FRANCESCA VAGHI
MARCO VENUTI
Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche – Sezione Linguistica
Università degli studi di Napoli 'Federico II'
Italia
venuti@unina.it
vaghi@unina.it

British Media and the Euro: A Corpus-based Approach

Abstract

Our research project is based on the editing of a corpus consisting of British newspaper articles dealing with the European single currency. We have restricted our study to four publications: *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Times*. All articles have been published between July 1 2001 and June 30 2002, six months before and six months after the launch of the single currency. In this presentation we deal with the two quality papers *The Guardian* and *The Times*, and, in particular, we have analysed the metaphors characterising the possible future entry of the United Kingdom into the European Monetary Union (EMU). The study is based on the cognitive theories of metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) which see them as linguistic expressions and mental representations. We have followed the example of previous researchers who applied cognitive theories to the study of the language of economics (Charteris-Black, 2000; Charteris-Black & Ennis, 2001). The analysis of the systematic metaphors represented by constant semantic fields gives an insight into the way the two newspapers build their discourse strategies by focusing on the choice of certain semantic fields.

Introduction

Our work in progress involves the editing of a corpus consisting of texts about the euro currency. These texts are a collection of articles retrieved from the websites of the following periodicals and newspapers: *The Economist, The Financial Times, The Guardian, The Times*. This selection features both texts meant for a more specialised audience in economics, and texts taken from quality papers and therefore intended for a wider and less specialised readership. Thus the corpus can be representative of a wide range of articles offering a thorough overview of the way the British press has portrayed the new-born European currency.

Corpus Data and theoretical background

The articles have been selected according to two main criteria: the date of publication and the relevance to the topic. All selected articles have been published between July 1 2001 and June 30 2002, six months before and six months after the launch of the single currency. The focus on the six months preceding and the six months following the introduction of the euro gave us the opportunity to investigate the different attitudes of the papers also in terms of predictions and first comments dealing with such an important event, a milestone in the history of European countries.

As for the relevance to the topic, we have selected those articles containing either the phrase "the euro" or "single/European currency" in the headline and/or the header.

After retrieving all the articles published in the chosen time span, a hundred were randomly sampled from each paper to create four sub-corpora of around 60.000 words each. In the sampling process we also took into consideration the number of articles published each month, in our opinion these criteria were necessary to assemble a corpus which would be representative of the uneven editorial coverage throughout the twelve months, since the articles published in December and January were predictably three times as many as the monthly average.

In this study we have focused our attention only on the two quality papers *The Guardian* and *The Times*.

Referring to the work of Lakoff & Johnson (1980) on the cognitive theories of metaphors we have examined the use of the metaphors concerning the possible UK membership of the European Monetary Union.

In order to identify such figures of speech we have analysed our corpus with WordSmith Tools 3.0 (Mike Scott, 1999)[1]. Starting from the frequency lists produced we have selected the most frequent terms expressing the possible future entry of the United Kingdom, and printed out their concordances. Applying the cognitive theory of metaphors to the examination of the concordance lines we aimed at giving insight into the way the two newspapers build their discourse strategies by focusing on the choice of certain semantic fields such as THE EURO IS A CONTAINER, and THE EURO IS A MECHANICAL OBJECT.

Methodology

Our first step was the study of the two wordlists obtained from the two sub-corpora of *The Guardian* and *The Times*. The comparison has shown a high frequency of the terms describing the in/out and join/entry perspective in both the papers; we decided to concentrate our attention on these items since they can all be related to the systematic metaphors THE EURO IS A CONTAINER, and THE EURO IS A MECHANICAL OBJECT. These two semantic fields

[1] For a detailed description of all the features of WordSmith Tools see Mike Scott, 2001.

highlight two different aspects referring to the possible UK membership, the first stressing the opposition between being “in” the single currency and “out of” the single currency, the second focusing on the economic and/or political process leading to the European Monetary Union.

We have then proceeded to make the concordances of all the selected terms and deleted all those hits which were not strictly relevant to our research topic. Table 1 contains the figures for the number of occurrences of ‘in, into, out, join*, entr*/enter*’ in the two sub-corpora[2]; even if the relative frequency of the search words does not feature great differences in use within the same newspaper and between the two pairs of word types[3], their function varies significantly.

	The Times	The Guardian
in	**25**	**37**
into	**30**	**22**
out	**24**	**23**
join*	**123**	**92**
entr*/enter*	**90**	**65**

Table 1

All the elements found in the analysis of the data have been studied referring to the discourse function of the metaphors in the building of the pro- (*The Guardian*) and anti-euro (*The Times*) arguments in the two broadsheets. The link between the systematic metaphors and the discourse strategies was made possible by the study of the context of each set of concordances. The different connotations emerging from the analysis gave enough evidence of the two opposed attitudes towards the newborn European currency.

Due to space limitation, we will give a detailed analysis of the concordances of ‘entr*/enter*’ only in each newspaper first and we will then compare the results in the conclusion.

The Times

We have sorted the concordances to highlight some recurrent patterns and have identified that the vast majority has a negative connotation. After the sorting just a third of the concordances did not show a negative attitude towards the single currency.

For instance, the pattern ‘for entry’ occurs 20 times of these, 10 are inserted into an overtly negative context, 6 show a neutral attitude and just four of them are used in a positive sense. The following concordance lines are a sample representing the different percentages.

1 said that the Treasury would be unable to deliver a "clear and unambiguous" verdict on the five economic tests **for British entry**. Mr O'Donnell, Gordon Brown's head of macroeconomic policy and international finance, also derided the syst

2 currency. Gordon Brown speaks on Sunday and his aides describe his speech as damping down the prospects **for early entry** into the euro. The Chancellor "lets it be known" that his speech is "a corrective" to the Prime Minister's speech at

3 the management failures of UK manufacturing. On this view the pound is already close to, or at, a sensible level **for euro entry** and we need not worry about devaluation with all its politically difficult connotations of national decrepitude. T

4 the pound still has a substantial way to go before it reaches any level that might be considered a plausible rate **for euro entry**. There is a school of thought which argues that the pound’s prolonged strength, defying repeated predictions of a d

5 r and Mr Brown is that there will be an assessment before June 2003 to determine whether the five economic tests **for entry** have been met. Mr Griffiths’s forecast was well out of line with the Chancellor’s customary caution on the iss

6 d Mr Blair are expected to make the key decision in the autumn on the economic assessment of the five tests **for entry**. At his Downing Street press conference on Thursday Mr Blair insisted that the tests were not "window-dress

The context was enlarged to draw attention to the context of each sentence. It is thus possible to notice that only sentence number three has a positive connotation whereas in all other instances it is either neutral (sentences 5 and 6) or negative (sentences 1, 2 and 4).

The pattern ‘entry into/to’ and ‘enter* + direct object’ showed a more balanced behaviour though still in contrast with the one found in *The Guardian*, out of the 17 hits for *The Times* 8 had a positive connotation, 7 a negative one. The following enlarged concordance lines again show an example of the balanced attitude with which the paper has described a possible entry to/into the European Monetary Union.

1 tty soon." Neil Kinnock, the European Commissioner and former Labour leader, said yesterday of British **entry to** the single currency, "the faster,the better". Mr Kinnock, for whom Mr Clarke was chief of staff beand 2 were neutral. The following lis

2 f the new money, but in Greece opinion polls show more than 70 per cent of people are in favour. Gaining **entry to** the monetary union is widely seen as an achievement and a sign of the country's progress in catching up with the rest of the mem

3 Gordon Brown speaks on Sunday and his aides describe his speech as damping down the prospects for early **entry into** the euro. The Chancellor "lets it be known" that his speech is "a corrective" to the Prime Minister's speech at

4 ting in 2001. They now expect the gap to widen again, albeit not as wide as when John Major sealed our ill-fated **entry into** the exchange-rate mechanism 11 years ago. This measure follows from the universal forecast that the UK eco

[2] The whole list of terms taken into consideration includes: ‘join, joined, joining, enter, entered, entering, entry’.
[3] join* is the most recurrent hit occurring nearly 50% more frequently than entr*/enter* in both the papers, but the proportion join*// entr*/enter* is the same.

The Guardian

Applying the same procedure to the concordances from the Guardian sub-corpus and analysing the ten occurrences of the 'for entry' phrase a more positive context emerged, as most of the hits share a positive connotation.

As the following sentences show:

1 y Blair would have us believe, a "pre-in" currency, committed in principle and merely waiting until the time is ripe **for entry**. Analyst No 2 believes we are fast catching up with French and German levels of prosperity. What Britain needs to avoid

2 ltimately be a political one. Mr O'Donnell allegedly told a seminar last November that the government's five tests **for entry** cannot be clearly and unambiguously met and so it would come down to politics. That the Treasury feels obliged to deny

3 staying out of the euro against the national interest would be a tragedy, Mr Hain says the assessment of the chancellor, Gordon Brown, of the government's tests **for entry** could happen this autumn

4 states, he said in an interview with BBC2's Newsnight to be broadcast this evening. If the economic conditions **for entry** were right, it was "overwhelmingly" in Britain's interests to join, he said. Mr Blair repeated his promise that the

5 litical rejection of euro is 'crazy' Staying out of the euro for political reasons even if the economic circumstances **for entry** were right would be a "betrayal" of Britain's national interest, Tony Blair has said in an interview to be screened tonight.

6 O'Donnell reportedly said it would be impossible to deliver a "clear and unambiguous" verdict on the five economic tests **for British entry**. But his remarks were completely misrepresented and the economic case must be clear and

there is just a single negative context (sentence 2) while the others are positive. The same connotation applies for the other concordances examined.

As we anticipated before the contrast widens from the analysis of the phrase 'entry into/to' and 'enter* + direct object'; in *The Guardian* the 20 hits of the corresponding concordance showed quite a distinct context: 12 instances were positive, 4 negative and 4 neutral as can be seen in the following sample of concordances.

1 e agents always ready to stoke this up. And they do have a genuine disagreement, about the timing of Britain's **entry into** the euro, which is where most of the briefing goes on and the vibes are at their worst. Their differences here do matter. But now

2 A referendum on Britain's **entry to** the single currency could be held as early as next spring, according to a timetable floated by the Europe minister, Peter Hain, in

3 go a hundred leading figures from business put their names to an advertisement in the Financial Times supporting **entry to** the euro, the Sun picked off a dozen the following day, attacking them for the most trivial problems their companies had experie

4 day stoke up debate over the euro by publishing a pamphlet setting out the arguments in favour of British **entry into** the single currency. One of the MPs behind the pamphlet, former defence minister Peter Kilfoyle, said that the question of euro

5 Asked about Mr Duncan Smith's opposition to the euro, Mr Major said he still believed it was politically "foolish" to rule out **entering** the single currency forever. He added: "I set out my policy before most of the current front bench were in parliament."

What is stricking if we examine the 'enter* + direct object' phrase is that it occurs only once in *The Times* and seven times in *The Guardian*. This different use can be explained by stressing that the verb emphasises a process in the making, underlining the dynamic effect of the action, whereas the noun (entry) describes the event as a static, inescapable and predetermined reality.

Conclusions

Even if the data presented are not an exhaustive representation of the different approach of the two newspapers, they are nonetheless interesting as a hint to a possible methodology for the study of metaphors and discourse strategies starting from a corpus perspective.

The similar number of hits concerning the UK entry in the EMU is evidence to the inevitability of such an important topic in both newspapers, regardless of their political stance. As we stated earlier the use of THE EURO IS A CONTAINER metaphor, exemplified in our present study by the 'enter*' and 'entry' patterns, highlights a connection between the attributes of the entity "containing" and the "thing contained". The parallel between the two entities can have both a positive and a negative connotation depending on whether the context provides an opposition or a correspondence between them.

Since both broadsheets use *container* metaphors in a systematic way, they associate a significant discourse function to them: they acknowledge the magnitude of an event such as the birth of the new European currency. What is more, the *container* metaphors inserted in negative contexts as in *The Times* articles convey the negative feelings of the anti-euro, conservative readership, whereas those in *The Guardian* express a more positive connotation by picturing the entrance of Britain in EMU as a difficult but necessary process in the making.

References

Anderson, P. J. and Weymouth, A. 1999. *Insulting the Public? The British Press and the European Union*. London: Longman.

Biber, D. 1993. "Representativeness in Corpus Design." *Literary and Linguistic Computing*. 8. pp. 243-257.

Charteris-Black, J. 2000. "Metaphor and vocabulary teaching in ESP economics". *English for Specific Purposes*, 19, 2, pp.149-165.

Charteris-Black, J. and Ennis T. 2001. "A Comparative Study of Metaphor in Spanish and English Financial Reporting". *English for Specific Purposes*, 20, 3, pp.249-266.

Fairclough, N. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ghadessy, M. and Henry, A. and Roseberry, R. L. (eds.). 2001. *Small Corpus Studies and ELT. Theory and Practice*. Amsterdam: Benjamins

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Partington, A. 1998. *Patterns and Meaning*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Scott, M. 1999. *WordSmith Tools Version 3*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Scott, M. 2001. “Comparing and Identifying Key Words, Collocations, and Frequency Distributions through the *WordSmith Tools* Suite of Computer Programs”. in Ghadessy et al.