the identification of typical phraseology in the corpora. A look at 4- or 5-word clusters will often highlight some of the most frequent phraseological units: in our corpora, these are mostly organizational units. Many of the expressions found in this case refer to the text itself (*e.g. the results of this study, the purpose of this paper*), or to quantitative data presented in tables (*e.g. as shown in table #, are presented in table #*), with their mathematical or statistical aspects (*e.g. less than or equal to, significant at the # level*).

The analysis of 5-word clusters highlights an interesting element of disciplinary variation. Economics makes much greater use of metatextual expressions (the paper is organized as, the rest of the paper etc.), identifying the text and its sections and explicitly outlining the development of the argument as such. Business studies make more frequent reference to the analysis of data (*greater than or equal to, will be positively related to*) or to the process of textual interpretation (*it is important to note, it should be noted that*).

Table 1 reports the top twenty 4-word clusters. Key-clusters, identified by comparing cluster-lists of different corpora through the Keywords function of Wordsmith Tools, reveal differences that are statistically significant and can be very helpful when focusing on disciplinary differences. These are marked in bold in the table.

| N  | Clusters: Economics           | Freq.      | Keyness index | Clusters: Business          | Freq.      | Keyness index |
|----|-------------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|
| 1  | ON THE OTHER HAND             | 554        | 145.73        | <b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH</b>  | 363        | 137.28        |
| 2  | IN THE CASE OF                | 386        | 64.39         | <b>ON THE BASIS OF</b>      | 354        | 68.66         |
| 3  | AN INCREASE IN THE            | 321        | 245.44        | <b>ARE MORE LIKELY TO</b>   | 265        | 36.46         |
| 4  | THE SIZE OF THE               | 320        | 128.46        | IN THE CONTEXT OF           | 246        | -----         |
| 5  | AT THE SAME TIME              | 237        | -----         | <i>ON THE OTHER HAND</i>    | 241        | -145.75       |
| 6  | AS WELL AS THE                | 198        | -----         | <b>IN THE UNITED STATES</b> | 236        | 25.86         |
| 7  | <b>IN THE ABSENCE OF</b>      | <b>192</b> | -----         | <b>THE DEGREE TO WHICH</b>  | <b>220</b> | <b>146.68</b> |
| 8  | <b>IN THE LONG RUN</b>        | <b>184</b> | <b>89.69</b>  | <b>AT THE SAME TIME</b>     | <b>218</b> | -----         |
| 9  | <b>IS CONSISTENT WITH THE</b> | <b>184</b> | -----         | <b>AS WELL AS THE</b>       | <b>210</b> | -----         |
| 10 | <b>AS A RESULT OF</b>         | <b>181</b> | -----         | <i>IN THE CASE OF</i>       | <b>209</b> | <b>-64.39</b> |
| 11 | <b>THE VALUE OF THE</b>       | <b>180</b> | <b>60.53</b>  | <b>TO THE EXTENT THAT</b>   | <b>170</b> | -----         |
| 12 | <b>AS A FUNCTION OF</b>       | <b>179</b> | <b>26.85</b>  | <b>IT IS IMPORTANT TO</b>   | <b>169</b> | -----         |
| 13 | <b>THE REST OF THE</b>        | <b>179</b> | <b>59.72</b>  | <b>AS A RESULT OF</b>       | <b>134</b> | -----         |
| 14 | IN TERMS OF THE               | 175        | ----          | IS LIKELY TO BE             | 133        | -----         |
| 15 | IN THE CONTEXT OF             | 175        | ----          | THE NATURE OF THE           | 132        | -----         |
| 16 | WITH RESPECT TO THE           | 168        | ----          | ARE LIKELY TO BE            | 128        | -----         |
| 17 | AT THE END OF                 | 157        | ----          | IN TERMS OF THE             | 127        | -----         |
| 18 | IF AND ONLY IF                | 156        | 159.09        | MORE LIKELY TO BE           | 127        | -----         |
| 19 | IN THIS CASE THE              | 155        | 89.09         | THE TOTAL NUMBER OF         | 126        | 37.85         |
| 20 | ON THE BASIS OF               | 155        | - 68.66       | THE RESULTS OF THE          | 122        | -----         |

Table 1. Twenty most frequent 4-word clusters (positive key-items in bold, negative in italics – all present in more than 60 texts)

The data reported show great disparity in the frequencies of the top items, possibly indicating that economics is slightly more formulaic than business. The table also shows that many of the most frequent elements in the corpora are also "*key clusters*", once again more so in economics. Most key clusters characterize the discourse for their high frequency, but some are "*negative keywords*", i.e. their frequency is significantly lower than in the other corpus. Though frequent in both corpora, three clusters typically characterize one discipline only: *on the basis of* is shown to be typical of business, whereas *on the other hand* and *in the case of* are typical of economics.

Comparative analysis of the data shows that economics is characterized by 'contrastive' discourse markers that potentially signal developing an argument by weighing pros and cons or considering different aspects, such as *on the one hand* (106) *on the other hand* (554). Other phraseological elements typically point to 'Conditional- restrictive' or 'Causal' relations: *in the case of* (386), *with respect to the* (168), *if and only if* (156), *as a result of* (181).

The expressions that are most characteristic of the business corpus, on the other hand, can be related to the process of empirical inquiry. Notice in particular references to scalar restrictions – *the degree to which* (220), *the extent to which* (363, 1.5 pttw) – emphasis on predictability – *are more likely to* (265) – and the wide predominance of *on the basis of* (354), variously followed by results, data, tools, theories, construct.

Prepositional phrases introduced by *on the basis of* are used quite extensively in the business corpus with reference to three basic functions:

- 1) to justify to one's own argument: e.g. *alternatives were defined on the basis of literature review, as might be expected, on the basis of their background, on the basis of the results etc.* ;
- 2) to justify research procedures: e.g. *Our survey instrument was developed on the basis of extensive pilot testing and incorporates existing scales, on the basis of informal discussions, on the basis of interviews, on the basis of item reliability analyses etc.*;
- 3) to identify factors involved in the issues observed: e.g. *team members are paid on the basis of team membership, investors in capital markets must act on the basis of publicly available information etc.*.

An emphasis on accounting for decision processes is inevitable in business studies and most of the debate seems to revolve around different ways of accounting for business behaviour, whether in terms of classification (*firm resources and capabilities could be differentiated on the basis of value, rareness, inimitability, and substitutability*) or explanation (*individuals form group memberships on the basis of their relative similarity to others*).

Expressions like *the extent to which* and *the degree to which*, on the other hand, clearly contribute to a representation of the research procedures that characterize business studies. An overview of the collocates of both expressions shows that they mostly qualify the object of verbs representing these activities – typically *indicate, assess, determine, define*.

The most typical phraseological features in both corpora can often be accounted for in terms of "meta-argumentative expressions" (Stati, 1998), i.e. complex expressions used to signal the development of the argument through reference to the act of arguing and its tools. Meta-argumentative phraseology often includes forms of 'self-mention' (Hyland, 2001, 2006), typically used to introduce assumptions or claims / conclusions. Table 2 presents other important meta-argumentative key clusters.



| Functions                           | Expressions                                  | Economics<br>F (pttw) | Business<br>F (pttw) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Introducing assumptions             | <i>we assume that the</i>                    | <b>133</b>            | 43                   |
|                                     | <i>is assumed to be</i>                      | <b>130</b>            | 22                   |
|                                     | <i>it is assumed that</i>                    | <b>114</b>            | 16                   |
| Reporting methodological procedures | <i>subjects were asked to (45)</i>           | 0                     | <b>45</b>            |
|                                     | <i>told that (23)</i>                        | 0                     | <b>23</b>            |
| Presenting claims / conclusions     | <i>It is shown that</i>                      | <b>49</b>             | 0                    |
|                                     | <i>it can be shown that</i>                  | <b>48</b>             | 6                    |
|                                     | <i>it is straightforward to show</i>         | <b>21</b>             | 0                    |
|                                     | <i>the results of this study</i>             | 8                     | <b>44</b>            |
|                                     | <i>there were no significant,</i>            | 0                     | <b>35</b>            |
|                                     | <i>there was no significant</i>              | 0                     | <b>30</b>            |
|                                     | <i>support for hypothesis #</i>              | 0                     | <b>31</b>            |
|                                     | <i>will be positively related to/</i>        | 0                     | <b>45</b>            |
|                                     | <i>associated to research has shown that</i> | 4                     | <b>47</b>            |

Table 2. Meta-argumentative phraseology (key-items: higher frequency in bold)

The frequencies of the expressions are relatively low, but they become relevant by comparison. Given the functions they are associated with, they are also at times significant in themselves: it can be seen, for example, that almost all articles in the economics corpus introduce assumptions with one of the three formulae based on the verb *assume*. When considering the lemma *assume* (2'645 occurrences), economics research articles manifest a clear preference for relating it to the first person plural pronoun – *we assume that the*, followed by *is assumed to be* and *it is assumed that*.

In economics research articles there seems to be a pronounced tendency for researchers to introduce their claims through use of both 1<sup>st</sup> person pronouns and passive voice. Occurrences of various forms with the lemma *show* (3568) also stand out, though mostly used impersonally: *it is shown that*, *it can be shown that*, *it is straightforward to show*. Much of the activity of research articles concerns the communication of results, so the high frequency of *show* in both clause types ('it' subject with passive and human subject) is not surprising. There are similar percentages of the verb: 0.04 pttw in introductory it'+ passive voice; 0.05 pttw in human subject clause type. The verb *show* refers to the researcher's activity and its frequent use in the genre reflects both the importance of the researcher's investigation and the concern with discovery.

Some obvious differences between the two corpora can be noticed. Where economics shows a preference for expressions centred on the verb *assume* followed by propositions, business clearly favours locational constructs, where self-reference is also typically realized in prepositional phrases (*In this article*, *in this study*, *in the present study*). The most obvious lexical items used by writers when presenting their purpose in writing the article are quite

predictably linked to deictic elements (*this*), and self-referential nouns referring to the discourse product itself (*paper*, *review*, *section*). The preferred form of self reference is *paper* (1'276 occurrences, 226 of which adverbial), followed by *study* (278 occurrences, 102 of which adverbial) and by *article* (2 occurrences, 1 of which adverbial).

In economics research articles the preferred pattern for introducing structure of the article is by far *the paper is organized as follows* (113 occurrences), followed by *the remainder of the paper* (36), *the second half of the* (31), *the paper is as follows* (21 occurrences). The search for nominal references to the notion of 'purpose' produced also 49 occurrences of *the purpose of this paper* in economics (see Bondi, 2007a for a study of statements of purpose).

Business proves to be much less formulaic in the statement of research purpose or in presenting the outline of the study. Reference to the article itself is more varied: *this study / the present study* (680 occurrences, 374 of which *in this study / in the present study*), *this article* (441 – 163 of which *in this article*), *this paper / the present paper* (273 – 116 of which *in this paper*). The choice of *paper*, though clearly attested, is the least frequent in business. On the whole, whereas nominal references to discourse units prove to be a very frequent choice in economics, they are far more limited in business, with only 17 occurrences of *the remainder of this paper / article* and 31 occurrences of *this/the article / paper is organized as follows*. Similarly the most frequent reference to purpose is in *the purpose of this study* with only 17 occurrences; other choices are *paper* (16), *article* (9) and *research* (4). On the whole then, business seems to be less explicit in reference to purpose, as well as less formulaic and more varied.

A brief consideration of phraseology brings out the importance of the representation of the process of arguing in both disciplinary fields. Both economics and business are shown to be interested in representing the argumentative procedures of the community, although they seem to show different stylistic, semantic and pragmatic preferences. These formal differences can often be explained in terms of methodological issues, once again thinking of the key role played by mathematical reasoning and philosophical argument in economics, as against the central role of empirical research and theory testing in business studies.

#### **4. *On the other hand*: signalling a perspective shift**

Closer study of individual phraseological items may also help reveal other features of the discourse community it characterizes. Comparison with the academic component of the BNC shows that the specificity of an expression like *On the other hand* is not only perceived against business, but against a wide range of disciplines. The occurrences in our economics corpus

(554, 2.2pttw) are more than double the occurrences in the quantitatively comparable business corpus (241, 1.0pttw). Comparison with the BNC shows an even greater disproportion: the occurrences in the written academic component of the BNC are 667 (0,4pttw).

An analysis of the data regarding the correlative element *on the one hand* shows a slightly less striking but similar pattern: 106 (0.4pttw) occurrences in economics as against 89 in business (0.3pttw) and 134 in the BNC written-academic component (0.1pttw).

A look at the concordances of *on the other hand* in economics will show preference for the presence of epistemic markers (*possibility, may, will*), as well as listing or 'alternative' markers (*two, other, some; not; but, however*) usually followed by general nouns referring to agent / factor / situation. Reasoning based on "scenarios" can easily be realized by focusing on different (not necessarily contradictory) aspects of a question and pointing at (or implying) a range of conclusions that can be drawn from each hypothetical perspective. *On the other hand* is a frequent cluster (51 occurrences), as well as *if on the other hand* (19), but the number of occurrences in which the discourse marker is found in a wider context of hypothetical reasoning marked by *if* is much higher (75).

In business, collocates of *on the other hand* are more varied and patterns emerge less obviously. *May* and *might* can still be seen as frequent collocates, but use of *if* is much more limited: 1 occurrence of *if* preceding the discourse marker and 12 following.

*On the other hand* has been described as a contrastive connector signalling an alternative (Fraser, 1998). Bell (2004: 2179) lists three main functions: listing, contrastive and cancellative. In actual examples of monologic academic discourse it is often difficult to separate the three if all levels of discourse are considered. The discourse marker is mostly used in textual patterns where different points of view are introduced or summarized, together with their distinctive features and possible objections or concessions. As also recognized by Bell (2004: 2180), in academic argument comparison and contrast are an essential element of the discourse.

Example (1) may seem to privilege a listing pattern, by introducing the paragraph with a prospective signal of listing (*two main assumptions*), but attention to the difference in perspective of the two assumptions is also drawn:

(1) In order to simplify the bidding stage and focus on information acquisition, we make two main assumptions. The private and common value components of the item's value, and the signals that the bidders can acquire, are normally distributed. **On the other hand**, the cost of acquiring information is proportional to the reduction in the conditional variance of the common value component being investigated. These assumptions give the model a tractable linear structure. (JJOIO 2000)

Example (2) illustrates a typical introductory move identifying the research question by "indicating a gap" in the disciplinary debate (Swales, 1990: 141). Notice the expressions referring to an evaluation of the two research claims reported (underlined), with *on the other hand* signalling the shift between two divergent opinions expressed (*well understood* vs. *not answered satisfactorily*):

(2) Why is there so much monitoring? Whenever a principal delegates a task to an agent who is better informed and has different interests than the principal, the agent may take advantage of the asymmetry of information. [...] The principal can do the monitoring herself or she can send an auditor. So it is well understood why there is so much auditing. **On the other hand,** the question how monitoring takes place or should take place is not answered satisfactorily, yet. How often should monitoring take place? How thorough should the individual audit be? How should a convicted agent be punished? What does optimal monitoring look like, if auditor and agent may collude? In this paper, I will provide some new ideas and insights regarding these questions. (*EJOPE* 1999)

Rather than contrasting two claims which are presented as mutually exclusive, the adverbial is used to contrast two positions which are considered compatible (or both considered true) but still represent two different perspectives or research interests. The contrast between a positive and a negative evaluation signals a shift in writer's perspective: the focus of attention moves from the background to the foreground of the research presented. If contrast is the most obvious element, the presence of a listing element is also there (the "how" and the "why" of monitoring as possible areas of interest), as well as some kind of cancellative function, weakening previously held assumptions of a well covered area of study.

The discourse marker is often found in contexts that are extremely rich in meta-argumentative lexis, where it typically marks a shift from attention to a weaker position in a debate to a stronger position. Notice for example the clustering of meta-argumentative elements in example 3 (underlined) and the shift from refutation to thesis statement:

(3) Our standard tests for unit roots in the real exchange rate confirm earlier empirical studies that there is little support for a long run relationship between exchange rate and price ratio. The hypothesis of a unit root can be rejected only [...]. This is true regardless of [...]. In addition, there is little evidence of [...]. **On the other hand,** the empirical results reveal that the generalized dynamic model tends to support PPP for more countries than do the standard tests for unit roots. [...] The results are similar [...]. It appears that [...]. (*IREF* 1999)

Similarly, example 4 illustrates the use of *on the other hand* in producing a balanced summary of results presented in the paper. The conclusion discusses results in terms of their being cause for optimism or pessimism and proposes "both" as the appropriate answer. The representation of argument in the first paragraph builds up a set of related positions by balancing agreement and disagreement with them. The discourse marker shifts attention to a

different set of related positions, showing once again a balance of agreement and disagreement with the positions reported.

(4) In closing, it is worth asking whether these results are cause for *optimism* or *pessimism*. The appropriate answer seems to be "both". It is *comforting* to see that industrial water emissions level off in richer economies because pollution intensity has an elastic response to income growth. Those who argue that economic growth increases pollution levels are only *partially right*, since they focus on scale and composition effects without giving sufficient weight to the impact of rising income on pollution abatement.

**On the other hand**, our results are cautionary for those who see economic growth as a *panacea* for improvement in environmental quality. Unitary elasticity of pollution intensity with respect to income implies that total emissions remain constant unless other factors intervene. Of course, industry tends to deconcentrate over time as infrastructure improves and prosperity spreads. Constant total emissions may therefore be consistent with improving water quality in at least some areas. However, the continued existence of many seriously polluted waterways, even in the most prosperous countries, suggests that economic development remains *far short of an EKC-style happy ending* in the water sector. (JODE 2000)

The specific use of the adverbial *on the other hand* is also often accompanied by a formulaic use of the correlative expression. The correlative pattern structures the argument as balanced right from the beginning, highlighting that alternative scenario; different options and different features have been considered. Concordance analysis shows 83 occurrences of its correlative adverbial **on the one hand** in economics. An example is provided in 5:

(5) The political aspiration of joining the EU and the policies required to accede have an influence on the sustainability of a peg prior to EU accession. On the one hand, the accession goal affects market expectations and, on the other hand, raises the commitment to appropriate economic policies and hence the credibility of those policies. (NAJOEF 2000)

The shift in perspective is often introduced by interpretive frameworks that encapsulate the two perspectives (e.g. *What is at issue is the polar choice of two very incomplete models; Razeto proposes two criteria, two countervailing effects on T, for two reasons, whose main purpose was twofold, this has two consequences* etc.), often pointing at their problematicity (e.g. *surprisingly, a conundrum, two extreme cases worth considering* etc.) as an interesting issue for successive argument. Extract 6 exemplifies the sequence:

(6) The root cause of the problem is neoclassical economists' theoretical schizophrenia. On the one hand, emphasis is placed on the primacy (and efficacy) of classically rational, atomistic, autonomous, and narrowly self-interested decision-making. **On the other hand**, economic policy judgments invoke a consequentialist evaluative standard (efficiency) which is predicated on a non-individuated collective goal: the constrained maximization of aggregate welfare. Significantly, a sine qua non for the attainment of first-best Paretian optima is respect for individuals' exchange and property rights. (JOSE 1999)

A major difference across the two corpora examined can be easily related to the structure of research and its reporting in the two fields rather than to the

function of the discourse marker. The vast majority of the contexts in which **on the other hand** is used in economics attribute the shift in perspective to the writer's line of argument or to the disciplinary debate on the issue examined. In business there is a major emphasis on the study of decisional behaviour and this explains a vast amount of examples where the shift is attributable to the subjects of an experimental study, either in terms of their categorization, or to their individual position (see example 7). By comparison this further reduces the importance of contexts in which the perspective shift represents a background debate or the writer's own argument (examples 8 and 9)

(7) Highly literate consumers who live in urban areas, are non-minorities, and are members of the majority religion are more likely to view promotions positively that are in print or electronic form. **On the other hand**, rural, ethnic minority consumers with low literacy and members of a non-majority religion are more easily persuaded by personal selling. (JOWB 2000)

(8) On one hand, analysts might view profitability as a signal that the acquirer could better afford the managerial procedures and structural mechanisms that accompany the integration of two firms. **On the other hand**, several researchers have argued that firms with excess cash flow will tend to make wasteful acquisitions due to agency problems. (JOWB 2000)

(9) The examples of Henkel CEE and BBAG show that a multi-tier product strategy is an attractive strategy among Western consumer goods marketers as it enables them to cover also lower price segments of the markets and to participate in various market developments. **On the other hand**, assuming a continued convergence of CEE markets to Western market standards and structures, the "parallel strategy" runs the risk of becoming strategically obsolete. Even these firms try to "regionalize" their local brands to overcome disadvantages in scale and scope. Their example shows us how hard it is to escape the prevalent "global business logic". (JOWB 2000)

## 5. Conclusions

The brief overview of general academic phraseology across disciplines has shown that phraseological units can be very helpful signals for the analysis of generic structure and argumentative style. Phraseological units are shown to contribute to key actions in academic discourse: outlining assumptions, problematizing issues (for example by highlighting data that need explanation), highlighting the significance of the data and the conclusions produced.

Convergences and divergences between closely related disciplines also help focus on disciplinary discourse. Frequencies and patterns can be interpreted in the light of factors characterizing academic discourse and specific disciplinary values. Meta-argumentative phraseology turns out to be a resource by which the author negotiates his/her position with the reader according to discipline-specific orientations, showing for example emphasis on abstract reasoning in economics or emphasis on empirical research in accounting for factual data in business studies.

On the whole, the general patterns sketched through the overview of quantitative data are reflected in closer analysis of individual units. The analysis of *on the other hand* proposed in this study has both confirmed the presence of different argumentative styles in the two corpora and highlighted the dominant function of the expression in academic discourse. Like other "contrastive" discourse markers, *on the other hand* shows that argumentative discourse draws on a continuum of relations of addition and contrast. A lot of discourse markers that are typically classified as "contrastive" do not point at any logical incompatibility, but rather at a range of relations of "difference" in the direct or indirect meaning of the text units, which are otherwise just as much characterized by relations of addition as by relations of contrast. When looking at monologic argumentative discourse from an interactional perspective, a discourse marker like *on the other hand* can be seen to point at a shift in perspective: i.e. the writer looks at different features of an issue, that may potentially lead to different argumentative conclusions. The presence of other contrastive markers in the context may emphasize or de-emphasize the contrast: the basic meaning of the marker lies rather in a shift of discourse perspective.

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