

A Corpus-Based Study of the Priming of *but* in Comment Articles in English

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Abstract

A corpus-based research has been carried out which aims at identifying some patterns of *but* in newspaper comment articles of *The Guardian* in reference to its signalling of cohesion and its contribution to the rhetoric structuring of text. In this paper a description of the study is presented focusing in the presence of *but* in this type of argumentative text according to two different variables, i.e. the part of the article (headline, lead, first paragraph, last paragraph and text body in between) as well as its position in paragraph. A hypothesis has been formulated that a summarised version of the general argument-counter argument pattern of the article is expected to be present either in the headline, the lead or the first paragraph (in absence of a lead), or in the last paragraph of the article.

In order to test this hypothesis, a mini corpus of 26 comment articles has been used for intensive analysis of the argument-counterargument pattern, as well as a specialised corpus consisting of 13,168 comment articles (about 11 million running words) from the British newspaper *The Guardian* (1 January 1998 to 13 November 2004). In addition to this, a corpus consisting of all the texts of *The Guardian* published from 1 January 1998 to 13 November 2004 (over 250 million running words) and the *BNC* corpus (World edition) have also been used as reference corpora. These specialised and reference corpora have been scrutinized by means of *WordSmith Tools Version 4* (Scott 2004–2005). Finally, the results obtained from the analysis of the corpora scrutinized are presented and discussed in reference to the priming of *but* in this type of text (Hoey 2005).

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